

**KINNOCK CAN'T
SILENCE US**



**500 and still
going strong**

See centre pages

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

**Tory talk of
recovery
is a lie**

Two thousand a day thrown on the dole



Cammell Lairds faces closure: thousands more will lose their jobs

Labour must fight!

Revolt of the damned



Ireland too is experiencing prison unrest. Prisoners rioted and fought with warders on the roof of Mountjoy jail last Monday evening (17 September)

Throw Maxwell out of the Labour Party

Tories talk revolution

By Steve Mitchell, NUS Vice President FEUD

The Tories are talking revolution. A 'training revolution'. Outlined in their White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Kenneth Clarke claims that there will be "spectacular increases in the number of students gaining quality education and training".

The Tories' projected increases can only be achieved on the cheap. The White Paper talks of a "new funding regime designed to provide a powerful incentive to... reduce unit costs". In other words, there will be large increases in the size of classes, large increases in the workload of teachers and support staff and a reduction in the study time available for each subject. And of course, there will be cuts, mergers and closures.

The Tories are proposing to remove further education from local council control and to prohibit the appointment of council representatives onto college governing bodies. This proposal was followed only last week with a proposal to remove student representation from the governing bodies in the Public Sector (polytechnics, higher education institutes etc.)

Such proposals are undemocratic, taking away what little influence local people and students have over local colleges. For students in the public sector, the proposal will mean a fur-

ther erosion of control and input into their colleges. Of course these are to be replaced by the introduction of market forces, businessmen and competition between colleges.

There is also a proposal to set up a new National Funding Council. This will mean that funding and ultimate control (especially on the question of mergers and closures) will be out of the hands of local bodies and in the hands of faceless businessmen who view education merely in relation to the market.

In the White Paper, Adult Education comes in for a battering too. Presently, millions of adults attend Adult Education across the country.

The Tories plan to cut these courses drastically.

Up to ten per cent of students from working-class families are quitting their courses because of lack of cash.

Among those struggling on, many are beset by huge debts, and many are taking time out of their studies to do jobs at the same time as their courses.

Well, that's the market for you. But sadly some students are blaming the government. As Tory minister Kenneth Clarke wrote to Tory MPs on 31 July, "a campaign [of] representations from students alleging financial hardship during the summer vacation... is already under way." Clarke suggests MPs should ask them: "Have you explored every possibility of a vacation job?"

Three million unemployed? Well, that's the market. It's the only sensible way to run things.

Already, rank and file members of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) have organised a campaign to fight the White Paper. Students have to link up with their campaign in the local colleges.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of NUS is flatly refusing to call a first term national demonstration. Its priority for the year is 'Target 70', ie. targeting the top seventy student marginal constituencies with a view to replacing the Tories in a general election with a Labour or Liberal MP. Whoever can 'realistically' win!

What is desperately needed is a first term crammed full of action — a major national demonstration as early as possible against student debt, for the restoration of benefits and against the Tories' White Paper. NUS should offer to make it a joint demo with workers in education, approaching rank and file members of NATFHE, etc.

Occupations in colleges should be co-ordinated on an area-wide basis involving students in further and Adult Education

NUS should be going out to FE and Adult Education colleges with a framework for the fightback — arguing for rank and file involvement, linking up with trade unions on campus, training executive committees on a local and area basis on how to build campaigns, occupations, pickets, and demonstrations. Far from being tactics of the past, this year's fight to save FE and Adult Education will depend on them,

By Colin Foster

With luck, Robert Maxwell will go the same way as John Gutfreund, Michael Milken, the BCCI bosses and Alan Bond.

Maxwell is in a rage against what he calls the "jackals" and "monkeys" of the BBC after *Panorama* on 23 September exposed gambits used by Maxwell to "distort the market" and push up the share price of his Maxwell Communications Corporation last October.

He will probably have similar words for the *Independent* after an article on 24 September charged that:

- MCC's debts may exceed its assets by over £400 million, making it technically bankrupt;
- MCC's profits last year came mostly from lucky gambles on the foreign exchange markets, not from its

printing and publishing business;

- This year it may end up with a loss after paying the huge amount due in interest on its debts. If it pays out a dividend to shareholders similar to last year's — and otherwise the share prices will plummet — then it can only do so by raiding its reserves, which are not big enough anyway.

From a working class point of view, Maxwell is even worse than Gutfreund; he is not only a profiteer, but also a union-buster. Journalists at Pergamon Press — which he has now sold — were sacked just for being union members.

Yet Robert Maxwell is still a member of the Labour Party — and, by all accounts, one with much influence behind the scenes over Neil Kinnock and the Party leaders. That is a scandal which should be ended. Kick out Maxwell!

Scrap immigration laws!

Muchammed Idrish spoke to Socialist Organiser

Around 4,000 people are deported from Britain each year.

Currently, our West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign is helping with six cases. Unfortunately, only 7-8% of people win their cases against the threat of deportation.

African and Asian people are most at risk. There are slightly less Caribbean people attacked under these laws.

Although the majority of immigrants into Britain are white, I can not recall the case of a white person being deported under immigration laws.

Under the 1988 Immigration Act there is no longer any right to appeal against deportation orders unless the order is served against a person who has been living in Britain for seven years.

In a recent case a man from Zaire was deported despite the Home Office giving an assurance to the contrary in court.

We are demanding the repeal of the 1971 and 1988 immigration laws — and everything in between, including all the immigration rules, which could be abolished immediately.

The Labour Party have not pledged to do anything about this situation. They are too scared of losing votes.

Contact the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Birmingham B19 1NH.

500 rally to Socialists for Labour

Five hundred people heard Tony Benn at a 'Socialists for Labour' rally in Manchester last Wednesday (18th October).

The rally was chaired by Eddie Roberts, North West Regional Organiser of the TGWU, who opened the rally with a call for the repeal of the Tory anti-union legislation, a point taken up by speaker Gail Cameron from Wallasey CLP.

Other speakers included the Terry Fields Defence Campaign and suspended Manchester councillor, John Clegg. The rally was sponsored by more than 20 local labour movement bodies, including the Manchester Trades Council.

The central message of the rally — 'Campaign for Labour, Join Labour, Prepare to Fight!' — was well received with around 30 non-Party members deciding to join.



Gail Cameron, Wallasey CLP

The lie machine



This was the *Daily Mirror* the morning after the BBC's *Panorama* had convincingly accused *Mirror* proprietor Robert Maxwell of stealing £1 million from *Mirror* readers. Not one word about it in the *Mirror*. Maybe they are saving it for fearless muckraking Paul Foot's column later in the week!



The *Star*, ever in step with the spirit of the times, proposes that we finance the NHS by a lottery. Health bingo! Why not? Excitement, gambling and maybe something for the health service at the end of it: the real spirit of post-Thatcher Britain summed up.

It's a wonder one or other of the tabloids hasn't started running its own "health lottery". Robert Maxwell might do it. Imagine the queue! "Jump the NHS queue! Win the operation of your choice in your Magnificent *Mirror*'s Medical Bonanza! Send your 50p to the Munificent *Mirror* Magnificent Maxwell Fund now!

Yosser Kinnock and the "gissa job" way to lose elections

Much of Neil Kinnock's opinion polls unpopularity can easily be explained away as got up by the Tory press. So can John Smith's popularity.

And it can be argued that it may not matter much in the election: Thatcher was much less popular in 1979 than Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan, but it was the Tories who won the election.

But Kinnock's unpopularity does matter: at the very least it lessens Labour's chances of winning the election. And there is more to it than tabloid hot air.

Kinnock is widely seen as a turncoat and a traitor. This common perception is not just Tory press distortion.

People know that Kinnock has changed his mind on almost every big political question from unilateralism to nationalisation.

And they know why: to win votes and power.

That does not make them respect or like Kinnock.

People don't like turncoats and traitors.

Many people will trace Kinnock's lack of fire and conviction against the Tories to this self-violation of his own once-natural instincts and opinions in the sacred cause of personal political ambition.

And it is not just Kinnock and other former "lefts" on Labour's front bench. Nowadays, even the Liberal Democrats can get away with sneering at the Labour Front Bench for its soulless mimicry of the Tories, and for its blatant lack of alternative policies.

Even the old right wing of the Labour Party — men like Anthony Crosland and even, perhaps, Hugh Gaitskell, would throw up at the sight of Kinnock's shadow cabinet



team of groomed and coiffed talking heads with nothing distinctive to say.

They don't even dare commit themselves to repealing the Tory

anti-union laws, the most illiberal labour legislation in Western Europe!

The Labour Front Bench team are without policies, without fire

against the Tories, without even active sympathy with the victims of 12 years of Tory rule, and they are led by a man who has scooped out his own political soul to make himself

fit to be Prime Minister in a post-Thatcher Britain.

To many of the electorate, people not predisposed to be hostile to Labour, Kinnock's team of public school boys and girls, and turncoats like himself, are saying nothing more inspiring than Yosser Hughes' old catchcry, "Gissa job!"

Hughes, the victim of Merseyside unemployment in Alan Bleasdale's "Boys from the Blackstuff", won the country's sympathy: Yosser Kinnock seems able only to win its contempt.

We want Labour to win the next election, and *Socialist Organiser* supporters will do everything they can to help it win the election. But it is impossible to deny that "Gissa job" Kinnock deserves contempt.

Maybe the election has been put back six or nine months. If Kinnock would use the time to campaign vigorously in the country against the Tories then people might begin to take him more seriously.

Stand up for real socialism!

SUPPORT OUR CAMPAIGN!



"An oligarchy of private capital, the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society"

Albert Einstein

The capitalists are trying to do to socialism what Stalinism did for four decades — bury it under a mountain of lies and misrepresentation. We say that Stalinism was the opposite of socialism! If you agree, join us in standing up to those who are again trying to bury socialism. Sign our declaration. Wear our badge. Join STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM.



"The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself"

Karl Marx

- Make a donation to STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM.
- Get your labour movement organisation to add its name to the declaration.
- Buy one or more STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM badges. (40 pence each, 10 for £3)
- Attend our STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM conference: 10.30 — 5.00, Saturday 2 November 1991. Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, London. Major speakers, creche, food, social.

For more details and to add your name to the STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM declaration.....
Contact: STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM 56
Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5

NAME (individual or organisation)
ADDRESS
DONATION/MONEY FOR BADGES
(Cheques to 'STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM')

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

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071 639 7965
Latest date for reports: Monday

Editor: John O'Mahony
Published by WL Publications Ltd,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Tridant Press, Edenbridge
Registered as a newspaper at the
Post Office

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated

Advisory Editorial Board

Graham Bash
Vladimir Derer
Terry Eagleton
Jatin Haria (Labour Party Black Sections)
Dorothy Macedo
Joe Marino
John McIlroy
John Nicholson
Peter Tatchell

Members of the Advisory Committee are drawn from a broad cross-section of the left who are opposed to the Labour Party's witch-hunt against Socialist Organiser. Views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board.

A sad and troubled romance

The long-running courtship between the respective leaderships of the EETPU and the AEU must be one of the most troubled romances since that sad business with Romeo and Juliet. For years they've been stepping out together and even went so far as to announce an engagement (in 1988/9) only to have the Capulets of the AEU National Committee put the kybosh on love's young dream.



INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

But now it looks like the lovebirds are finally getting it together: this month's *Contact* magazine (that's the journal of the EETPU, not a dating agency, by the way) carries a front-page letter entitled "Let's Get Together". It's signed by Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird of the AEU, together with Eric Hammond and Paul Gallacher of the EETPU.

The latest amalgamation talks have been "the most positive ever", trill the would-be partners. A ballot "on the principle of amalgamation" is promised at a date "yet to be determined". Jordan and Laird have obviously learned nothing from their past difficulties with the AEU's sovereign National Committee: this semi-rank and file body has thwarted two previous attempts to "get together" with the electricians, but its policy does not rule out merger "in principle". A ballot "on the principle" could, therefore, be presented as in line with existing AEU policy.

The EETPU's leadership's bashful but determined pursuit of the AEU has generally been seen as a desire to get back into the TUC by the back door (they were expelled in 1988). But these days, the AEU leaders seem to be even more enthusiastic; Bill Jordan spoke with the passion of an infatuated suitor when he defended the electricians at this year's TUC: "If breaking TUC rules was a crime, we'd need a very large dock and most of you would be in it" he told a hostile Congress.

The renewed ardour of the AEU leadership — and its apparent indifference to the consequences that a merger might have for its own continued membership of the TUC — may be explained by the following scenarios: 1. A Labour victory at the next General Election: some form of Incomes Policy (aka "National Economic Assessment") cooked up between Kinnock and the TUC; backlash from skilled sections... AEU/EETPU clean up. 2. Tory victory: TUC completely side-lined; Bridlington Agreement outlawed; recruitment free-for-all unleashed... AEU/EETPU clean up.

On balance, Jordan and Laird would undoubtedly rather stay inside the TUC fold and have the ear of a future Labour Prime Minister. But TUC membership is clearly no longer the central consideration that it once was.

In the medium to long term, the break-up of British trade unionism into 3 distinct centres (AEU/EETPU; TGWU/MSF; COHSE/NUPE/NALGO) with the TUC reduced to a loose and ineffectual "liaison" body, must be on the cards: whatever we think of the present set-up, this would be a disaster. For now, a campaign to break up the AEU/EETPU nuptials is the best way to prevent such a disaster. Bring on the rank and file Capulets.



Remember Eric at Wapping...

Labour Conference '91

The issues

By Cate Murphy

Thirty eight per cent of people believe more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's problems, according to the recent State of the Nation poll.

64% would willingly pay higher taxes if that meant better health, education and social services. 67% believe we live in a divided, unfair society, with one law for the rich and another for the poor.

More people would prefer to see unemployment reduced, even if it means higher inflation.

Many people, in other words, want radically different policies to the Tories' policies; they want policies that offer hope to the worst off in society.

But if they're looking to Neil Kinnock's Labour Party to deliver, they'll be disappointed.

In a desperate — and obviously misplaced — bid to become "respectable" to the voters, Kinnock has ditched all vestiges of radical politics from Labour's programme.

A combination of expulsions of any dissenters and the "heads down, don't rock the boat" mentality common in the upper echelons of the labour movement, means that Kinnock has had a relatively easy ride, too.

Judging by the agenda for this year's Labour Party conference, it doesn't look as if things are going to change much.

Most of the key debates will be resounding affirma-

tions of the Labour leadership's pale-blue policy documents. The union block votes will ensure that calls for re-nationalisations, positive rights for trade unions, and disarmament, all go down to defeat.

Bland non-debates on "voter friendly" issues like the NHS, education and training, and the environment will take centre stage. If last year's conference is anything to go by, stage-managed chairing will ensure that a succession of smart-suited "respectable" PPCs will get to star, leaving the rabble-rousing constituency activists confined to walk-on parts.

Try as they might, the Labour leadership won't have it all their own way, though. In the debate on trade union rights, the long-held demand for repeal of all Tory anti-union laws and the introduction by a Labour government will be one of the composites, and is assured of backing from some of the unions.

Labour Party Socialists and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, whose campaign "Unshackle the Unions" has won wide support from rank and file trade unionists, will be lobbying hard to win further trade union support for this composite, and will be holding a fringe meeting on the Sunday night (see box).

Nor will the disgraceful partisan role of the Labour leaders in the Gulf war be forgotten. Resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Western troops from the region, lifting of sanctions,



Condemn Kinnock's

Support resolutions condemning the Labour leadership's backing for Bush and Major's Gulf war; support calls for withdrawal of Western troops from the Gulf, lifting of sanctions against Iraq,

and humanitarian aid, are timetabled, along with calls for support for self-determination of the Kurdish

and Palestinian peoples. These will act as a focus for the many thousands of Labour Party activists sicken-

Reselection: fight for accountability

By the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

The two key Labour Party NEC proposals contained in its document "The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates" were defeated at last year's conference.

One sought to make reselection subject to a preliminary "trigger ballot" of individual party members. The other to deprive trade unions of their right to vote in the decisive stage of the reselection process.

Conference carried, on a card vote, Composite 2 which rejected the "trigger". Composite 3, which reaffirmed that "trade union branches should retain a share of the vote at CLP level" as at present, was also carried.

At its meeting this July the NEC reinstated these defeated proposals. Its latest document on parliamentary selections includes the "trigger" ballot. This would decide not only whether reselection takes place but also the extent of trade union involvement in it.

The NEC proposals will be brought to conference. If agreed, the reselection as a means of ensuring the accountability of MPs to their

CLPS, and of the PLP to conference, will be ended. The NEC's proposals are designed to ensure that reselections are held only in minimal circumstances and with minimal trade union input.

The pressure will be on CLPs to settle for their MP's automatic re-adoption because:

- should a trigger ballot decide on a reselection, this would be regarded as a vote of no confidence in the sitting MP. Before mandatory reselection was introduced in 1979, CLPs which were grossly dissatisfied with their MP hesitated to embark on a procedure, similar to that now proposed, because they realised that doing so would provide the mass media with an opportunity to misrepresent Labour as a divided party;

- should reselections be held only during the summer recess, as the NEC proposes, this would inevitably reduce members' participation. The story is that MPs are prevented from voting in the Commons because of selection meetings. In fact, these could be held at weekends any time during the year. When in 1987 the NEC changed the selection system it did so under the banner of participation.

Nothing is more likely to reduce it than summer reselections. Many party members with children have to take their holidays in August and many CLPs do not usually meet in that month.

Members' participation would also decrease because the "trigger" would reduce to a very small number the Labour-held seats likely to be contested.

The great majority of MPs seek re-adoption. Consequently, as reselections would be heavily concentrated in the second or third summer following a general election, the limited period allowed would drastically reduce the choice of candidates. Potential contenders would only be able to put themselves forward for one or two constituencies.

Union participation too is likely to decrease. The NEC has ignored the conference decision upholding the present trade union branches' involvement in the final selection. Instead they are proposing that all members of affiliated unions — including non-Labour supporters — be allowed to vote. (Their votes are to count as equivalent to one-third of an individual party member's vote.)

Whether this procedure is adopted depends on whether

individual Labour Party members agree to it. They won't like the idea that union members belonging to other political parties or holding anti-Labour views could decide who should represent Labour.

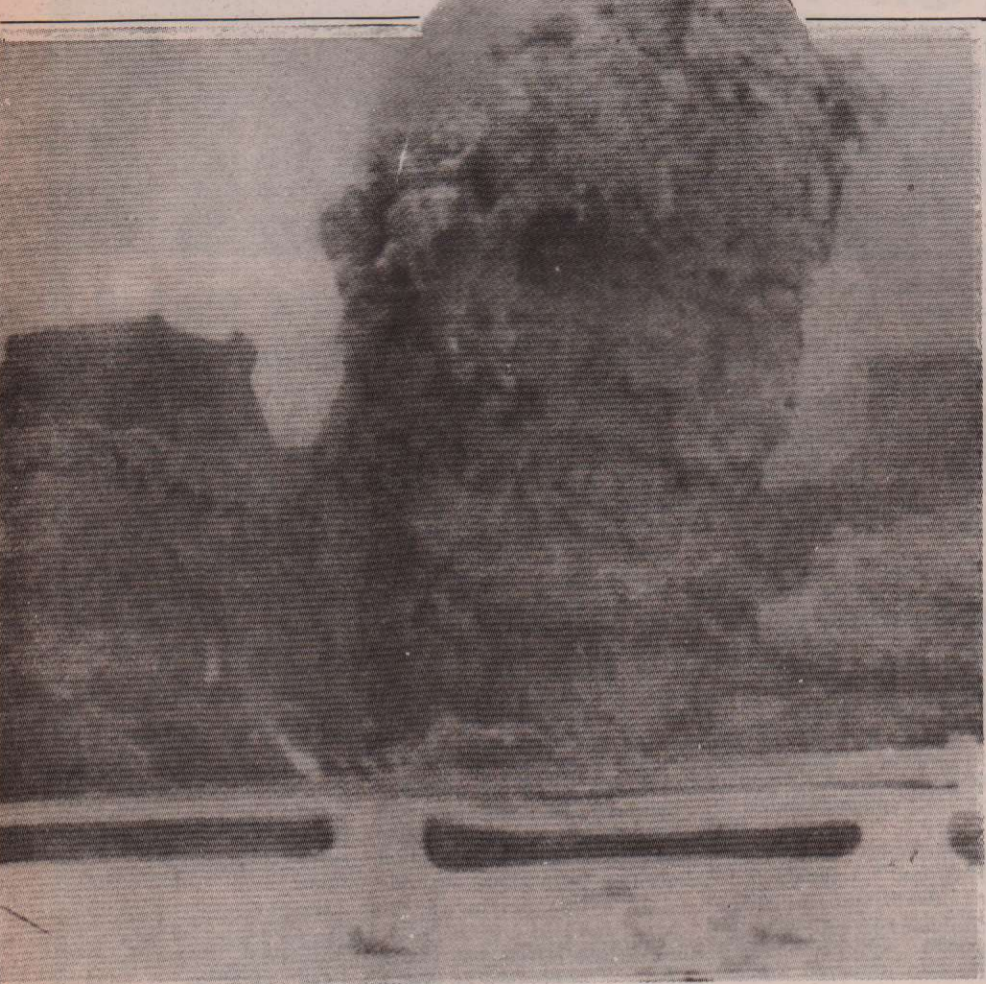
An administrative load would be landed on union and party staff which would be an insurmountable obstacle.

The predominant purpose of mandatory reselection was not to deselect MPs. Its aim was to make them more responsive to the party they represent. But if there are to be virtually no reselections, this aim is defeated.

The present electoral college is not ideal, but the NEC's alternative is worse. The NEC's elaborate new structure seems primarily designed to disguise the real intention. This is to make reselections a thing of the past. What is at stake is the accountability of MPs to their CLP, of the PLP to party conference, and of the NEC to conference.

The NEC's proposals should be thrown out. Mandatory reselection must be safeguarded. Delegates should overwhelmingly support the composites based on Resolutions 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 13 and amendments to them.

for Labour



backing for Gulf slaughter

and humanitarian aid from the West for the areas devastated by the war; back calls for self-determination for the Kurds and Palestinians

ed by Kinnock's craven capitulation to the war-mongering of Bush and Major, and give a signal to the leadership that not all party activists are willing to sacrifice their principles.

Then there are the resolutions opposing the witch-hunts against MPs Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, and against activists up and down the country, calling for the lifting of all suspensions, and an end to expulsions. We will be demanding that the Labour leadership starts fighting the class enemy — the Tories — and not its own membership.

Debates where the left is on strong ground include opposition to NEC plans to introduce a "trigger" ballot for reselection of MPs — a move that was rejected by last year's conference. And we will be calling on the NEC to implement the decision of the last two conferences to establish a Black Socialist Society.

Neil Kinnock may want a media-friendly, anodyne week in Brighton, but the left will be organising to make sure our voice is heard.

Labour Party Socialists will be organising three fringe meetings in Brighton, and producing a daily bulletin to keep delegates informed, and offer a focus to those who are angry at what Kinnock is doing to our party and want to fight back.

Come and join LPS in Brighton. Contact us at our office, 3rd Floor, Premier House, 11 Marlborough Place, Brighton. Or contact us c/o 10b Windsor Road, London N19.

Stop the purges!

By Ruth Cockroft

"We don't want to do it, but if we don't Labour will lose the election." That's how the right-wing justified the witch-hunt against Socialist Organiser supporters in Sheffield Central constituency.

The spectre of a vote-losing, red menace has long been used by the Kinnockites to frighten party activists into accepting wholesale purges of the left, or risk losing support of the electorate.

But a poll published two weeks ago shows that the Great British public don't quite share Kinnock's hysterical paranoia. Quite the reverse.

38% of people say it is Neil Kinnock who puts them off voting for Labour. And the number who won't vote Labour because of the "loony left"? None, according to the poll. Perhaps the best thing Kinnock could do now for Labour's electoral effort would be to expel himself!

So will the Labour leadership stop expelling socialists and turn its energies to attacking the real enemy — the Tories? Not if Chris Patten has his way.

As the election looms, the NEC is spending more and more of its time attacking its

own organisation.

The pre-conference NEC (Wed 25) looks set to suspend MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields — and ban them from the conference altogether. Plus, there are the cases of the 25 suspended Brighton Party members, the Lambeth councillors, Nottingham East, Liverpool... and who knows how many more to deal with.

The National Constitutional Committee already has a backlog of cases which will take a year to get through — and that's before the latest round of proposed expulsions!

So desperate are the Labour leadership to get their nice, anodyne, pale-blue party into shape, that there is not even a pretence of playing by the rules.

As long as the right-wing get their candidates through, any and every dirty trick, every smear campaign, every corrupt action is justified. But let left-wingers break just one rule — intentionally or not — and the whole weight of the Party machine comes down on them.

And it's the Kinnockites who claim to be the democrats, who say it is the left who are against democracy!

In the run-up to a General Election where Labour has the best chance in 12 years of unseating the Tories, to spend so much time — and

Conference Diary

Stop the purges!

Friends of Brighton Labour Party fringe meeting, 5.30, Middle Street School, Brighton

Unshackle the Unions

Fringe meeting organised by Labour Party Socialists and Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee Sunday 29 September, 8.00pm, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Stein, Brighton Speakers include Dennis Skinner MP, Peter Heathfield

Campaigning for socialist policies in the general election

LPS and Socialists for Labour fringe meeting 7.30, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Stein. Speakers include Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn

Organising the left in the Labour Party

LPS fringe meeting Lunchtime, Concorde Pub, opp Palace Pier Speaker Tony Benn

LPS Office — open 24 hours a day

3rd Floor, Premier House, 11 Marlborough Place, Brighton (5 mins from Conference Centre)

Sweden: a model failure

By Martin Thomas

The social-democratic version of "socialism in one country" is collapsing as well as the Stalinist one.

Last week, Sweden's Social Democrats lost a general election for only the second time since 1932. The last time they lost, in 1976, the resulting conservative coalition government changed few Social Democrat policies — it only increased public spending by raising government subsidies to business — but this time Sweden looks like getting a right-wing government set on major change.

Sweden's "socialism in one country" had a lot more going for it than the USSR's. It was not all sham and lies.

Half a century of social-democratic reforms created probably the least unequal society in the world. Although the main industries remained in the hands of private capitalists — Volvo, Electrolux, Saab, SKF, Alfa-Laval, Atlas-Copco, L M Ericsson, Asea, Tetrapak, IKEA — wages were systematically pushed up and differentials narrowed.

Effective retraining and adult education schemes kept unemployment near zero. An unmatched welfare system provided security. Maternity and paternity leave, and child-care provision were among the best in the world.

And these were not just reforms handed down by some benevolent despot: Sweden was a liberal democracy, and an exceptionally powerful trade union movement was central to the decades of reform. 85% of Sweden's workers are trade union members.

But the reforms never went beyond the limits of capitalism. They never went further than patching up and softening inequalities in one well-placed corner of the capitalist world.

From the late 19th century, through to the 1960s, Sweden grew faster economically than any other country except Japan. Rich natural resources — forests, iron

mines — a good position near the big export markets of Europe, a starting-point of relative social equality and wide education in what was a smallholding peasant country, and escape from damage in the two world wars helped its way.

With a well-educated workforce, much of Swedish industry remains highly competitive. But Sweden's "social democracy in one country" depended on being able to insulate its economy from the rest of the world, so that Swedish government policies could shape it.

Swedish government policies no longer shape the Swedish economy. The capitalist world of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, with increasing international integration and ever-faster capital flows, changed the rules of the game.

As the *Financial Times* put it (October 29, 1990), "Under intense pressure from overseas financial opinion that forced up interest rates... and led to a huge outflow of capital from Sweden, the Swedish government is having to abandon a long-held... commitment to full employment and... the welfare state..."

"The international money markets have become the arbiters of Sweden's future, not the Social Democratic ideologues..."

Because Sweden's Social Democrats always remained *social democrats* — people committed to softening capitalism rather than helping the working class to replace capitalism — they have gone along with the international financiers rather than mobilising the working class to fight back.

In the ensuing demoralisation, Swedish politics, long dominated by liberal consensus, have turned uglier. One of the major gainers in last week's election was a new party, New Democracy, with two main policies: cheaper booze and fewer immigrants.

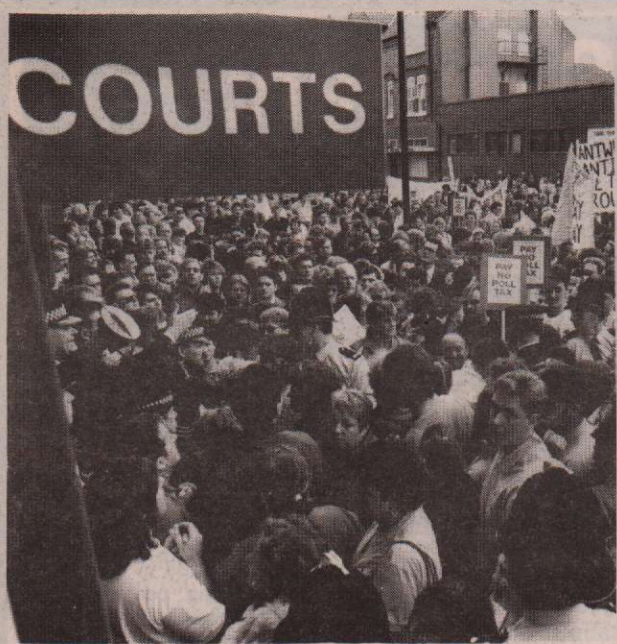
Last November, the Swedish employers' federation launched a five-year plan for completely dismantling the social democratic heritage. It demanded:

- wholesale sell-off of state enterprises;
- the break-up of the welfare state, with market forces in the health service and child day-care system; "vouchers" in education;
- abolition of state pension and sick-insurance schemes;
- the sale of all local authority housing, and abolition of housing subsidies;
- an end to national wage agreements;
- abolition of the "wage-earner funds", through which, in the 1970s, the trade unions tried to gain some workers' control over industry.

Now Sweden will have a government which may start on this programme. Sweden's workers will be readier to fight back than their demoralised Social Democratic leaders.



Social democracy Swedish-style — or Kinnock-style — can't work



Labour-controlled Burnley Council is stopped from jailing poll tax non-payers...by a judge!

Go straight to jail and pay later

GRAFFITI

Burnley Council is top of the Poll Tax jailings league. Alone, it accounts for 20 out of 70 jailings nationally — and it has another 11 suspended sentences notched up as well.

But now the council's reign of terror looks likely to be over. So what is the story: is this a Tory council brought to its knees by the local community and labour movement? Actually, no.

Like 18 of the 29 jailing councils, Burnley is Labour controlled. And who stopped it? Well, actually a high court judge has ordered the release of a non-payer and a judicial review of the exceptionally high number of non-payers in Burnley.

Here are two views of the rioting in Newcastle last week.

First: "We are in desperate need of more police officers visible on our streets."

And, secondly: "The events we saw on our television of the riots in Newcastle occurred where people are socially deprived...[the riots are] inextricably linked to social deprivation, poor housing and illiteracy."

One quote comes from Deputy Leader of the Labour Party Roy Hattersley. The other from that pillar of the establishment and reactionary, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Can you attach the right name to each quote? Answers on a postcard...



And what did Roy say?

Did you see the Conservative Party political broadcast last week?

Lots of classical music, rural idylls, and soothing facts about how well Britain is doing.

Unfortunately, of the eight claims made in the broadcast only two were completely true — that Britain exports more than the US and

Japan per head of population, and the latest strike figures are the lowest in 50 years.

The remaining statements, ranging from health service spending to the level of taxation were a mixture of half-truths and out and out lies.

The *Tribune* rally at Labour Party conference has been a regular parade of left and not-so-left dignitaries for many years.

This year, much as expected, Tony Banks, Ken Livingstone, Barbara Castle, Clare Short...

Hang on! *The Barbara Castle*, who made an early attempt in the late '60s to introduce anti-union laws with "In Place of Strife", to be defeated and pensioned off to a job in Europe in disgrace?

Rumours that *Tribune* is opening a retirement home for disgraced ex-lefts are unconfirmed.

The new Conservative poster campaign asks "Who controls Labour?"

The unions, of course — according to the Tories. The letters of Labour are cut out to reveal the faces of various trade union barons.

Supposedly these bogeys will frighten the electorate into voting Tory. Unfortunately, if anyone can recognise these balding, grey-suited men they will be well up on union affairs.

If anyone associates these men with militant action then they obviously aren't up on union affairs.

But the slogan "Who's behind Labour — a rather conservative bunch of trade union bureaucrats" just doesn't have the same ring.

It's the beginning of the student term again, and all the "freshers specials" are appearing in the papers.

The *Observer's* guide is hot on financial advice; an article which is less than complimentary about the Student Loan Company appears.

But then again, the guide is full of ways to spend your money, including an article called "Live now, pay later".

Better turn to the banks section then: Nat West seems to come out rather well. Nice to have some objective financial advice out of the shark-infested water of student finance.

And was the *Observer's* freshers' guide sponsored? Yes, seeing as you ask, by Nat West.

Hitlerian Guardian?

GAY ABANDON

PRESS GANG

The Guardian
Mirror
Star

By Jim Denham



'Gay Abandon' article was "depressing" and maybe "dingy" but surely not "Hitlerian"

For the past two weeks and more, the *Guardian* has been under sustained attack. Its letters pages have been inundated and its switchboard kept buzzing with furious protest.

A demo was mounted outside the paper's offices. A boycott is threatened.

The barrage comes from an unexpected quarter, given the *Guardian's* liberal reputation: gay activists, outraged by an article entitled "Gay Abandon" published in the paper's Weekend supplement of 7 September.

The article has been described as "dingy and destructive"; "oppressive, negative and nihilistic"; a "hotch potch of appalling epidemiological inaccuracy". And these are only the more

restrained criticisms.

Words like "bigotted", "homophobic" and "Hitlerian" have been banded about. Comparisons with James Anderton's "cesspit of their own making" remarks have been made.

The author of the offending piece, Richard Haseldon (who is gay) has been accused of being a "self-hater" while the *Guardian* itself has been likened to the *Sun*.

The "Gay Abandon" article was certainly depressing and maybe "dingy" and "negative". I can't comment upon its "epidemiological accuracy". But "homophobic", let alone "Hitlerian"? I think not. It was a description of a visit to a popular gay bar called The London Apprentice where Haseldon observed signs of

what in America is called "slippage" — the return by some gay men to promiscuous and unsafe sex.

Some of the quotes used in the article are certainly disturbing (Haseldon subsequently apologised for one that might have given the impression that HIV could be passed on by kissing).

It may be that the entire article was melodramatic and one-sided; but it never pretended to be anything other than one (gay) man's view of one aspect of the gay scene.

Comparisons with the *Sun* (let alone Hitler) are just plain silly: can you imagine Kelvin McKenzie's reaction to the suggestion that *Sun* staff should be sent to gay and lesbian awareness workshops? *Guardian* editor Peter Preston says he hasn't

ruled out that suggestion for his staff.

Those who now bay for the blood of the "homophobic" *Guardian* may care to cast their minds back to the many times that the *Sun* ran "pofter" stories.

Pofter-baiter-in-chief was, of course, the *Sun's* neanderthal "TV critic" Garry Bushell, one-time manager of various skinhead "Oi" bands, associate of NF organisers and guest at Lady Diana Moseley's 80th birthday party.

Last week Mr Bushell announced that he was leaving the *Sun* to join the rival *Star*. Editor Kelvin McKenzie responded by telling the sensitive columnist to "fuck, fuck, fuck off", adding "you're far too right wing for us, anyway". Too right wing for the *Sun*? Now that's what I call "Hitlerian".

Housing Associations under attack: women in need get nothing



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

The Housing Corporation is a government funded body, set up to distribute money, and monitor how it is spent. It employs many people, all on good salaries, and operates from the heart of London's West End, hardly known for its cheap office accommodation. It has but one task — to lend and give money to Housing Associations in order to build and maintain "social housing". It sounds like a simple enough job, but nothing this mysterious body does is simple.

In the good old days when councils built houses for people in housing need, the Housing Departments would carry out demographic surveys, work out how many

homes would be needed in the coming period, and build them. In order to stop this blatant waste of tax and ratepayers' money (roughly equivalent in cash terms to mortgage interest tax relief) the Tories began to cut back on the amount of money councils were allowed to spend on new houses. At the same time they insisted that as many as possible of the existing homes were sold off, and that those that were left were poorly maintained. This left quite a lot of spare money at the Treasury. Quite a lot of it went into funding tax relief for homeowners, some went into paying for tax cuts, and a bit went into the Housing Corporation to spend on "social housing". Along with the money went enough strings to guarantee a bureaucracy of which Stalin would have been proud.

Neither the Housing Corporation nor the housing associations it funds are subject to government guidance. As a result, the rules about who gets the money are constantly changing. As a housing development takes about 5 years from being a gleam in the developer's eye, to having people living in it, every change of policy leaves someone stranded. For example, the big issue this year is homelessness, so the government have told the 'Corp' to put millions into the "homelessness initiative". Suddenly housing associations who had been promised money to build, say, units for the disabled or mentally ill as part of "care in the community" find themselves penniless when the money is switched to doing up a bed and

breakfast hotel for the homeless in London.

Because of this insecurity about promised money disappearing overnight, "social housing" has become a very risky business. Housing associations try not to take risks — too many people are dependent on them to keep a roof over their heads. So most of the risk is taken by private developers working "in partnership" with associations.

And how many private developers do you know who will risk capital for a small profit? Exactly. A great deal of money is going into the hands of private developers rather than being spent directly on housing. And the 'Corp' has to try to monitor where all the money goes — and try to make sure that before signing any cheques, the government isn't about to change its mind.

Recently the government decided that for every penny "allocated" to a housing association, an equivalent amount should be raised from the private sector. And because the private sector is not stupid enough to put cheap money into such a risky business as social housing has become, the private money is very expensive indeed. So quite a lot of public money has to be spent on paying high interest rates from private lenders.

The Tories' latest favourite is shared ownership, whereby the not-so-well-off are able to get a foothold on the homeownership ladder. Of course such people are hardly attractive propositions for banks and building societies to give mortgages to. So the

government has made the 'Corp' devise the mortgage protection clause which protects the building society from making a loss if the shared owner defaults, at the taxpayers' expense of course.

And what has this got to do with women? Well, back in the good old days when councils had some hope of being allowed to house those in need, women with children often had a high priority claim on decent housing.

Now they are lucky to get a place in a bed and breakfast hotel. But, even then, a lot of women got left out — single women have never been eligible for council housing unless there were a lot of vacant homes, and councils often could not manage to house disabled women, or girls who had run away from home. Racist housing departments sometimes meant that black women got the worst housing if that. Housing associations were set up to fill the gaps — many specifically set up by and for women, particularly single women, young women and women with special needs. Other housing associations were set up to provide homes for black people, others to provide independent living for the disabled.

This government has changed all that. Its waste of resources and frequent disruptive policy changes have meant that homeless families now have the greatest claim on housing association homes, because the councils haven't got the places any more. Without housing associations to provide homes for them, women in need have nothing.

Display this in your workplace

The case for free trade unions

By Eddie Roberts,
TGWU Region 6

After the TUC conference and whatever the outcome of this year's Labour Party conference, the debate on the future of employment legislation must continue.

At present, it is a very confused debate in which the voice of the rank and file has been inadequately heard. So let me try to outline what lies at stake between the two main positions — for Labour's new framework of law, and in contrast to that the total repeal of all the Tory anti-union laws.

The limitations of Kinnock's proposals

The first position unconditionally endorses Labour's proposals. What is being endorsed? Labour propose that restrictions on so-called "secondary" action will continue. So will sequestration and the clauses making unions legally liable for the acts of their officers.

Labour propose keeping the right of members to take their unions to court if detailed legal requirements on ballots over union elections and industrial action are not met. The courts, predictably, would have a field day — at our expense.

I repeat, what is being endorsed? Those who support Labour's new framework are arguing that if a group of car workers or bus workers or textile workers go on strike to support each other or, say, NHS workers, then they should be brought before the courts. That is what they are saying.

If, in such circumstances, a union failed to get its members back to work to the judges' satisfaction, they would be in contempt of court. The fine for that is unlimited. So, if we did not pay, then our assets could be sequestrated up to an unlimited amount.

Solidarity will still be outlawed

Labour will keep sequestration, and those who support its proposals are supporting sequestration. And in doing so they are supporting the Taff Vale judgement, condemned for almost a century by our movement, revived by Norman Tebbit in 1982, and accepted by Labour in 1988.

What was good enough for Ramsay McDonald, Clem Attlee, Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan — that is, opposition to Taff Vale — is not good enough for Neil Kinnock or Norman Willis.

The way Labour's proposals are drafted leaves interpretation open to the judges. Please remember how we have, with justification, condemned them in the past. Labour's new framework is a recipe for weaker unions and the maintenance of the Thatcher-inspired attacks on trade unionists.

A fresh start for the unions

The demand for "total repeal", in contrast, is saying "break with Thatcherism and its attacks on the unions — don't adapt to it — make a fresh start."

Having weighed all the possibilities, I remain convinced that a fresh start means the total repeal of all the anti-union laws and their replacement by a Charter of Positive Rights. This would add to the individual rights proposed in Labour policy documents; clear cut rights to organise, bargain and take industrial action.

Such a charter would protect secondary action and peaceful picketing if carried out after a democratic vote. It would begin to give trade union members, as working people, the kind of rights that justice demands should be theirs. In itself it would be insufficient, and so would the Labour Court, consisting of judges and industrial relations "experts" that Labour is proposing.

Can I take it from this that there have been certain legal amendments to the right to picket?



Reforming the law and the judiciary

A Charter of Positive Rights for trade unions and trade unionists must go hand in hand with reform of those who would "interpret" it — the judges.

In the higher courts judges should be appointed only after parliamentary scrutiny. They should be nominated from the

lower courts whose personnel should be subject to election as part of a revived local government process. Positive discrimination should provide for more women and judges from the ethnic minorities.

Only if we change the administration of the law, as well as the form and content, will we secure a lasting and just settlement for trade unions and, more importantly, their members.

Is that asking for the earth? Is that revolutionary? It certainly ap-

pears to have some in our movement shaking in their Gucci loafers. I maintain that total repeal of all anti-trade union legislation and a legitimisation of the rights of trade unions and trade unionists is far better than the fudge and flannel espoused by some.

We should be confident and articulate in our demands. Doing so confirms our faith in our movement, its history and, most importantly, its future.

Slightly abridged from Trade Union News

Support this workers' charter!

By Gail Cameron
Wallasey CLP

We need to campaign at all levels in the labour and trade union movement to win support for a workers' charter of positive rights for trade unionists.

Such a charter could include the following points:

- The right to belong to a trade union for all employees including those employed at GCHQ, the police and the armed services.
- A legally recognised right to strike, to picket effectively and in whatever numbers is chosen, and to take other forms of industrial action.
- The right to strike for all trade unionists, including secondary or solidarity action, without fear of dismissal, fines or se-

questration of union assets.

- Legally enforceable rights for unions to gain access to workplaces to organise for workers to join unions and for unions to gain recognition.
- The right of unions to determine their own constitutions and rule books in accordance with their own democratic procedures, free from interference by the state.
- The right to stop work whenever health and safety are threatened.
- The right of workers and their unions to be fully consulted and informed by employers on all decisions relating to working conditions, job prospects, strategic investments and mergers and takeovers.
- The right to employment free from discrimination on grounds of gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation or political persuasion.

- Full-time rights for part-time workers.
- Inclusion of homeworkers in employment protection legislation and financial sanctions on those who illegally exploit them.
- The right of trade unions to take political action and collect a political levy.

A resolution calling for this won two and a half million votes at the 1989 Labour Party Conference. NALGO and the North West Labour Party adopted this policy in 1990, and this year the RMT adopted a policy on roughly the same line.

For copies of the Workers' Charter for Positive Rights, contact Cate Murphy (Labour Party Socialists Trade Union Officer), 58 Florence Road, London SE14. Tel: 071 277 7217. We can also provide speakers for your meetings.



"You need a strong and effective voice for workers' rights speaking out within the Labour Party. For that reason Socialist Organiser has got to be defended."
Ronnie MacDonald
Chair, Offshore Industry Liaison Committee

Defending trade union rights

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser

£25 for a year
£13 for six months
£5 for 10 issues

Send cheques payable to SO to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Name.....

Address.....

500 and still

Miners versus the Tories

SO special issue, 4 April 1984

The miners' strike is a tremendously important mobilisation, the most important working class battle for many years.

Once again, the miners — despite their divisions — are the shock-troops and standard bearers of the working class. Once more the miners are telling a foul, anti-working class Tory government that they can't run things exactly as they like and that the miners are calling them to account. It is the most vital and direct in-



terest of every worker in Britain to stand on the line

with the miners and help them win.

How to fight the right



SO 455, 26 July 1990

On 25 July the Labour Party's National Executive Committee voted to ban *Socialist Organiser*.

It is no longer "legal" in the Labour Party to sell *Socialist Organiser* or to help produce it. Attempts to expel those who produce the paper are expected to follow in due course.

The ban on *Socialist Organiser* takes the Labour Party on to a new level of intolerance, and moves it a big step nearer to being an authoritarian one-faction

party.

The argument why socialists should be in the Labour Party and stay there despite bans and proscriptions is that Labour is the mass party of the working class, based on the bedrock organs of the working class, the trade unions. Labour remains that despite the recent changes, and despite the readjustments of the weight of union power (or union leaders' power) in the affairs of the Labour Party.

Nothing fundamental has changed here. *SO* will continue in the Labour Party. We will give Kinnock and his friends reason to know we are still around.

SO 109, 18 November 1982

Militant's evident support for the notion of taking the Labour Party NEC to court must be criticised.

The sectarian behaviour of Militant's "Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-Hunt" — cold-shouldering the 101 CLPs who set up a 'Labour Against the Witch-Hunt' committee last month, and instead inviting them to gather around Militant's rostrum — has also caused problems.

But Militant must be defended with vigour. The issue is not whether we agree with their politics, but whether socialists have the right to organise in the labour movement for distinctive views.

And we say: together with the fight on democracy, keep up the fight on policies and the fight to build mass campaigning Labour Parties linked to the direct class struggle. For the witch-hunt is in essence a political, not a constitutional battle; and it will be decisively defeated only by a resolute left wing fighting boldly for the complete transformation of the Labour Party into a mass socialist party capable of creating a workers' government that will take decisive measures against capitalist power and privilege.



Fight war! Fight capitalism!

SO 476, 21 February 1991

Capitalism causes war. There is no absolute shortage of energy-sources in the world. If the world's oil reserves were owned in common, and their use controlled democratically, there

would be no cause for war, but only for debate on the advantages of different energy-sources and different rates of using those reserves.

Private ownership of the means of production means that most of the world's oil reserves are owned and controlled by a tiny minority of kings, emirs, sheikhs, dic-



1990 Labour Party conference delegate, Tim Cooper, speaks in defence of *Socialist Organiser*

Solidarity East and West!

SO 104, 14 October 1982

Workers' boycotts of Polish trade; breaking of links between British labour and trade union organisations and the East European state 'unions' and 'parties'; demonstrations and pickets and every other method of working class action available should be used to give aid to the Polish workers' movement in its fight for life.

SO 403, 24 May 1989

There is no getting away from the fact that what is necessary in China is a revolution of the workers and working farmers, and that that can never happen without the destruction of the state apparatus through which the increasingly decrepit once-totalitarian Chinese bureaucracy exercises its dictatorship.



in the history of working-class revolutions, a disciplined party fighting for a programme of revolution against the bureaucrats and for working class power — then in the last weeks we would have seen the beginnings of workers' power in China.

In the USSR and Eastern Europe, as well as in China, only such organisations can prevent the ferment unleashed by the decay of the old Stalinist command economy dispersing in confusion and chaos and ending in terrible new defeats for the working class in the state-monopoly societies.

The inspiring events in China point to an important lesson for Marxists: if there had been a revolutionary Marxist party, a party whose militants had been educated



tators and profiteers. They enjoy unimaginable riches while hundreds of millions starve. And they fight each other for even more of those riches! If need be, they fight each other with missiles, bombs, tanks and poison gas!

That is what the Gulf War is about. To cut the roots of war, we must cut the roots of capitalism.

attempts to ban us:

going strong!



End the Ban Rally in defence of Socialist Organiser, August 1990. From left to right: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Dorothy Macedo (LPS), Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer). Other speakers included: Phil Kelly (editor of Tribune), Ken Livingstone MP and SO editor, John O'Mahony.



Democracy not revenge!

SO 67, 7 January 1982

Marxist socialists are democrats because we look to the working class and only to the working class to realise its own self-rule in socialism. The working class needs democracy for the same reason as it needs things like trade unions and political parties — because, unlike the bourgeoisie, it does not own major private property, and it can own the means of production and rule in society and in the state only collectively, and therefore only democratically.

This is true for the working class as a force fighting within capitalist society, and struggling to transcend it. It is true for the working class as the ruler of society, administering a planned economy.

SO 405-6, 13 June 1989

The Marxist programme [is] consistent democracy. Depending on circumstances that may mean the right of various people to full independence, to local autonomy, or to special cultural rights, etc.

The alternative to this Marxist approach is to decide that some peoples are

bad and some good, to ascribe some universalist and transcendental 'world-revolutionary' significance to the nationalisms of chosen nations, and to deny any collective rights to other nations.

Of course, we side now with the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza against the Israeli occupation, and the tendency to which I belong has always supported the Northern Ireland Catholics in struggle against the British state and against the oppression to which Partition consigned them. But you must do that within the political framework of the Marxist and Leninist programme for resolving conflicts like those between Arabs and Jews and between Catholics and Protestants.

SO 338, 3 December 1987

Socialists need a policy that is able to satisfy the national aspirations of the Palestinians and also protect the national rights of the Israeli Jews, while combatting the actions of the current Israeli state against Palestinians inside and outside its borders.

The creation of a Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state would allow for this. This is the PLO's demand. And Israeli Jews, too, can be convinced that the Palestinians have national rights and that they should be allowed to build a state.

This policy provides a framework for a struggle now by socialists within Israel and the occupied ter-

ritories and for Palestinian rights within Israel, in which Palestinians and Israelis can participate. It opens the way for Arab-Jewish workers' unity and a struggle for a socialist United States of the Middle East.

SO 405-6, 13 June 1989

The Bolsheviks put it like this: "In so far as national peace is in any way possible in a capitalist society based on exploitation, profit-making and strife, it is attainable only under a consistently and thoroughly democratic republican form of government... the constitution of which contains a fundamental law that prohibits any privileges whatsoever to any one nation and any encroachment whatsoever upon the rights of a national minority."

"This particularly calls for wide regional autonomy and fully-democratic local government, with the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions determined by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc." (1913 Resolution of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee).

Within Ireland our slogan for the Protestant community must be: autonomy and local self-government of that community's own affairs to the furthest extent compatible with the democratic rights of the majority of the Irish people.

For socialist feminism!

This pamphlet attempts to put forward an alternative socialist feminism, a socialist feminism based on an understanding of the links between sex oppression and class exploitation. We examine the history of the Marxist movement and women, and attempt to unravel the themes of modern Anglo-American cultural feminism.

We attempt to do this not as sectarian critics outside of

The case for Socialist Feminism



the movement, but in the spirit of revitalising and re-orienting women's politics.



A crazy irrational system

SO 427-8, 7 December 1989

Capitalism has not ceased to be irrational and inhuman, nor have market mechanisms ceased to be blind and wasteful just because of the Stalinist experiment in 'state socialism'. Wage slavery and exploitation have not ceased to be at the heart and root of capitalism. The possibility and even the inevitability remains of capitalism plunging once again into devastating slumps — remember the

October 1987 stock exchange crash? Capitalism still presides over regular mass slaughters by hunger which are an indictment of any social system.

In the United States, the richest capitalist country in the world, thousands of people sleep on the streets or get a living only from the

drugs trade. In the private profit counterpart of Eastern Europe — Latin America — unemployment runs at 40% in the big cities, workers' living standards have sometimes been halved since the debt crisis broke in 1982, cocaine gangsters rule huge areas, and malnutrition and even starvation are widespread. Capitalism is no alternative at all!

Scrap immigration controls

SO 283, 11 September 1986

There is little place in Thatcher's Britain for people with the wrong colour skin, whether they are aged 2 or 80.

The Home Office's job is to 'protect' Britain from people such as Khuram Azad [a two-year old threatened with deportation to Pakistan]. That's what the immigration laws created since 1961 by Labour and Tory governments alike (and still supported in their fundamentals by the Labour leaders) say.

The horrible spectacle of a baby being hounded and threatened with deportation has called forth cries of disagreement and disgust

even from some of Britain's racist press. They are objecting to the logical application of the racist immigration laws they support in principle and in fact.

The fight to keep Khuram Azad with his parents is important. But even if Waddington and the Home Office bow to the outcry over



Khuram, the same racist immigration laws will still be in operation, the perpetual witchhunt will go on.

The labour movement must demand that the Labour leaders break their common front with the Tories on immigration and commit themselves clearly to scrap immigration controls.



Who pays for the Tories?

A price worth paying?

THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Patrick Murphy



The Tories have chosen their main propaganda target in the run-up to an election — the link between Labour and the unions.

"Who runs Labour?" their posters bellow, and just in case the answer isn't clear, some of Britain's leading trade unionists peer out from the huge letters of the word "Labour". The comedian Stephen Fry made the telling point this week that the unions had taken such a battering in the last 12 years that the public didn't recognise most of the pictures.

The challenge, nevertheless, is one which Labour should confront head-on. The differences between the two parties' funding says a lot about the roots of each of them.

From the start, the Tories have been funded by big business which, like the 19th century breweries, openly bought influence and protected their interests. The use of huge sums of money is a decisive means by which people who are in a tiny minority can always have their way even in a "democracy".

Trade union funding of the Labour Party, on the other hand, makes Britain more, not less, democratic. Without it there would be no working class party of opposition, there would be no way for the majority of people to sustain a consistent political voice. If the argument appears a shade partisan, look at the US. There the most political unions fund particular Democrats, most stay out of politics and there is no working class party which can seriously compete with the big capitalist parties.

The result is the complete alienation of the majority of people from any sort of politics, and protest through ethnic identity, street crime and drugs.

Implicit in the Tory campaign just now is the demand that Labour break the union link and survive like the others on individual and company donations. Now there is just an outside chance that the party of Kinnock, Smith, et al could cobble together a few guilty liberal industrialists — the Anita Roddicks of this world. The certainty is, however, that there would be no such part that could represent the workers as an organised class, no party for the poorest, no party which even genuflected in the direction of a challenge to the profit system — because no such party could gain adequate funding from people who thrive on that system.

Working class people have no possibility of competing with the resources and power of



The Tory faithful

big capitalists except through their *collective* strength. The drive behind the Tory poster campaign is that there should be no Labour Party — that we have no right to collectively

"Every worker should calculate the compulsory contribution they have had to make to this Tory jamboree"

fund our own party.

At the same time, private wealth is to have absolute unfettered power to buy political influence. In 1989 big business *reported* donations totalling £3.5 million to the Tory Party

— but this is only the tip of the iceberg, for neither companies nor party are required to publish such donations.

Individual donations, such as the £2 million given by Greek shipping billionaire John Latsis are much harder to trace. The links between unions and the Labour Party are open, the figures are published annually, and under law no political fund can exist without the approval of a substantial majority of union members in a secret ballot.

Contrast that with big business funding of the Tories. Most of it is secret, its effect is not seen openly at a conference where business leaders can be held to account because the Tory conference doesn't make any decisions. Above all, there is no requirement in law for companies to obtain the approval of shareholders before they make donations. "One law for the rich..." as the old saying goes.

Partisan as it may seem, one of these links is straightforward corruption, the other is one of the few bits of *social* democracy left in the parliamentary system.

And what do the likes of John Latsis get in return for their donations? In an understated way that was made clear by the head of

Taylor Woodrow, Peter Drew, last week. His company, one of the largest contributors to the Tory Party, had reduced their contribution in 1990, unhappy with certain policies, but he promised a much greater donation in 1991 because "we are pleased that our views on the economy are being taken on board and that Mr Major is performing well".

These companies are looking for policies that guarantee their profits, offer them low taxes, cheaper labour costs, restrictive anti-union laws. It is a package which, in the 1980s, became known as supply-side economics, and the Tories have made every effort to deliver it to their friends in the last 12 years.

Amidst all this, every worker should calculate the compulsory contributions they have had to make to this Tory jamboree, for the profits and wealth of these companies have to be paid for by someone.

In the 1980s they were paid for by the unemployed, who became mere "excess capacity"; by those who worked in, or used, public services which have been cut to the bone or sold off to the private sector friends of the government; by the homeless victims of the run-down in the building programme and the sale of council houses. They are still being paid for by the huge numbers of low paid and the hopeless generations of young people looking for kicks on jobless council estates.

Norman Lamont, the Chancellor, recently said more about the Tories' attitude to our class than any socialist newspaper. "Continuing unemployment", he said, "is a price worth paying for a revival in trade, growth and profitability". The social cost of Tory policies is, of course, of no consequence to those who will never have to pay it.

Meanwhile, for John Latsis, £2 million is "a price worth paying" for a government willing to go to such lengths and stick to such a brutal programme to revive the profitability of capitalism.

There was a time when most socialists, and even the Labour Party, would at least *talk about* expropriating these parasitic vultures, taking over their vast wealth and control of resources, not only to fund the NHS and education, but to run production rationally and democratically, to make it for the first time serve human need rather than the wealth and power of a tiny minority.

Since then Labour leaders, and many beyond that, have become finally convinced that this would too severely restrict the rights of some individuals to accumulate wealth, gain private ownership of industry, and control production in their own individual way.

Me? I think that is a price worth paying!

The Bolsheviks' peace manifesto

WHAT THEY REALLY SAID

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was born amidst the great bloodshed of World War One. Immediately after the seizure of power (on October 25th according to the old Russian calendar) the new workers' government issued an appeal for peace — written by Lenin — which outlined the democratic basis on which peace could be assured. Those principles remain perfectly valid today.

The workers' and peasants' government, created by the Revolution of October 24-25, and basing itself on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace.

By a just or democratic peace, for which the overwhelming majority of the working class and other working people of all the belligerent countries, exhausted, tormented and racked by the war, are craving the government means an immediate peace without annexations (ie. without the seizure of foreign lands, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and without indemnities.

The government conceives the annexation or seizure of foreign lands to mean every incorporation of a small or weak nation into a large or powerful state without the precise-



ly, clearly and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective also of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to the given state, or forcibly retained within its borders, and irrespective, finally, of whether this nation is in Europe or in distant overseas coun-

tries.

If any nation whatsoever is forcibly retained within the borders of a given state, if, in spite of its expressed desire — no matter whether expressed in the press, at public meetings, in the decisions of par-

"The government proposes an immediate armistice to the governments and peoples of the belligerent countries"

ties, or in protests and uprisings against national oppression — it is not accorded the right to decide the forms of its state existence by a free vote, taken after the complete evacuation of the troops of the incorporating or, generally, of the stronger nation and without the least pressure being brought to bear, such incorporation is annexa-

tion, ie. seizure and violence.

The government considers it the greatest of crimes against humanity to continue this war over the issue of how to divide among the strong and rich nations the weak nationalities they have conquered, and solemnly announces its determination immediately to sign terms of peace to stop this war on the terms indicated, which are equally just for all nationalities without exception...

The government proposes an immediate armistice to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries,

While addressing this proposal for peace to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia appeals in particular also to the class-conscious workers of the three most advanced nations of mankind and the largest states participating in the present war, namely, Great Britain, France and Germany.



Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

Minneapolis 1934. "The Battle of Deputies Run". Striking Teamsters' workers' defence guard under Trotskyist leadership drives the scab-herding cops out of the town's main market centre.

The victorious strikers also produced a daily paper, *The Organiser*, formed a women's battalion; organised motorised flying pickets and used their success to build up a left-wing current in the unions, "The North West Labour Unity Conference", with the aim of transforming the movement.

But the Minneapolis base of the Trotskyists was broken up through jailings and bannings as a result of their stand against the Second World War.

Solidarity Day highlights pressing issues for American labour

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By Barry Finger

Over 350,000 protestors marched on Washington, D.C. on Saturday August 31st. The rally — called Solidarity Day — was endorsed not only by the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions but by 181 national organisations. These represented a broad array of civil rights, environmental and religious groups.

The march coincided with the 10th anniversary of the first Solidarity Day rally — prompted by Reagan's firing of the striking air traffic controllers and the dismantling of their union, PATCO — and of the 28th anniversary of the Martin Luther King-led march for civil rights.

The theme of the march was an insistence on justice for working people and their families. The core concerns were national health care reform, outlawing permanent replacement workers and support for the right to form independent trade unions here and abroad.

Nearly 40 million Americans are without any basic health care and probably an equal amount above that are underinsured. Even those who are insured find their benefits declining, while their premiums skyrocket.

And as workers are increasingly replete over issues such as shrinking health care benefits, more and more employers have capitalised on strike actions to rid themselves of unionised workforces. They do this by taking advantage of a loophole in American labor law which holds it to be illegal to fire a striking worker, but sanctions his or her permanent replacement. In other words, the employer is not obliged to guarantee that an open position will be available once the strike is settled.

In fact what little there is in the

way of legal protection for labor is circumvented and nullified by lengthy and costly court battles and outrageously insignificant fines assessed against law-breaking firms. The existing machinery is just a thin veneer of "even-handedness" in the class struggle. It officially raps the offending capitalist across the knuckles for firing union organisers and members, while winking at the practice and looking the other way. Such practices have so eroded labor's base that the organised section of the American working class has been reduced to under 16%, down from nearly 30% in the 1960's.

Moreover, 5.4 million public workers in over 24 states lack even the right to bargain collectively and organise unions. Yet it is just this very freedom of association which one American administration after

"Clearly labor can still display concerns beyond the purview of simple business unionism and these concerns were evident in the mobilisation"

the next used to periodically invoke with such great hypocrisy against Stalinist oppression of labor abroad.

In fact, it is worth recalling that in more than 70 countries, working people face the prospect of harassment, imprisonment and death for demanding this fundamental freedom of association. According to a recent survey by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, between January of last year and this past March, 264 labor activists were killed around the world and 2,400 were detained or arrested for trying to promote workers' rights. Among the offending nations are such great friends of the American administration as Colombia, wherein nearly 140 trade unionists were killed, and El Salvador where over 350 were incarcerated and China.

It is in the specific arena of international labor solidarity, rather than in resistance to American economic integration where American labor intervention can prove most effective. Unfortunately, labor leaders have chosen the line of least resistance by calling for protectionist trade policies, especially against Mexico, in response to the withering American industrial base. Liberalised trade policies should be made contingent on a basic threshold of workers' rights.

Nevertheless, the demand of American labor for a say in the export of American capital raises in a nascent and chauvinistically distorted fashion, a fundamental socialist issue. And this is an issue on which socialists can build, namely, the program of labor — including international labor — control over the very deployment of capital per se, over the direction of investment and over choices of technology.

Clearly, labor can still display concerns which reach way beyond the purview of simple business unionism and these concerns were evident in this mobilisation. From the demands that a civil rights bill be enacted, that the cities and states be adequately funded, that the infrastructure be rebuilt and educational priorities overhauled, labor once again proves that its potential greatness lies as the focal point of a broad movement for social change.

Unfortunately, the purpose of this muscle flexing was to remind the Democratic Party and the Democratic-led Congress, that it still exists. But by proceeding along this well-trodden path, the leaders of American labor redefine and thereby shrink their movement in dimensions more suitable to a pressure-group than a social class.

And as such they are in fact even less credible than the average pressure group — and predictably even less successful. For the oil lobby or the gun lobby for instance — as long as their demands do not harm the general business climate — can easily be accommodated by either capitalist party.

But if labor tries to pressure

either party to enact its social program, it immediately becomes an embarrassment and a liability. For its demands — modest as they must seem to socialists — most emphatically do affect, and of necessity adversely, the conditions under which capital is accumulated.

That is why even the faintest resonance of labor's program by any Democrat is immediately greeted by Republicans and other Democrats with howls of derision. This random naif can expect to be roundly derided for despoiling the political process by introducing "class-conflict" politics and will be relegated to the political hinterland of the party.

Arguably, the American labor movement has not been the decisive factor in any major political victory since the 1964 civil rights bill. The enormous economic gains that were made in the first few post-war decades have gradually been turned around. Real wages have drifted downwards since 1973, while tax burdens have been increasingly

regressive. Social benefits have been eroded and workplace health and safety standards have been effectively relaxed through lack of enforcement.

It is clear that the American labor movement will continue its downward course of setbacks and defeats if it continues to confine itself within the two-party arena. Unfortunately, divorce proceedings with the Democrats seem to be occurring basically at the insistence of the Party, as the latter seems increasingly unwilling to distinguish itself from the Republicans.

To reverse its fortunes, American labor will have to learn and act on the fact that there is no progressive alternative for it save independent political activity through an independent labor party.

Until that time, marches and demonstrations such as these will be just painful reminders of how far labor still has to go before it exercises any real continuous clout in the American political process or for that matter in the world arena.



The first Solidarity Day

Debate: socialism and democracy

The Bolsheviks and democracy

By Tom Rigby

Ian McCalman's contribution to the debate on socialism and democracy (SO 498) seems to me to seriously miss the point at issue.

It is simply not tenable to argue, as Ian does, that "Lenin's commitment to political pluralism was limited irrespective of the conditions which prevailed in Russia in the post-revolution years."

On the contrary, Lenin and the Bolsheviks' attitude to the question of political pluralism was shaped by events as they developed. The question has to be approached historically, as Trotsky put it:

"As far as the prohibition of other Soviet parties is concerned, it did not flow from any 'theory' of Bolshevism but was a measure of defence of the dictatorship in a backward and devastated country, surrounded by enemies on all sides.

For the Bolsheviks it was clear from the beginning that this measure, later completed by the prohibition of factions inside the governing party itself, signalled a tremendous danger. However, the root of the danger lay not in the doctrine or the tactics but in the material weakness of the dictatorship, in the difficulties of its internal and international situation. If the revolution had triumphed, even if only in Germany, the need of prohibiting the other Soviet parties would have immediately fallen away. It is absolutely indisputable that the domination of a single party served as the juridical point of departure for the Stalinist totalitarian regime.

The reason for this development lies neither in Bolshevism nor in the prohibition of other parties as a temporary war measure, but in the number of defeats of the proletariat in Europe and Asia." (Trotsky, *Stalinism and Bolshevism*, 1937)

Victor Serge — who could hardly be described as an uncritical "Leninist" — was concerned to analyse the actual concrete situation facing the party and the Soviet state in the years of the civil war and immediately after.

Though his conclusions were not the same as Trotsky's, he too was opposed to reasoning in the abstract. (An error, I believe, that Ian falls into.)

"After many hesitations, and with unutterable anguish, my Communist friends and I finally declared ourselves on the side of the Party. This is why. Kronstadt had right on its side. Kronstadt was the beginning of a fresh, liberating revolution for popular democracy: 'The Third Revolution!' it was called by certain anarchists whose heads were stuffed with infantile illusions. However, the country was absolutely exhausted, and production practically at a standstill; there were no reserves of any kind, not even reserves of stamina in the hearts of the masses. The working class elite that had been moulded in the struggle against the old regime was literally decimated. The Party, swollen by the influx of power-seekers, inspired little confidence. Of the other parties, only minute nuclei existed, whose character was highly questionable.

It seemed clear that these groupings could come back to life in a matter of weeks, but only by incorporating embittered, malcontent and inflammatory elements in their thousands, no longer, as in 1917, enthusiasts for the young revolution. Soviet democracy lacked leadership, institutions and inspiration; at its back there were only masses of starving and desperate



After seven years of world war and the civil war, famine devastated Southern Russia in 1921. By the end of the year 36 million people were starving.

men.

The popular counter-revolution translated the demand for freely-elected Soviets into one for 'Soviets without Communists'. If the Bolshevik dictatorship fell, it was only a short step to chaos, and through chaos to a peasant rising, the massacre of the Communists, the return of the emigres, and in the end, through the sheer force of events, another dictatorship, this time anti-proletarian. Dispatches from Stockholm and Tallinn testified that the emigres had these very perspectives in mind; dispatches which, incidentally, strengthened the Bolshevik leaders' intention of subduing Kronstadt speedily and at whatever cost. We were not reasoning in the abstract. We knew that in European Russia alone there were at least fifty centres of peasant insurrection."

(Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a revolutionary*)

Contrary to Ian's implication, it is possible to dig up numerous quotations from Lenin and Trotsky in the first period of the revolution where they stress the need for mass democracy from below, initiative from the masses, etc. and assume, as a matter of course, the existence of a multiplicity of parties.

I will provide just one quote. This is taken not from the early period, but from March 1921 and from a speech Lenin made during the 10th Party Congress, the one that decided to temporarily ban factions within the party itself.

"The choice before us is not whether to allow these parties to grow — they are inevitably engendered by petty bourgeois economic relations. The only choice before us, and a limited one at that, is between the forms of concentration and coordination of these parties' activities." (Lenin, *Collected Works* Volume 32)

As Marcel Liebman has commented: *"The formulation is vague and far from satisfactory, but it certainly does not suggest a desire to eliminate the opposition parties once and for all. One cannot discern any totalitarian or monolithic scheme here."* (Leninism under Lenin)

There is no substantial continuity between Leninism and Stalinist totalitarianism. Only shared forms.

Ian protests that the Bolsheviks functioned as the "arbiters" of loyalty to the workers' state and thus decided which parties could and could not function. This seems

to me to be a topsy-turvy way of looking at the issue.

In reality, the Bolsheviks were engaged in a bloody life and death struggle to save workers' power from defeat and collapse. There was no god on high or referee who could function as "arbiter" between the different hostile classes. Either the Bolsheviks rose to the occasion, and thus became to a certain extent "arbiters" of where other parties stood in the class struggle or they surrendered.

And if the Bolsheviks had surrendered, we can be sure that they had plenty of enemies only too willing to function as "arbiters" and ban them in turn.

Nowhere does Ian confront the issues he raises from a historical, concrete, materialist point of view. For instance, if Ian believes that Trotsky's perspective of

the dangers of reasoning in the abstract.

Ian is on firmer ground when he alludes to the restoration of the ban on the Mensheviks in early '21. I, for one, would find it difficult to justify everything the Bolsheviks did in this case. But Ian's approach to the question lacks subtlety. He argues: "If these other parties constituted a threat to the 'workers' state', then surely they should, according to John's criteria of 'loyalty', have been banned during the civil war and not after it."

Two points can be made about this. Firstly, if the inverted commas mean anything, then Ian should explain why Russia ceased to be a workers' state in the last days of the civil war. Secondly, a more dialectical approach is needed.

The war might have been over but the working class was in a terrible state. Many of the best cadre had died in the civil war, others had been drawn into the party or into positions in the state machine — where they were outnumbered by careerists, time-servers, ex-Czarist officials, etc.

Industrial production has collapsed to less than one-fifth of its pre-war level. The famine and starvation had slackened, but this simply spurred on economic protests from the more impatient sectors of less politically conscious workers and peasants. The revolution was on the retreat, this is undeniable.

Ian should discuss this actual concrete situation rather than pointing to supposed logical inconsistencies in John O'Mahony's approach.

It would be helpful if Ian could clarify what he means by "a full blooded commitment to representative democracy" and spell out how the Bolsheviks could have demonstrated such a commitment.

Perhaps they should have allowed the constituent assembly to take the power in January 1918? Then the Bolsheviks could have testified to their "full blooded" commitment to democracy by being slaughtered by the right wing of the SRs, the C-det party, the monarchists and the Dan "Volunteer Army" whose programme consisted of the single point, "All power to the constituent assembly".

After all, looked at in terms of formal majorities and minorities, it was only the bulk of the working class who supported the soviets while the majority of the peasant masses and all the classes of the old order were for the constituent

assembly.

When discussing democracy the key question is surely "what kind of democracy?". Which class is to rule? The workers or the bourgeoisie? Is the old state machine that excludes and separates the majority of the population from power to be destroyed? Judged in these terms infant workers' Russia was without doubt the most "full blooded" democracy in human history. If Ian thinks otherwise he should spell out why.

Finally, I think there is one additional point that needs to be drawn out.

It strikes me that underlying all of Ian's argument is the loss of a sense of proportion in politics. Does Ian really believe that, irrespective of all other considerations and conditions, socialists can give a cast iron pledge in advance, for all circumstances, not to take any measures that from a formal point of view could be considered "anti-democratic"?

No we cannot. The reason for this is that the other side, the class enemy, will make no such pledges.

The capitalists tolerate the Marxists to the extent that we are not a threat. The trade union and democratic liberties that our movement has won over decades, indeed centuries, stay in place because, as the Americans put it, "you can't dig coal with bayonets". But none of the rights the working class movement enjoys in the capitalist democracies are protected by some "arbiter" standing above the hostile classes.

As Rosa Luxemburg — an ardent supporter of the Russian revolution, but a comradely critic of the Bolsheviks — put it: *"It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would good humouredly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or of a national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit. They will turn the country into a smoking heap of rubble rather than voluntarily give up wage slavery."* (Rosa Luxemburg, *Speech on the Spartacus Programme*, 1918)

No amount of philosophical theorising about "the fundamental dilemma facing socialists" over how to reconcile various intentions will get us away from this brutal reality. To argue otherwise is to accept the bourgeoisie's own myths about themselves.

It's a nice myth, but a myth nonetheless.

"In reality the Bolsheviks were engaged in a bloody life and death struggle to save workers' power from defeat and collapse."

reform of the CPSU was wrong in the late '20s and early '30s, he should at least sketch out an alternative. Perhaps Ian will, but those attempts that have been made along these lines, such as Anton Ciliga in *The Russian Enigma* are not very convincing at all.

What's more, Trotsky was not alone in his estimation. Non-Bolshevik leftists like the Mensheviks Dan and Abromovitch believed that a perspective of overthrowing the Communist Party could only lead to bloody counter-revolution. They too were aware of



Detective Nick Peretti (Judd Nelson, left) and "Scotty" Appleton (ICE-T) make an arrest

Memories of AIDS

Video

Belinda Weaver reviews "Longtime Companion", available on video

"Longtime Companion" is an AIDS movie, and it's a sad movie, but I found it touching and worth seeing.

It's a more-in-sorrow-than-anger movie. The characters mourn the friends they have lost to AIDS and they mourn the carefree lives they used to lead together, but they rarely get angry; they just get on with living one day at a time (in case there's no tomorrow).

The film is structured like a drama-documentary, moving forward year by year from 1981, the year the first *New York Times* article about AIDS was published. Facts then were scanty, which only added to the fear that the story generated among the characters in the film, a group of gay men in the entertainment business in New York. Some tried to deny or ignore AIDS; others tried to be flippant about this supposed "gay cancer".

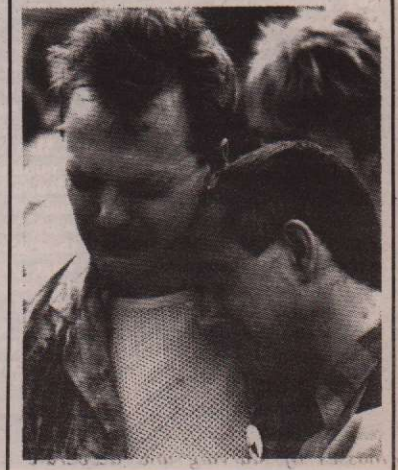
But all were afraid, and when one of them, John, suddenly dies of pneumonia, terror sets in. The main character, Willie, goes through an emotional wringer. In one scene, he gives in to panic; rushing to a bathroom, he obsessively scrubs away the affectionate touch of an intimate friend. There are many such scenes of panic. Sean, the man whom Willie touched, experiences his own terror when he finds a strange mark on his neck. "My side of the bed was soaking this morning," he swears to his longtime lover, David. "It's summer," David calms him down.

But Sean is right; he does have AIDS. Within two years, both he and David will be dead. The most touching scene in the film is where David comforts the dying Sean. The tone is deliberately light, there's nothing mawkish or sentimental about it, but the gentle way that David urges his lover simply to let go is one of the saddest displays of loving kindness I have ever seen on film.

The film is like a scrapbook of AIDS experiences. All the signposts are there — the first oddball theories, the guilt about dying friends, the quack therapies and "cures" seized on by desperate people, the grim round of hospital visits and memorial services.

By the end, Willie has become a buddy, helping out AIDS victims without family or friends. His lover, Alan, a lawyer, is also busy helping gays thrown out of housing or denied jobs because of their illness.

By the end, all the characters have learned not to blame themselves for AIDS — it's just a virus, says one of the female characters matter-of-factly — and have begun to try to build something together, to help themselves and other people until a cure is found. That's a positive message to take away from any film. For a film in 1991, it's almost a miracle.



Vicarious revenge

Cinema

By Vicki Morris

"New Jack City" has a plot and a message to hang on it. In that order.

The plot is not believable and the director seems to recognise that it is of secondary importance by ignoring, or failing to achieve, the main convention which governs plots in general — spacing the hatching of the plot, its taking root, time for the goodies to have a near miss in catching their man, building tension for the final dénouement.

Unfortunately, you cannot put this plot to the back of your mind and concentrate on the message hung on it because it is so gung-ho — lots of violence, some ludicrous devices à la James Bond, and, its central flaw I suppose, thin and corny characterisation.

Having said that, I also suppose, that this is reasonable in the case of the portrayal of the baddies — drug manufacturers and dealers who are, in real life, every bit as vile as they are painted.

Where the problem lies is in the characterisation of the people who take on the crack-barons — cops. Maverick cops granted, but cops nonetheless, whereas in real life cops don't usually give a damn, or else they are unable to deal with social problems at root.

These cops succeed to a degree in their aim, but the director knows that there are massively more po-

tent reasons why they cannot eradicate the problems confronted in the film — the criminals once caught can get light sentences by offering to expose others involved in the business.

It is a business with friends in high places who have no interest in solving the basic tragedy of large numbers of "poor, dispossessed people" with nothing more fulfilling to do in life than get doped up to the eyeballs and rob their family and neighbours to support their habit.

So why is this plot there? It is quite exciting, so it serves the purpose of most plots of keeping the audience enrapt, but that, without something more, would be a bit insulting to the victims of the whole situation whose plight is the film's

raison d'être and who seem to get lost in all the excitement.

The explanation I can find is that it is a vicarious revenge film. Given the complexities of the problems, the fact that the State seems to have no will to eradicate the drug-barons or the social conditions — if that isn't a bit of a euphemism for being left to live like an animal in hell on earth — lots of people must despair of improvement let alone of a solution.

In that situation it seems quite natural to want to get some big guns together, drive into the Bronx and massacre the immediate villains of the piece.

And to judge by the howls of approval of the cinema-goers when the baddie gets his, the director has tapped into a real sentiment in peo-

ple in the 'civilised world', not just assuaged his own sense of frustration.

Of course, the director knows that that will not solve the problem.

The final chilling message of the film is that there are such barons in every city, preying off the poor, and getting off scot-free. Oddly, with such insight, the director says that the problem to be solved is "drugs"... a view he shares with Barbara Bush. You can't solve that problem without solving the problem of blighted lives which leads people to give up on everything else.

But recognising and highlighting the difficulties in tackling just this one aspect of the pile of shit which is inner-city ghettos in modern-day America is a step in the right direction.

Modern gladiators

Sport

By Steven Holt

On Saturday a young man was severely beaten about the head and is now in hospital in intensive care.

It is feared that he will suffer severe and permanent brain damage, or may even die. The man who knocked him down was cheered by hundreds of thousands of onlookers and the fight between these two men was broadcast live on television.

The police are not looking for the

winner of the fight.

The reason for the lack of police concern is that the severe hurt done to this man took place within a socially accepted convention, the "sport" of boxing.

Boxing is, like football and cricket, a competitive activity with unavoidably violent aspects. Unlike such sports as football and cricket, the whole aim of the competitors in boxing is to incapacitate their opponent physically by knocking them out. This carries a heavy risk of inflicting brain damage and anyone entering boxing as a career will suffer some degree of brain damage at some time.

The British Medical Association has for many years urged that boxing should be banned as unsafe.

But, the supporters of boxing argue, boxers have freely chosen boxing as their career. To this we can ask,

"How many young men would choose boxing other than to avoid unemployment or degrading no-hope jobs?"

Is it a coincidence that so many British and American boxers are black?

And what of a society where so many working class people want to watch people hurting each other, where others rake off huge profits from this process, and where some, black and white, men have to resort to this kind of thing as a "social ladder"?

I don't know whether banning boxing is an appropriate response, since those who box have chosen to do so, within the limits of choice imposed by present day capitalist society. Boxing is certainly a symptom of capitalism, and perhaps the best response for socialists is to continue efforts to bring about fundamental changes.



Michael Watson

To the Irish Lourdes

Television

By Paddy Dollard

Knock is a west of Ireland Lourdes in Co. Mayo where the virgin Mary is supposed to have appeared a little over a hundred years ago. People go there as they go to Lourdes looking for miracle cures. It is a big local industry now, as is Lourdes.

"Journey to Knock" was about a journey in the vain hope of miracles, or just for the outing,

made by 3 English paraplegics — an old man who lost his legs in the war, a middle-aged miner crippled in a rock fall and a young man — David — whose muscles are wasting away.

The young man is not a Catholic. He goes — defying doctor's orders — and hitchhiking to the boat at Holyhead for the "outing". He is anything but reconciled to his condition.

The film's hard-edged, matter-of-fact treatment of the men's condition and the abrasive, aggressive humour that sparks between them somehow seemed to point up the awfulness of their predicament.

What it means to have your muscles wasted down to the strength of a very small child was

terrifyingly brought out in one episode.

On the boat to Ireland, the young man goes in his wheelchair to the lavatory, hauls himself up to the urinal, gripping the pipes above it. The movement of the ship rolls the chair away from under him, across the room.

He is stranded, hanging onto the pipes, unable to do anything else. His strength wanes and he sinks down and crawls helplessly on the vomit-covered floor, unable to catch the chair rolling gently back and forth with the movements of the ship.

"Journey to Knock" was one of the most moving — and original — things I have seen on TV.

Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty!

Tsarist flags on the streets in Moscow; mass renaming of streets and squares in Italy named after Marx, Lenin or Gramsci; a chorus from the media saying that socialism is dead. For sure, the struggle for a cooperative commonwealth is not fashionable these days.

It's goodbye to the "trendy left". Former "left intellectuals" are swinging to the right as fast as *Marxism*

Today and the *Sunday Times* can take them.

But working-class people are not so easily convinced that the future belongs to capitalism. Tucked away in a corner of the *Guardian* on 19th September was an opinion poll result showing a 30-38% majority — in the population at large, not just among Labour voters — for the proposition that "more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems". The poll shows a shift in favour of socialism since the same question was asked a

year ago.

And, West and East, the class struggle continues — as indeed it will always continue, until capitalism is overthrown.

The *Alliance for Workers' Liberty* was set up in May this year. It declared then: "We need a crusade to clarify and restate the ideas of socialism, free from all taint of Stalinism, and to help the political reconstitution of the working class".

That crusade is even more urgently needed now. The AWL is supporting the *Stand Up for Real Socialism*

campaign launched by *Socialist Organiser*. It strives to tie together work in that campaign with daily activity in the trade unions and workplaces, in anti-poll tax groups, in colleges, and on the streets; and to link all that activity with a drive to educate ourselves politically and organise a stable, cohesive, alert contingent of Marxists.

It's time to stand up and be counted for socialism. Contact the AWL c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Workers resist August coup

SWP: soft on Stalinism?

LETTERS

FO'Connor is an SWPer. For this reason, his letter (SO 499) is valuable: I have rarely seen so well expressed the foolishness of the SWP, or their unwillingness to think issues through to their logical conclusion.

The SWP says — ridiculously in my opinion — that Stalinism and the system in Britain and the USA are both capitalist: Stalinism is "state-capitalism".

Then the conclusion must follow that on one side you have liberal bourgeois democratic capitalism, under which the workers have the

freedom to organise and fight for their own interests, and on the other side, capitalism with a totalitarian fascist-style political regime.

And which it makes no difference to the working class?

But this is the politics of third period Stalinism! The politics which recognised no difference between fascism and liberal democracy and led the German CP — on Stalin's orders — to refuse to defend democracy. That is, to defend the right of the German labour movement to exist.

Trotsky, who thought the USSR a degenerated workers' state, pointed out in the 1930s that the Stalin regime differed from Hitler's "only in its more unbridled savagery". He was right then: even after the Nazi bestiality of the 1940s, Trotsky's judgement probably still stands up when Stalinism is taken as a whole. Twelve million died in the Nazi death camps? Up to 30 million died in China alone between 1958-61 as a result of totalitarian state-organised chaos and famine (no-one knows the exact figure).

And there is no meaningful difference, nothing for workers to get excited about as between Stalinism and bourgeois democratic capitalism?

Capitalist exploitation, hollowed-out bourgeois democracy, racism and all the things socialists fight against in Britain, are not excused because elsewhere in the world things are far worse. But to tell workers in Britain that they are no better off than workers under Stalinism is to make yourself ridiculous.

The SWP is unwilling to think questions like this through for fear it would weaken their anti-capitalist resolve in places like Britain. Their "solution" is to close their eyes to reality.

Trotsky had a tag for this too: "The revolutionaries who can remain what they are only by closing their eyes to reality are not worth much".

No. Minnie Ryan, New Cross

Right wing arguments don't help

Women's Eye (SO 498) stated that women who make the 'choice' to allow themselves to be 'kept' by a man should get nothing from society. Things have changed, Liz Millward says, since the old days when women were brought up to expect not to work.

Things have undoubtedly changed in relation to attitudes about women working, but I think that Liz exaggerates.

Many women of our mothers' and grandmothers' generations did go out to work — and the experience of women working during the two world wars showed that it is not true that women were stopped from working then and can work where they like now.

Capitalism tries to pick and choose when it wants women to work and when it doesn't.

In times of labour shortage women are encouraged to work, when part-time workers are needed women are encouraged to work and our current ideology has changed due to these demands.

But to say that these changes mean women are no longer subject to stereotyped expectations

of their careers or role as family maker is pushing it too far.

Young working class women are still expected to be married with kids by their early '20s. For many of these women there is no work available and getting married is the only way out of their family home. There is little choice for these women.

This article also ignored the effect that years rearing children and staying in the home have on women. Being a housewife and having little contact with other people, except usually with close family, is unhealthy.

It undermines women's confidence. After being out of the labour market those women often feel incapable of holding down a job and therefore 'refuse' to work.

Many housewives are on tranquillisers or anti-depressants as a result of their unnatural lifestyle: those women too may 'choose' not to work.

Men and women are not economically or socially equal. Men earn a lot more than women and it's not just that women work to keep the money for themselves. Often a woman's wage goes towards a family holiday or is spent on the kids. This attitude that sees women's money as being separate stems from the idea that women's wages are 'pin money'.

Liz Millward's article implies that there are thousands of

women who contribute nothing to society but just sit around watching telly and eating chocolates. For the rich this might be an option, but for the majority of working class women, their lives are controlled by a wide variety of economic and social pressures.

And even if there are a handful of women who consciously choose not to work, is the failure of the fight for women's liberation their fault? If Liz is saying this, then why not blame the fact that a small number of people who beg on the streets and who aren't desperate for the fact that everyone is not fighting for an end to homelessness?

Why not blame that small number of people who don't want to work for the unemployment problem?

The article looked at some of the effects of the system that oppresses women, but it did not put the blame for that where it belongs — on the workings of capitalism and the failure of the labour movement and the left to organise those thousands of women who are in work and deserve better pay and working conditions.

Liz used the right-wing arguments about individual choice which do nothing to help us understand the lives of the majority (or even a large minority) of working class women.

Elaine Jones

French socialists call for new debate on Stalinism

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Martin Thomas

The French socialist weekly *Rouge*, in its issue of 12th September, has called for a new debate on the analysis of the old order in the USSR, acknowledging that the "degenerated workers' state" theory needs to be reconsidered.

The call marks a watershed in the history of the Trotskyist movement. The LCR, the group which publishes *Rouge*, has a wide influence internationally, linked to such writers as Ernest Mandel and groups such as *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Action* in Britain.

For over 40 years, that current of opinion has held to the view that Trotsky's assessment of the USSR as a "degenerated workers' state" could validly be extended into the post-World War II world and extrapolated to describe the East European states, China, Vietnam etc. as "deformed workers' states". It has based its whole perspective of "the world revolution" on that view.

Most other Trotskyists shared the basic view, giving it their own various slants. *Socialist Organiser* shared it until the mid-80s. After fresh discussions, we concluded that the Stalinist states were systems of class exploitation parallel to capitalism, rather than being an advance on capitalism. We formally abandoned the "workers' states" position at our conference in 1988.

The rush towards capitalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe must be utterly demoralising for any socialist who reckoned that those societies embodied their ideals, even imperfectly.

For over 60 years now Trotskyists have combatted the lie that the Stalinist system was socialist, and advocated a new workers' revolution against the bureaucrats in the USSR. Nevertheless, most Trotskyists have reckoned that the USSR was still

somehow "post-capitalist", or a "degenerated workers' state" — and that general view has been influential on the left way outside the ranks of the Trotskyist groups.

It is a view routed and ruined by the events of the last two years. Large sections of the left need to re-examine both their views on the Stalinist states, and the assumptions on which those views were based.

This is how *Rouge* puts it.

For fifty years now, different theories have confronted each other in the workers' movement on the analysis of these [Stalinist] states.

In the light of the current overturns, it is possible to take up the debates on all these questions anew. For our part, we are willing to take part in this discussion and confront our own theory with the lessons of history.

We used to believe that from a sharp crisis of these regimes would arise forces — significant, at least, if not commanding a majority — capable of opposing the road of a self-managed socialist democracy to that of capitalist restoration. In fact such currents are marginal today.

We used to think that in spite of the confiscation of power by a parasitic bureaucracy, the existence of non-capitalist social relations arising from the revolution [of 1917] represented gains in the eyes of the workers, who would mobilise to defend them.

In fact, it appears not so at all. Primarily, the workers see in their miserable living standards the expression of a productivity gap which has widened again between the rich Western countries and the Eastern bloc.

That does not exclude vigorous movements tomorrow of resistance to the consequences of privatisations, but as of now the facts are sufficient to render necessary a critical re-examination of the analyses and of their consequences for practical activity.

We are willing to take part in this re-examination and this debate, which will be illuminated by joint action with all those who, facing the enormous challenges that we do, will remain faithful to the defence of the exploited and oppressed.

WHAT'S ON

Tuesday 1 October

Anniversary of Chinese revolution. China Solidarity Campaign picket of Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London, 7.00pm

Thursday 26 September

"Fighting racism", Leeds SO meeting. 7.30, Coburg Pub
"Why we are socialists", Canterbury Tech SO meeting. 1.00. Speaker: Mark Osborn

Saturday 28 September

"Stop the purges!" meeting at Labour Party conference. 7.30, Middle St Primary School, Brighton. Called by Friends of Brighton Labour Party

Sunday 29 September

"Our history", North London SO meeting. 7.30, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road. Speaker: Cathy Nugent
"Unshackle the unions" fringe meeting called by LPS and SMTUC. 7.30, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Stein, Brighton. Speakers include Dennis Skinner, Peter Heathfield
Leafletting of Chinatown in support of political prisoners. 12.00-2.00, London. Organised by CSC

Monday 30 September

"The Sarah Thornton case", SE London SO meeting. 7.30, Two Eagles Pub, Elephant and Castle. Speaker: Liz Dickenson

Wednesday 2 October

"Campaigning for Left Policies in the General Election", LPS fringe meeting, Labour Party Conference. 7.30, Royal Albion Hotel, Old Stein. Speakers include Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn
Picket for Dessie Ellis. 9.30-11.30am, Old Bailey, London EC4

Thursday 3 October

"Is socialism dead?", Brighton SO meeting. 7.30, Eastern Pub. Speaker Cate Murphy
"After Stalinism — standing up for real socialism", Sheffield SO meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street

Saturday 5 October

March for the Tottenham 3. Assemble 12.00, Civic Centre, Wood Green, London N22. Rally 2.00, Finsbury Park

Monday 7 October

"Stand up for real socialism", Socialist Organiser London Forum. 7.30, Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road, Kings Cross

"Crisis facing offshore trade unionism" says rank and file leader

Rally to the rig workers!

By Tom Rigby

"Trade unionism in the offshore industry is facing a crisis". That's how Ronnie MacDonald, Chair of the rank and file based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee

(OILC) described the situation prior to a major meeting in London this Thursday (September 26) to discuss presenting a common trade union front to the employers. The OILC provided the organisational backbone for the unofficial strikes and rig occupations during the summer of 1989

and 1990. Oilworkers were demanding full union recognition and decent health and safety provision. Something that the employers have still not conceded. Over the last few weeks, rank and file anger against the behaviour of the national officials from the main unions on the rigs has reached boiling point.

Workers resent a deal signed above their heads by the leaders of the AEU, GMB and EETPU. According to Ronnie MacDonald this deal has received a "universally adverse reaction" from the rank and file. In order to overcome the sectionalism that has traditionally weakened the unions in the North Sea, the OILC has for a long time been arguing for a



Ronnie MacDonald united 'single table' approach to bargaining.

is for the existing unions to take up the issues in a unified way. But, if they don't we are not going to walk away and leave a vacuum in the industry. It's either/or. It's as simple as that." Trade unionists must rally to the OILC and back those who have put their livelihoods on the line for trade unionism in the North Sea. "Certain prominent national officials are working overtime to vilify the OILC. I would ask other workers and trade unionists to reject these allegations and keep up the support they have given us" argued Ronnie.

Send messages of support, donations etc., to OILC, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen, AB1 2NB. "The Crisis in Offshore Trade Unionism" and "Striking Out! New directions for offshore workers and their unions" [price £5] both available from the above address.

Support the community education workers

By Mary Cooper, Strathclyde NALGO

Community education workers in Glasgow are on strike in support of staff who have been suspended for refusing to carry out work associated with redundant posts.

In May of this year Strathclyde Region cut 158 jobs, arguing that

the service provided was no longer necessary. Strathclyde NALGO argued against these job losses and campaigned against the resultant cuts in services. At the time, the union stated that members would refuse to carry out any work resulting from the redundant posts.

The Region have attempted to disguise the effects of the cuts by re-allocating workers involved in Adult Education, After School

Care and women's and health groups to undertake the work of the redundant posts. Three members of staff whose duties were re-allocated refused to comply and were suspended by the Council.

Strathclyde NALGO decided to ballot community education workers on strike action. The ballot was overwhelmingly in favour, and 24 workers from Area 15 came out on strike.

Since then, all Community Education members throughout Glasgow sub-region were instructed to strike from Monday 16 September. About 250 members are involved. The action is backed by the National Emergency Committee and

strikers are receiving full take-home pay.

The strikers are demanding reinstatement of their suspended members and recognition that the redundant posts are redundant.

The workers have publicised their action within the community and have explained the issues involved in leaflets distributed in local community centres.

It is important that Strathclyde NALGO link the issues involved in the dispute to the wider fight against the cuts currently taking place or threatened throughout the Region.

Please offer support to the strikers on 041-221 7735.

DHSS SEC — no re-runs of 1987!

By Dave Armes, CPSA

DHSS SEC CPSA's Committee for its largest section (DHSS) finally met on 5th September after months of wrangling by right wingers, unhappy with the prospect of a Broad Left Section Executive Committee.

By the time of the first meeting they had succeeded in their objective of denying the BL a two thirds majority on the Committee by having the ballot recounted outside of CPSA by a firm employing casual labour. The Broad Left lost two positions overall in the re-count.

Not content with this, the BL84/Moderate Charter Group made it quite clear that they had no respect for the wishes of the members expressed in the ballot box. Headed by Section Chair, Dave Kowalski, they went all out to deny the Broad Left the physical ability to carry out the policies we were elected to achieve. The morning was taken up with Kowalski refusing to allow the Committee to decide its own Standing Orders. In the afternoon, he tried to ensure a right wing majority on the all-important General Purposes Committee (GPC) which runs the Section in the absence of the Committee.

If the right wing hope to undemocratically stifle this NEC by Stalinist manoeuvres, the Broad Left must be prepared for a major battle. Our strength lies with the members who elected us. It is they who must decide, not Kowalski and his clique.

Mid-Wales DSS staffing strike

By Lawrence Chapplegill, CPSA DHSS Section Executive

Twenty-four CPSA members walked out this Monday from Newton DSS Office in Mid-Wales.

The present action is to last one week and is the first stage of a local staffing campaign.

Management have received extra government money for staffing but have failed to offer the permanent increase in staffing which the union is demanding.

For messages of support, information and donations contact: Lawrence Chapplegill, c/o Strike Centre, TGWU 2, Cornwall Street, Newton, Powys, SY16 2BL.

Last week a re-convened NALGO Local Government group meeting adopted a new strategy for fighting cuts in jobs and services.

The strategy is an improvement on the previous, good one dating from 1988. However, it is in danger of going the same way — becoming a paper policy and not translating into a real

campaign to defend jobs and services.

It is essential that those strikes going on, like Liverpool, are now used as campaigning issues amongst the membership as a whole.

The first national anti-cuts event that has been called is a lobby of Tory party conference in Blackpool on 10 October.

Activists should ensure that their branches are booking transport and encouraging the membership to attend.

Manchester council sets frightening precedent

By Maxine Jordan, Manchester NALGO

Two NUPE members in Manchester Housing Department, one of them a leading shop steward, have been suspended pending a disciplinary hearing later this month over rent arrears. It could well result in them both being sacked.

The two housing workers had a council tenancy, but following several incidents of anti-gay harassment at their home, they moved. Their "crime" was that they didn't leave a forwarding

address at the Area Housing Office

What management have ignored is that they in fact arranged with the Town Hall to pay off the arrears they owed.

What's more, the conduct of a tenancy has no connection with the contract of employment: rent arrears are not a disciplinary offence.

NUPE met on September 10th to decide what action to take — tragically, they were so confident that the case would be won at an industrial tribunal, should the two be sacked, they voted not to take strike action.

They should have voted for strike action to demand that suspensions be lifted and charges dropped immediately!

The point of order

Most union meetings are boring. Don't be surprised when that fiery young revolutionary you found at work isn't so enthusiastic about noting last week's minutes and debating a Point of Order.

But branch meetings do have to have a structure. It is necessary for all those attending the branch to participate in decisions, for those decisions to be recorded, and for the record to be checked and acted upon.

It is a means of controlling the branch officials.

It is also necessary for discussions to have a structure where everyone speaking speaks through the chair, only on the subject at hand, and only for so long. Otherwise members speak or shout at

THROUGH THE MAZE

An introduction to the unions



By Rob Dawber

the person they disagree with, and start issuing threats or untoward comments. It's no surprise that you can still find branch minutes ending with the words, "And the meeting ended in good order at 9.30pm".

The problem is that some people thrive on this stuff, being more concerned about the proper order of business and procedures than the outside world. And God forbid if such a person is in the chair. Any individual wandering down to the branch with a problem is likely to be intimidated into silence.

Moreover, the procedures can take on a life of their own. I have heard of occasions when a branch has been busying itself with its routine business, discussing what to do with the correspondence, and because there is no mechanism to raise the fact that hundreds of members have just walked out it doesn't get raised. Strikes are, in reality, few and far between, and when they do occur they can disrupt the cosy routine of the branch.

So what do you do? Past

experience tells me that since issues do not of themselves emerge into the business of the branch, they have to be consciously introduced. Don't wait for someone else to do it.

Not just disputes involving your own members need to be raised, but also disputes elsewhere. "Any Other Business" is usually the easiest place to raise issues, but that is at the end of the meeting when people are thinking about going home. If in doubt, stick your hand up. If it is an issue outside your branch's area, then think of how it can affect your members.

Propose a speaker, that you send a delegate, a letter of support, a donation. Even if the issue has not reached the level of a dispute, still raise it in your branch. Just don't let yourself get washed along by "The Procedure".

John Tocher

John Tocher, AEU Divisional Organiser for the Greater Manchester area and a lifelong socialist, died on September 17th at the age of 64. It was fitting, if tragic, that John should pass away just a couple of days before his retirement since he had spent his whole working life in the service of the trade unions.

John Tocher joined the Communist Party in the 1940s and was for many years a member of its National Executive and its Chair in 1970. He worked at BAe (then A V Roe) at Woodford becoming convenor of shop stewards in the early 1950s. He was subsequently AEU District Secretary in Stockport before succeeding Alf Jones as Divisional Organiser.

John was a member of a close group of able CP members and Labour lefts who dominated the AEU — and the industrial labour movement in the North West — in the immediate post-war decades. It included Eddie Frow, Hugh Scanlon, Bob Wright, Bernard Panter and Stan Cole.

Party organisation was firmly based on the stewards' committees, dominated in engineering by members and sympathisers. Greater Manchester was probably the strongest CP fortress outside Scotland and South Wales.

John Tocher first came to national prominence during the strike at the Roberts Arundel factory in the centre of Stockport — a marathon stoppage which lasted from late 1966 into 1968. An industrialist from North Carolina, Robert E. Pomeranz attempted to smash the union declaring "I am the great white father of the workers". Tocher was imaginative and indefatigable in organising a far-flung campaign of boycotting and picketing. One of the stories he often told in later years about the dispute involved Paul Casey. For 8 months, Casey crossed picket lines — to abuse and worse — to work in the factory. By night he would rendezvous with Tocher in the back room of back street pubs providing vital information about management's strategy and the movement of goods and machinery. He was eventually rumbled by management who had taken to following Tocher's car.

Tocher was always an excellent but very patient organiser. In Hugh Scanlon's campaign against John Boyd for the AEU presidency in 1967-8, the left vote in Manchester was so high it provoked an internal inquiry into his activities. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the campaign against "In Place of Strife" and the 1971 Industrial Relations Act.

But his politics were limited by Stalinism, by the horizons of the CP and the politics of left alliances, by his loyalty to Scanlon and a certain limited caution. To take one example,

in 1972, that *annus mirabilis* of post-war militancy, the breakdown of national negotiations between the EEF and the CSEU prompted Scanlon to urge plant bargaining for a shorter working week and wage increases. By April more than 7000 workers in Confed district 29 of which Tocher was the Secretary, had occupied their workplaces. Yet Tocher always held the campaign on a tight rein. And when, in May, Scanlon caved in and despatched a circular urging the dropping of the campaign for shorter hours in favour of cash-only settlements, John Tocher reluctantly recommended that stewards accept this retreat. A golden opportunity was lost.

John Tocher left the CP in 1975, disillusioned with Stalinism and bureaucracy. The ensuing years witnessed a decisive weakening of the Broad Left and workplace organisation in engineering and the entrenchment of the hard right in the AEU leadership. Tocher expressed some bitterness at the

"He never stopped fighting the right wing."

way things went in the '80s and not a little disgust at the right's undermining of democracy in the AEU, culminating in attempts to merge his beloved union with the yellow EETPU. But he never stopped fighting the right wing. He stood against Jordan for the presidency and despite bouts of illness, fought to keep the Broad Left going.

John Tocher was a bad enemy but a good friend as I found personally on several occasions when I received generous support against tuppence ha'penny right wing bureaucrats. In his last years, he became a strong critic of sectarianism. He believed passionately that the way forward for the left, was through the transformation of the movement we have now by means of patient work in both the Labour Party and the unions. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Labour Party Socialists in Manchester and one of his last public appearances was when he came from his sick-bed to speak at our meeting in August.

John Tocher was born in 1927, the bitter year after the defeat of the General Strike, the year of "Baldwin's revenge", the 1927 Trades Union Act. All that changed. The legislation was repealed. The working class came again. John Tocher's life spanned periods of defeat, victory and defeat once again for our movement. The best memorial to him and certainly one he would want would be the rebuilding of a movement which can consign today's anti-union legislation to the waste-paper bin of history and go forward to build socialism.

John McIlroy

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Your paper needs you

This is the 500th issue of *Socialist Organiser*. Our revolutionary socialist paper is 13 years old. Despite all the Tory attacks on

the working class and the recent barrage of ruling-class propaganda hailing the death of socialism, our paper is stronger than ever. We are building a solid core of support and influence, so that we

will have the weight to contribute significantly when big working-class struggles re-emerge — as we know they will.

Our policies and analyses have been vindicated, we believe, in recent events in Eastern Europe. We are the only paper to have kept our bearings as the Kinnockites attack the Labour left, not giving up faint-heartedly and abandoning the struggle in the mass labour movement.

Why not help us fight for socialism?

Activists organise for 30 October demo

Students: ground down or fighting back?



By Alice Sharp

development units to work, ie. to involve students; and they are against student activists being trained and developed.

Clamp's revelations bear out what Left Unity has said for many years.

And the Kinnockites' sit-tight tactics are not even keeping NUS secure for Labour. Their sluggish incompetence has allowed the "independent" right wing to grow. Disgruntled by the NUS Kinnockites' lack of commitment to push through "reform" (organisational rejigging of NUS) at any cost, they have become more organised and determined.

"Left Unity is certainly for kicking the Tories out, and for a Labour government. The difference is that we say students must fight the Tories now; we must fight through action on the streets..."

Students will be marching in Manchester on 30 October — against student debt, for a minimum grant, and for the restoration of all benefits and cuts in education.

This summer many students have been forced to pack in their courses.

Others chose to scab on striking workers in Liverpool. Very few found work, and for the vast majority, got further into debt. The abolition of all social security benefits for students caused tremendous hardship.

The new term begins with two Government White Papers, "Higher Education; a New Framework" and "Education and Training for the 21st Century". Both papers mean drastic cuts in education.

Yet we have a leadership in the National Union of Students (NUS) that is unwilling to stage any real fightback.

Steven Clamp, a Kinnockite and recently-ditched member of the National Executive Committee of NUS, has spilled the beans. The Kinnockite clique running NUS, he says, have NUS staff divided up into three categories: "loyal, non-loyal and regrettable".

They are positively *against* student involvement in campaigns. They do not want the training or

Threats of disaffiliations from NUS if they don't get what they want are now commonplace. The basic ideas of unity in action against government attacks no longer grip the minds of many sabbatical student union officers in higher education colleges.

Left Unity supporters on NUS NEC have fought hard this year, as in previous years, for NUS to organise a national demo in the first term of the academic year. Defeated only by one vote on the NEC, we intend to fight on.

Stepping where the national leadership will not act, Manchester Area NUS has called the demonstration on 30 October.

Left Unity argues:
• a mass campaigning union, democratically run, that goes on the offensive against the Tories;

• for the NUS leadership to carry out the mandates passed at national conferences;

• for NUS nationally and student unions locally to work with trade unions in education against cuts and for a better deal for all in education.



Students need a mass campaigning union, democratically run, that goes on the offensive against the Tories

But the NUS priority campaign for this year is "Target 70" — targeting the top 70 marginal constituencies where student voters could swing the result. It almost amounts to asking students to vote tactically to keep the Tories out!

Left Unity is certainly for kicking the Tories out, and for a Labour government. The difference is that we say students must fight the Tories now; we must fight the Tories through action on the streets, not just through publicity "campaigns"; and we must keep up the action to put pressure on a Kin-

nock government if Labour wins the election, because we can't trust Kinnock.

Left Unity activists are already booking coaches for the 30 October demonstration, selling tickets, canvassing halls of residence, running stalls and putting out lots of publicity to make sure the streets of Manchester are flooded with angry students on 30 October.

The Tories' plans for education — see page 2

KINNOCK CAN'T SILENCE US 500 and still going strong

SOCIALIST Tory talk of recovery is a lie

ORGANISER

Two thousand a day thrown on the dole

CAMMELL LAIRD & CO

Labour must fight!

Sell this paper!

This weekend, 28-29 September, is a *Socialist Organiser* sales weekend. Supporters of the paper will be expanding sales in pubs, shopping centres and estates right across Britain.

Why not help us? Take a bundle of *Socialist Organiser* each week to sell to workmates and in your local labour movement. Help to give our ideas a stronger base of support in the working class. Write to *Socialist Organiser* (Circulation) for details.

Take out a subscription

Socialist Organiser has a distinct and important point of view. We are unique on the left, both in our coverage and in our slant on many issues.

You can get *Socialist Organiser* delivered every week by taking out a subscription: £25 (year); £13 (six months); £5 (10 issues).

Make a donation!

Last week's *Socialist Organiser* reported our fund drive for £10,000. We aim to raise this money to buy new equipment. The result will be a better produced socialist paper.

This week we received £309.56, or 3% of our fund total.

Thanks this week to: supporters in South East London for £58.34 from a car boot sale and £26 from a social; supporters in East London for £44.22 from a car boot sale.

Donations received include £100 from Sheffield, £30 from Newcastle and £5 from South London.

We are asking readers for help in raising £10,000. Could you send us a donation to help meet our target? All contributions — large and small — are welcome.

Tear out and return this slip

Enclosed is a subscription/donation*

Name.....

Address.....

Enclosed £.....

* Delete where necessary

Return to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA