

Labour's witch-hunt left



pages 4 and 5

Yugoslav tragedy

page 7



For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!

OILC forms new union



centre pages

The politics of Citizen Kane page 13



SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Tories squeeze the poor

Poll tax thieves rob eighty thousand thousand!



Photo: John Harris

Eighty thousand people on benefits had money docked to pay poll tax arrears in August. The figure was over ninety thousand in September — and rising.

This month about 100,000 people will have had money taken from their pitiful benefit cheques — £39.65 for a single person over 25, £62.25 for a couple — to prop up the poll tax system. The Tories themselves admit that it is unfair and unworkable.

Rich city financiers and big businessmen swindle the Treasury out of billions in tax evasions every year — and nothing is done about it.

Yet the Tories are prepared to waste millions to hound the poorest in our society for a handful of coppers in poll tax arrears.

Turn to page 2

Scrap the poll tax now! Amnesty for non-payers!

Don't pay the poll tax!

Non-paying Tower Hamlets councillor Phil Maxwell spoke to SO

I have just been given a three week suspended sentence for poll tax non-payment. I have been ordered to pay off my poll tax arrears at £30 per month.

I will not be paying the poll tax. I think that the vast majority of Tower Hamlets people who have been taken to court for non-payment simply cannot pay. It is the job of the Labour Party to stand with these people.

People who elected me are being harassed by the courts. I want to show solidarity with them.

43,000 poll tax summonses and 32,402 liability orders have been issued in Tower Hamlets. 11,346 cases are in the hands of the bailiffs.

The bailiffs have been round to my home, but I would not let them in.

There have been no jailings — yet — in the borough. However, on Friday 18 October this may change, when a non-payer who has a suspended sentence returns to court.

I think there are around six poll tax non-paying councillors on Tower Hamlets council. Nationally there must be hundreds of Labour councillors refusing to pay.

John Biggs, our Labour Group leader, says what I am doing is out of line with party policy. I have told him that I did not realise it was Labour Party policy to maintain poverty.

Labour must not abandon the poorest people in British society. That is why — as a Labour councillor — I continue to support mass non-payment.



Phil Maxwell

Tory thieves From front page

Labour leaders had the cheek to claim that it was their campaign which finished off the poll tax!

It was the campaign waged by those who refused to pay, who have taken to the streets in protest, have stood firm against the bailiffs, have picketed the courts, who have gone to prison for their principles, who have forced the Tory U-turn.

And it is us who must campaign still against deductions from benefits or wages, against the jailings and the victimisations.

We have to demand from an incoming Labour government that they deliver an immediate abolition of the poll tax, and an amnesty for all non-payers, and those jailed!

Tory NHS lies wear thin

By Martin Thomas

"Privatisation is inevitable as long as the NHS is underfunded and we have this type of rationing system", said Gordon Best last week.

Best used to be a top adviser to NHS boss Duncan Nichol, and co-wrote a document with Nichol for the Tory Government's 1988 review of NHS policy. Now he says:

"People will have to wait more for treatment, or won't get certain treatments at all, and they will be forced to go private for those treatments. The influx of private money will in turn take the pressure off the Government to spend more on the NHS, leading to more people going private".

Whatever the Tories' desperate denials, their NHS "internal market" is ideally suited to slotting in private hospitals, private GP contracts, and private health insurance schemes, and

gradually increasing their role until the remaining free public health service is only a bare-bones emergency service for the poor.

Patrick Minford, an academic influential in right-wing Tory circles, has published (through the Institute for Economic Affairs) a pamphlet advocating just that.

Meanwhile the evidence continues to mount that the Tories' cash squeeze is wrecking the health service.

Mark Baker, boss of the

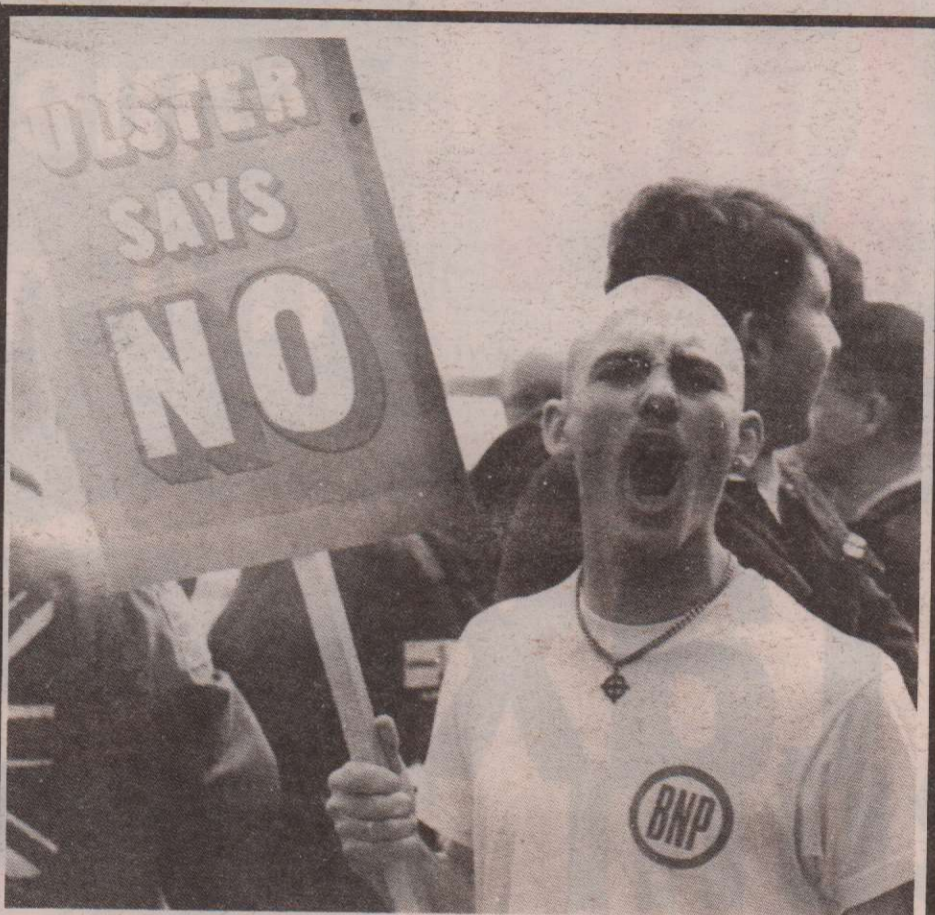
"flagship" Bradford Hospital trust, has resigned, and the trust will have to make big cuts to balance its books. London's hospitals are heading for huge cuts, with the Government undecided about whether to plan where the cuts come or leave the choice to a fight to the death in the marketplace.

One in five nurses, a survey showed this week, are so hard up that they take second jobs — often on top of heavy overtime in their nursing

jobs.

The Labour Party leaders have denounced the Tories' drive towards privatisation with a vigour not seen from them for a long time. They continue, however, to refuse to make any definite commitment to more money for NHS from a Labour government, let alone restoring the damage done by the Tories since 1979.

Without that commitment, opposition to the privatisation of health will be just words.



Stop these scum!

Fascist BNP scum turned out to harass an Irish solidarity meeting in the West Midlands. This is just one of many recent provocations by these jackals. It's time to

start building a broad labour movement-based campaign to stop them. Photo: Mark Salmon

New legislation not a cure-all for child abuse

By Liz Dickinson

Last week, two further incidents of child abuse were in the news.

In Lancashire, a judge declared his sympathy for the former head of a school for autistic children. She had admitted three charges of cruelty against her pupils including slapping an eight year old hard on the leg ten times, and making a ten year old girl cry by twisting her hair because she was not reading properly.

The woman was given a non-custodial sentence.

Two other members of staff were given non-custodial sentences after admitting ill-treatment of the pupils, including force-feeding and slapping.

The judge took into account that the staff were "tremendously overstretched but that he had to make clear society's disapproval while acknowledging that you had much to be proud of."

Autistic children have great difficulty making sense of the world, many cannot speak and they are extremely vulnerable to abuse.

In this case they were supposed to be safe at school — they were not.

Parents have said that they first started to complain as early as 1977, but alleged that education officers had ignored them.

The second story to make the news was the findings of a Bradford report on their care homes.

The report highlights the crisis in 14 of the city's children's homes which house 100 children.

Major disturbing features included sexual abuse, young female residents involved in prostitution, low staff morale and poor living conditions.

The Labour-controlled council unanimously approved a series of measures including: a

"Sexual abuse, physical abuse and psychological torture as in 'pindown' are rife."

re-organisation of staff, review of staff training, regular visits by councillors and new guidelines for handling difficult situations. All of this sounds very familiar.

Two of the homes are to be refurbished within the next 6 months, a third was renovated in the last 6 weeks.

Councillor John Godward warned that there was no overnight solution, called for more government cash and claimed that Bradford's children's homes were no worse than any other local authorities.

The depressing fact is that he is probably right.

Over the past 5 years there has been scandal after scandal about the plight of children in the 'care' of local authorities.

Sexual abuse, physical abuse and psychological torture as in 'pindown' are rife.

The lowly status of residential social workers, their relatively low pay compared to that of field social workers, lack of training, low morale and the difficult behaviour of the children and young people they work with have also been frequently highlighted.

Thorough training, parity of pay, good support and supervision — yes, to all of these.

But do workers really have to be trained not to abuse children? It has taken a major piece of legislation to put children's rights on the Statute Book.

If we were, as is claimed, a 'child centred society', would we not recognise these rights as fundamental? Should we really need the new Children Act, which came into force in mid-October, to tell us that children and young people have a right to be listened to, respected and kept safe? And will the new legislation fundamentally change social attitudes to children?

I think not — it's a far deeper issue.

Students: All out October 30th!

Students from colleges right across Britain will be marching through the streets of Manchester on October 30th.

The demonstration called by Manchester area NUS (MANUS) will be a focus for building a campaign against the Tories' education plans.

The MANUS full-time convenor, Richard Love told *Socialist Organiser*: "We've had promises of coaches from colleges as far away as Swansea and Brighton and from Newcastle and Scotland too."

"We hope the demonstration will act as a catalyst for the campaign against student debt and

for equal access to education. We organised the demonstration because the NUS leadership don't seem to be interested in campaigning anymore".

As well as political speakers, there will be comedians and a social event in the evening. A big demonstration will prove that given the right kind of leadership and hard work, students can be mobilised.

In counterposition to the do-nothing Kinnockite clique that runs NUS, *Socialist Organiser* and Left Unity supporters will be out in the colleges organising students and building campaigns.

For more information about the demonstration, ring Richard on 061-275 2973.



The lie machine

What have these four tabloid page ones in common? The looming general election.

The Tories are on the ropes over the NHS. Nobody believes them on the NHS any more. So they try to pretend Labour has made preposterous claims —

and then climbed down. Opinion polls show it is doing them no good. People have caught on.

The NHS is Labour's general election issue. So the Tories are beginning to play the race card, using "cheating immigrants" as code. Cheating Tories!



Albanian refugees kicked out of Italy last August

Major manoeuvres to cheat electorate

It's not cricket!

It isn't cricket! The cricketering Tory Prime Minister John Major would not believe it if he were to be told of a species of cricket in which the batsman could hog the wicket with no obligation to move whatever anyone else did — within a large

span of time — until *he* judged it to be the best time for himself to start running. "That isn't cricket!"

Yet where the general election is concerned, the Tory Prime Minister can drag things out, despite the unpopularity of the Tory government, for many, many months more, waiting for the Tories' best chance to scrape through to victory.

It isn't cricket. And it isn't proper democracy either!

If Britain were a properly developed democracy elections would be held at fixed intervals. The Tory manipulations we are seeing now would be ruled out.

We do not have a properly developed democracy.

Right now we see the Tory party — which John Major last year rightly described as one of the best fighting machines in Western Europe — and the bourgeois class it represents ducking and diving in the hope of winning the election — despite the collapse of the poll tax, despite the collapse of their economic policies, despite three million unemployed, who are being joined every week by thousands more.

All the immense power of the ruling class is now being mobilised to win the election, and keep the Tories in office. Everything from

their lying press to their power to manipulate interest rates.

Their big weapon in the present prolonged election campaign — and that is what it is — is the big, hard-faced lie, repeated again and again, without shame or scruple!

"All the immense power of the ruling class is now being mobilised to win the election, and keep the Tories in office. Everything from their lying press to their power to manipulate interest rates."

Every half way informed person knows what they have done and are doing to the National Health Service, created by the 1945 Labour government and itself the single biggest achievement of the labour movement in politics.

Do they come clean and admit it, pose the issue clearly to the elec-

torate, ask honestly and openly for a democratic mandate for the NHS policies they are implementing now and will continue to implement if they fineagle their way back to office in the general election?

They do not. They lie. And they lie. And they lie.

Their politicians lie. Their press lies. But the day-to-day experiences of those who use the NHS do not lie. That is the Tories' big problem about the NHS. It is the problem all their lies may not be able to solve for them.

So they have started to beat the chauvinist drums about keeping out "cheating immigrants" and "bogus" political refugees. It is comparatively low-key stuff yet, but their press (see page 2) is already trying to whip up nationalist fervour, presenting the Tory government as the guardians of the British against hordes of refugees.

The vast fortress of bureaucratic walls and bulwarks that already surround the EC are now being raised and strengthened against people seeking entry. The Tories prepare to go further than that in the belief that the resulting social and political atmosphere will help them hold on to power.

If Britain were a proper democracy the Tories would not be able to manoeuvre like this. They

would not have the option of going on for nine months more, poisoning the political atmosphere, frustrating the desire of the majority for a change of government. They would have to go out and face the electorate — now.

And if the Labour Party had fighting leaders instead of the present demoralised gang around Neil Kinnock, then the Tories would get the hard ride they deserve for what they are doing now. It does not. We have no-guts Neil and his chums.

It is not cricket — and it is not proper democracy.

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

Karl Marx

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Letter from Hungary The grey Danube

By John Cunningham

The Danube is no longer blue as in the Strauss waltz, more the colour of wet concrete nowadays, but it is still the most important waterway in Central and Eastern Europe. Through its 2,842 km journey to the Black Sea, the Danube joins East and West, demarcates lands which have known centuries of territorial dispute and, as the enormous barges passing through Budapest's bridges attest, is a major commercial thoroughfare.

It is also more. For centuries, the aspirations for peace, in an area of the world seemingly perpetually inclined to war, were often centred on the river. The Hungarian poet Ady once described the Danube lands as a "pillory made for halving people and halving nations". Another Hungarian poet, Dezso Kosztolanyi said in the early 20s, "Not even the Ganges is as sacred as the Danube".

The Danube, often the signifier of national difference and territorial delineation is also ambiguously and at the same time a unifier. The revolutionaries of 1848, for example, planned a new state which would have included much of present day Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, Moldavia and Wallachia. They were ruthlessly crushed by the Habsburg and Tsarist armies, but their land was to be called the Danubian United States and the Danube was to be its heart and artery.

Although attempts were made to resurrect this idea after the First World War, the victorious powers were content to reaffirm the 1859 Congress of Paris which declared the principle of free navigation along the Danube. The Belgrade Agreement in 1948 maintained this principle, but precious little was done to use the Danube as anything other than a commercial trade route.

The proposal then to divert part of the Danube and build a hydro-electricity plant at Bos-Gabcikovo — the Nagymaros River Barrage System (GNRBS) — thus met with a certain degree of approval. It was, after all, commercial exploitation of the river, something which had been going on for centuries. The outrage at the proposals, a joint Austrian-Hungarian-Czechoslovakian project, from all over Central Europe testify and demonstrate the other side of the equation. The plan was regarded as little more than the rape and destruction of the soul of Central Europe. Posters and banners appeared in Hungary with 'I love the Duna' (the Hungarian name for the Danube). Green activists, environmentalists and many thousands of ordinary people took to the streets in Prague, Budapest and Vienna.

The scheme in its essentials represents the worst kind of centralised state planning and plain ignorance, this time backed by Austrian technology and large amounts of Schillings. It has two main components: the first being to divert the river some 30 km into Czech territory, with the old course of the river maintained, but at a greatly reduced level. Second, the diversion is intended to feed into a barrage at Bos-Gabcikovo where a huge hydro-electricity plant is to be built.

Environmentally, the scheme is almost universally regarded as a total disaster. Diverting the stream of the river will play havoc with the water table over a vast area. The by-pass canal is elevated some 20m above the land-level in an area of known seismic instability!

Key areas such as certain forest and wetlands would be lost due to the lowering of the water table, large areas of agricultural land would be lost, fishing destroyed and long established communities divided or simply gone forever.

Not surprisingly, opposition has been strong. Nor has it been a particularly fortuitous time for such projects. Many people, from all walks of life, are increasingly wary of the kind of major tampering with nature involved in such schemes. Dreamed up in the mid-70s by planners from the Czech and Hungarian governments, the political changes in those two countries have also cast a great shadow of doubt over its continuance.

In Hungary especially, the new government of Josef Antall decided to pull out. The Austrians, after making sure that their construction companies were amply compensated, also pulled out. Only the Czech and Slovak government now appears interested in carrying on with this monster — even though the scheme will meet only 2% of the country's energy needs.

Stay in the Labour

Jeremy Corbyn MP analyses the prospects for socialists in the Labour Party after the Brighton conference

Labour Party conference was a pre-election event. This is the stage at which the leadership is at its most powerful, and the left is isolated.

There are also some unusual circumstances this year. The events in the USSR have led to a general attack on socialist ideas.

The adoption of one-member-one-vote, first for parliamentary selections, and now for internal party elections is not in itself a bad thing. But voting taken without political discussion becomes a plaything of the media.

And the establishment of "policy commissions" will make it difficult to challenge the National Executive Committee. Presumably the conference will be invited to vote

for or against NEC-recommended policy, with no opportunity to amend documents. This year's consultation on the future of party conference is designed to lead to the abolition of party conference and its replacement by a rally.

The witch-hunt has already gone a long way. Militant supporters have been hounded. Dave Nellist and Terry Fields have been treated very badly, and banned from party conference without right of reply.

Now Labour groups in local government are being given the automatic support of the National Executive every time they make an attack on their own population. In Lambeth the defiant Labour group said it was acting on policy of the local party. It was threatened with suspension.

This all has a detrimental effect on recruiting people to the party. For instance, there is now the smallest number of under-25 year olds in the party for 40 years.

Some people are leaving the Labour Party — but this

is a terrible mistake. People should stay in the Labour Party. This party was set up as the political voice of the trade unions and working class as a whole. To leave the party because of a particular authoritarian trend is to give in. It is exactly what the right wants. My message is: do not leave, stay and fight!

Outside the Labour Party is the wilderness. Look at the experience of the ILP split from the Labour Party in the 1930s. The ILP was virtually obliterated.

The left can still win victories. We beat the Labour leadership at conference on arms cuts.

And we must recognise that the party reflects what happens in society generally. There is no easy way out, but my feeling is that we have passed the worst times. Although there is some holding back on the industrial front prior to the election, I think that after the election we will be in an entirely new situation.

A future Labour government will meet trade union action. Will Labour really be

able to say we will not make a pension increase because we need another Trident submarine?

The events in Eastern Europe do not mean that socialism has failed. The party played an elitist role and became a passport to privilege. The Soviet state was a highly centralised authoritarian state. We now see an explosion caused by all sorts of different pressures.

70 years of Russian domination over the Soviet nationalities is leading to break-up. People are demanding better living standards.

The problem which the people in the USSR will have to face up to is that capitalism means attacks on working class living standards. The people who were demonstrating for pluralism and democracy were not demonstrating for lower living standards, but that is what will come.

Socialism is not dead. It will continue to live because capitalism cannot provide for working class people.

Jeremy Corbyn was talking to Martin Thomas.

"Left wing" witch-hunters

By John O'Mahony

How can you tell when a political purge has turned into a witch-hunt, and the witch-hunt has taken on a momentum of its own?

That was easy back in the days when witches were people accused of doing evil things with the Devil and on the Devil's behalf, as distinct from the Labour Party now, where people are hunted for politics which the men in suits who run the party consider diabolical.

The witchfinders would seek out witches, make accusations, have people immersed in water to see if the Devil came and saved them. (If they drowned, that proved that they were innocent of all devilish protection). Maybe

some witches would be condemned to be burned or hanged. Whisperings and accusations would become common.

The Devil and his agents could be anywhere, and were known to be everywhere. An appearance of being the very opposite of what people thought the Devil was, was itself cause for suspicion.

People whom you did not like, or were in conflict with, were especially likely to arouse your suspicion. Apparently innocent acts had to be looked at afresh with the fearful knowledge uppermost in the mind.

Wasn't that old woman seen near a cow that later died unexpectedly? There you are! The hysteria and fear would build up and up.

And then would come the transformation. People

would get up in church and level fantastic accusations of lewd and malevolent dealings with the Devil, of having gone for midnight rides on the Devil's spiky tail, of having cast diabolical spells on people who had recently died — at whom? At themselves!

Women and men, driven out of their wits by fear and hysteria, and terrorised into identifying completely with their witch-hunting oppressors, would get up and confess — in paroxysms of exhibitionism and attention-seeking — to fantastic deeds done for the greater glory of Satan. Anyone who has seen or read Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, a play about the 17th century witch-hunts which took place in Salem, Massachusetts, will remember the demented confessing young women.

That stage of fantastic self-

accusation is the real take-off point for a full-blown witch-hunt.

Clare Short's performance in Brighton during Labour Party conference strongly suggests that this stage has now been reached in the Labour Party.

Short got up in church in Brighton — that is, at the *Tribune* fringe meeting — and denounced herself and others. This is what she said, according to Edward Pearce in the *Guardian*:

"If Mrs Thatcher became a long-term prime minister when she should have been a short-term leader of the opposition, that was the fault of 'us the left', of factions, quarrels and attacks on the leadership". *Tribune* reported Clare Short as follows: "Some people say



Jo Richardson gave the right wing what they wanted on the witch-hunt, and then they dumped her

Party and fight!



The emperor has no principles



Kinnock's panel of 'left-wing' witch-finders: Margaret Beckett, David Blunkett and Clare Short

The everyday reality of police frame-ups

By Mike Shankland ("Conviction")

Recent months have seen a spectacular series of exposures of police frame-ups. The Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, and Judith Ward are only the best-known cases.

On 26 March this year Tony Wellington, a young black prisoner from Birmingham, had his conviction for robbery quashed by the Court of Appeal. Wellington had been arrested in 1987 and questioned by members of the infamous West Midlands Serious Crime Squad.

After being arrested and charged with bag snatching offences, Wellington made a signed confession admitting to those charges. Police officers added a fabricated written admission to a post office robbery. At his trial Wellington maintained that he was innocent of the latter charge but was found guilty and was sentenced to ten years.

At the time of Wellington's appeal, 95 cases of alleged "framing" were currently being investigated from the West Midlands area. Fifteen more cases are to go to appeal in the wake of Wellington's release. The West Midlands Serious Crime Squad was also involved in the Birmingham Six case.

Evidence has been building up dramatically since 1987. In that year, four men charged with the 1986 Hootys Warehouse robbery were tried at Dudley Crown Court. The defence solicitors proved that a bogus admission statement had been added to the interview notes of one defendant and that a false confession had been attributed to another. The prosecution dropped their case against all four men.

Over the following months the police lost further cases as juries became more reluctant to convict at trials where "confessions" were the sole prosecution evidence. In July 1989 a "framed" black prisoner, Keith Parchment, had a five year sentence for robbery quashed after his solicitor proved that police had contrived evidence against him.

In August 1989 it was announced that the case file of an Irish-born prisoner, Michael Bromell, arrested for "unlawful wounding" in Coventry and convicted some two years previously, had gone "missing" from police custody. A few weeks previously Bromell had written to Police Chief Geoffrey Dear protesting his innocence and claiming that officers had contrived statements against him. Dear had sent for Bromell's papers only to find that they were not available.

He responded by disbanding the whole elite unit of his force. Officers from the Serious Crime Squad were moved to other areas of policing, and West Yorks

police began a mammoth inquiry into all cases handled by the Squad since 1986. Some cases of the two previous years were also to be investigated.

The well publicised cases, such as the Birmingham Six, are simply the tip of the iceberg. "Framed" prisoners often serve longer sentences — as they risk losing parole for not expressing remorse for their "crimes" — and get victimised by the prison service for being supposed troublemakers.

Prison can be a hard, brutal experience for any person and the issue of prisoners' rights warrants far more serious attention from socialists and other radicals. Some say that torture does not take place here. Tell that to inmates of Long Lartin prison such as Derek Harry Tredaway or Keith Twitchell, who had plastic bags placed over their heads whilst West Midlands Serious Crime Squad officers forced them to sign prepared "confessions" to armed robberies! Or to Martin Foran who was fitted up by the Squad for robbery offences and denied medical treatment for a severe illness whilst in prison!

Many crimes are "cleared up" by plea bargaining arranged with prisoners already in custody. Some people in police custody get "admissions" forced from them.

There are political reasons for these injustices. The legal system is class biased and elitist. People with little or no money have to make do with solicitors on legal aid rotas, who are rarely enthusiastic and want these trials over with so that they can move on to more financially rewarding work. People with money can seek out more competent solicitors and pay them well.

Once in the courtroom, people find that their background or their lifestyle are on trial as well. Judges have the prejudices associated with their privileged class and their age group.

Take an everyday example: a young man fitted up for assaulting a police officer after the anti-poll tax protests of March 1990.

He was arrested outside Hackney Town Hall during a demo. Some protestors had thrown stones at the police, who then charged the crowd.

He was assaulted by the police, arrested and later framed for assaulting a police officer, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. The authorities had quite simply decided that any person who had taken part in this protest had placed themselves outside the law. The police want to get a quota of arrests and then arrange a case against those they caught. The message is clear: "stay off the streets or risk jail".

Police malpractice will only be curbed when the issue is taken far more seriously. In the meantime, those prisoners who have been fitted up deserve our active support and solidarity.

the Left are the people who are against the leadership. That's not good enough, comrades.

"We have to use the democracy of our party to lead it where we want it to go. We should be having a vibrant discussion. Where is it?"

"The Trotskyist entrism project damaged the Left. It was an enormously painful journey for some of us to deal with it. But Walton did it. I like Dave [Nellist] and Terry [Fields], but we can't treat MPs differently from ordinary members".

She may also have slipped some rat poison in Neil Kinnock's tea at a meeting of the NEC. This and other revelations can be expected the next time Ms Short has an over-conivial lunch with some Edward Pearce or other.

Now in fact this poor misguided, confused woman has, on the whole, led a pretty blameless political life.

Her left credentials amount to what, exactly? Concern with women's rights? But though her opposition to naked women in newspapers may have stung the Sun into calling her Crazy Clare, or something like that, her politics here are strictly in line with her good Catholic upbringing.

What else has Clare Short been "left" on? Ireland? Well, yes, but even on that she has been no red Republican enragé.

True, on certain platforms

and at certain meetings Short does not differentiate from an identikit "left" troops-out view. But Robert Maxwell has the same policy on Ireland! And for "considered" and formal occasions Clare Short presents herself as against a precipitate British withdrawal "without a political settlement".

Sometimes she sounds a bit like SO — except that for Short this is not something she tries to educate the left about so that it can be more effective against the establishment; it is her "moderate" face for the establishment.

On not a great deal else can Clare Short base any confession to having been left-wing. She has never been a prominent organiser of the left. I don't think she has ever joined any "faction" less respectable than the Tribune Group.

When this woman goes around denouncing herself for her left-wing past, then the Labour Party really is in the grip of witch-hunt hysteria!

Clare Short may even have been reduced to this state by fear, for she is being hounded in her constituency by the EETPU, who are trying to deselect her. In some areas of today's Labour Party, even Clare Short is "too left wing".

Of course, this classic demented old lady performance of Short's would be impossible without the

credulous, scared, confused audience provided for her by the Tribune meeting. The reports I have read do not say whether or not others at that meeting, following Short's self-denunciation, got up and denounced themselves, or spoke in tongues before rolling on the floor and frothing at the mouth.

There is now a whole culture in the Labour Party which might be called "witch-hunt left". Tribune editorials express this viewpoint. Tribune is in favour of driving Militant out of the Labour Party. With impeccable schoolbook logic — and on one level, irrefutably — Tribune says that Militant cannot stand against Labour and be in the Party. With great democratic rectitude it insists that the MPs Nellist and Fields should get no special treatment; and it seems quite incapable of putting these things in the context of what is going on in the Labour Party.

They seem incapable, too, of grasping the imperious authoritarian logic that will work itself through in the sort of one-faction Labour Party they are now in fact supporting. Clare Short may denounce the left and her own half-imaginary past: but what if the EETPU is not placated?

What happens if, under a new Labour government, Tribune finds something intolerable and protests or, heaven forbid, organises against it? Some Clare Short — or perhaps this Clare Short — will denounce them for

factionalism and for their "contempt for Labour Party democracy", increasingly defined as rule by an authoritarian machine in the name of a passive and media-manipulated "majority".

Short's ridiculous performance should alarm all those in Labour's "centre left" who are concerned for the well-being of the Labour Party, and for its spiritual and mental health.

They should look to themselves, and to the witch-hunting culture they have allowed to grow up in the former left of the Labour Party. That is where Clare Short is coming from (and, also, going from!)

Defeats — most of them avoidable defeats — have produced the present mood on the Labour left, in which nothing matters but getting the Tories out. This left quietly allows Kinnockites like Clare Short to blame the defeats on those who attempted to make Labour a fitting instrument for working-class struggle, when the blame lies squarely with the right wing and with former left-wingers like Kinnock who have less fight in them, and less anti-Tory fire in their minds and in their bellies than even a Paddy Ashdown has.

The serious left will treat the Shorts and the other Tribune witch-hunters with the contempt they deserve. When they have exhausted their usefulness so too, probably, will the right.

GRAFFITI



God's little angels saving us from barbarism...

Divine justice?

GRAFFITI

We've had God's cop. We've had God's sports commentator turned eco-personality. Now we have God's judge — a London magistrate, Ronald Bartle, who believes the police "are doing the work of God" and "are the ultimate defence between civilisation and barbarism".

Bartle's most remarkable opinion is "I never recall any attempt by a [police] officer to exaggerate in the slightest degree the circumstances of an offence".

Strange that a man with such critical faculties should be entrusted with handling charges against the detectives who framed the Birmingham Six.

Stranger still when you remember it was also he who threw out charges against the police about Wapping and the Guildford Four.

Give me David Icke any day — at least he's a harmless religious nut.

They are unpleasant, potentially vicious and should be muzzled.

No, not the delegates at Tory Party conference, but pit bull terriers. According to one vet, reported in Saturday's *Guardian*, there is a problem for pit bull owners having their dogs, well, chopped.

"They see their dicks on the end of a lead, basically".

The true spirit of philanthropism is abroad again in the US.

The good folk of Berkeley have been on the horns of a dilemma — if you give money to a beggar on the street, they'll only spend it on tobacco and alcohol.

But the solution is at hand — tokens worth 25 cents (in bundles of \$2 to \$5 for the regular philanthropist) can now be bought, which are redeemable only against food, laundry and bus tickets.

This new paternalism is sure to be a great topic of conversation at Berkeley cocktail parties.

The Thomas affair has become a real life soap opera in the States. Is Professor Anita Hill the professional woman with a grudge, or is Judge Clarence Thomas a sexist bigot with so little respect for justice he would himself lie under oath?

It would appear that the second is more likely (and many thought up until now a qualification to be a judge).

In recent years the courts in the US have begun to take sexual harassment at work much more seriously. The old "reasonable man" test, whereby harassment against a woman was assessed by a standard of whether a "reasonable man" might find the behaviour offensive.

Then came "reasonable person". Now the legal system has decided that the best measure of harassment is if a "reasonable woman" would be harassed by the behaviour.

Great legal decisions of our time (Part 512). The High Court last week decided that there was no illegal discrimination against women as part-time workers.

With respect to redundancy, redundancy pay, maternity leave and pay, part-time workers get a much worse deal than full-time workers — and 90% of part-time workers are women.

The High Court decided that this was indirect discrimination, but the judge — evidently an expert in labour market economics — decided that increasing protection for part-time workers would damage employment prospects for part-timers.

Another enlightened legal decision. I suppose if we were to remove all workers' protection, unemployment would be a thing of the past.

Remember the "Who's Behind Labour?" poster campaign run by the Tories?

Maybe it's time to launch a "Who's behind the Tories?" campaign.

It seems that many of the Tories' business sponsors are a bit miffed about the recession and are not coughing up.

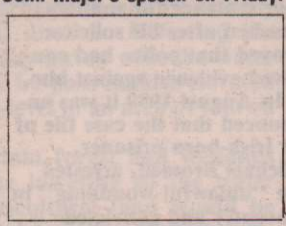
So the answer is "No one much", give or take a Greek fascist or two.

Questionable politics meets terrible poetry in the person of Ron Todd, here writing about Mikhail Gorbachev's granddaughter at the time of the August coup:

"Anastasia will never know the fight/That Grandpa made to keep his dream in reach./But when full-grown that young girl in sunlight/Will understand — that Grandpa gave her more,/Much more, than access to a beach."

Fortunately, we will never know what John Betjeman would have done as General Secretary of the T&G.

Below we print the highlights of John Major's speech on Friday:



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And pigs will fly
... when the Tories fund the NHS adequately



Citizen Maxwell

PRESS GANG

The Guardian
DAILY MIRROR
STAR

By Jim Denham

They showed "Citizen Kane" on the telly a few nights ago and, for the umpteenth time, I sat enthralled.

The acting is wonderful of course, and the fancy camera-work still impresses after all these years. But I have a feeling that a large part of the film's enduring popularity is that it confirms the widely-held conspiracy theory of the press: this holds

that the newspapers are controlled by a cabal of sinister men in top-hats, plotting to brainwash the masses and further their own vested interests.

This view of the press (and of the media as a whole) can regularly be heard at left-wing meetings. It is the standard explanation for the supposed 'backwardness' of the working class and for all setbacks suffered by the left and the labour movement.

'Left' MPs and union leaders, in particular, often seem to verge on paranoia about the press.

The trouble with this kind of conspiracy theory is that it casts the majority of ordinary working class people in the role of gullible dupes at the mercy of the all-powerful press moguls.

According to this view, Labour could never win an election, given the overwhelming Tory bias of the British newspaper industry.

Fortunately, all the evidence is that the vast majority of newspaper readers (and especially readers of the Tory tabloids) take a healthily cynical attitude towards the press: in poll after poll, readers of papers like the *Sun*, *Star*, *Mail* and *Express* have demonstrated that they know perfectly well that their chosen papers are biased, inaccurate and dishonest (which begs the question of why the hell people buy these papers in the first place, but that's a different question...)

Of course, there are press conspiracies: the *Mail* and the *Express* in recent weeks have exceeded even their own habitual pro-Tory bias, to become little more than mouthpieces for the government. The "No November election" leak was fed to the five most solidly Tory papers (the *Mail*, the *Express*, the *Sun*, the *Telegraph* and the *Times*) by John Wakeham in a deliberate attempt to

upstage Kinnock's big speech the next day.

But the days when press barons like Beaverbrook and Northcliffe in Britain and William Randolph Hearst (the model for Kane) in America used their papers to interfere directly into the political process, are long gone. Apart, that is, from Robert Maxwell.

It is a considerable irony that the last of the classic Kane/Hearst megalomaniacal proprietors should also be Britain's only "socialist" media baron.

Kinnock and the Labour Front Bench will continue to turn a blind eye to all Maxwell's dubious business practices (not to mention his union-busting) just so long as the *Mirror* continues to support Labour. Kane died muttering the mysterious word "rosebud"; there is no mystery about Citizen Maxwell's devotion to the thornless rose of Labour.

Who says I'm invisible?

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Dickinson

It was with very personal interest that I read extracts from Germaine Greer's new book "The Change, Women, Ageing and the Menopause". My reactions turned from interest to disbelief to anger.

According to Greer,

menopausal and post-menopausal women become invisible. Whether waiting to order a drink, or queueing in the shops they will be ignored.

Furthermore, we are fast approaching being unwanted, undervalued and sexually undesirable. But, Greer says, thought unwanted we will be... FREE!

She intimates that a woman's usefulness, vitality, desirability and her sense of worth vanish along with her menstrual cycle. Even if you retain a sex drive... forget it, because it's unlikely anyone will want to have sex with you.

But don't despair you mature women out there. You will pass into a serene old age, full of wisdom and at one with nature — and you will probably only be fifty!

Greer indulges in sweeping generalisations about menopausal symptoms and their effects ignoring the fact that millions of women have millions of different experiences of the menopause.

She also takes a swipe at women who choose to take Hormone Replacement Therapy to alleviate, what can be, the quite debilitating effects of menopause.

She says we are sick and that we should stick it out as the symptoms might only last two years (!) And, after all, it is only natural. Ms Greer, aren't period pains natural as well? Shouldn't women stop taking pain killers for those?

A mature student with finals looming, I started taking HRT, because day and night I was literally dripping with sweat from 'hot flushes'. I couldn't sleep. My menopause was early and the symptoms extreme. After discussions with my GP I made an informed choice to take HRT.

If Germaine Greer had been menopausal whilst making her way through college, I doubt she would put forward the same polemic.

She does make some valid points about the drug companies selling HRT.

They would be more valid if she confined her wrath to the system of capitalist production and profit, rather than to the women whose daily lives are made more bearable by the end product.

The male-dominated medical profession also comes under fire. Rightly so. Many unnecessary hysterectomies are carried out on women experiencing

the onset of menopause.

What women need is information about all the options. We need to be able to discuss the menopause dispelling myths and histrionics, and then make informed choices.

Mature women in their forties have moved on, sometimes painfully, from the Women's Movement of the '70s, Greer's heyday.

We began to realise that our place in society should not be determined by our age, reproductive capacity or sexual attractiveness.

This hasn't been easy for working class women after years of conditioning in an ageist and sexist society. We've fought long and hard to challenge the biological determinism that Greer now seems trapped by.

Finally, Jill Neville in the *Independent* writes, "Greer acts out her own personal therapy in sky-writing, and makes the megalomaniac error of projecting her own experience onto everybody else."

If Germaine Greer feels invisible and unwanted because she has passed through the menopause, that is sad. She must not assume that we all feel the same. I am not invisible, and neither will you be.



Combat in the Croatian-held town of Vokovar during September

After 8 ceasefires the war grinds on

The Yugoslav cockpit

By Colin Foster

Despite eight ceasefires to date (Tuesday 15 October), the war between Serbia and Croatia grinds on.

The Serbian government and the federal army are signalling concessions, but they look more like manoeuvres for diplomatic advantage than genuine peace offers.

Non-Serbian soldiers have been deserting from the army, and some opposition to the war has begun to develop among young Serbians. On 7 October the declarations of independence by Croatia and Slovenia came into effect, and it seems certain now that Croatia's independence as well as Slovenia's will be recognised by the European Community.

In response, the Serbian government is signalling that it will recognise the independence of Croatia if given guarantees on the

rights of the Serbian minority which makes up 12 per cent of Croatia's population. The Serbian-officered Yugoslav army has separated itself a little from the Serbian government, and tried to make deals to secure the safe withdrawal of army garrisons in Croatia which had been blocked by the Croatian militia.

But a secure peace between the two biggest nationalities of the dying Yugoslav federation is still a long way off. Serbia has rephrased its demand as "rights for the Serbian minority in Croatia" but what in fact it proposes is that the areas of Croatia with substantial Serbian populations — those invaded by the Yugoslav army in recent weeks — should become independent mini-states which would then merge into a Greater Serbia. The Croat minority that would then be created in that Greater Serbia will be driven out by terror.

The Croatian nationalist government, under duress, has promised

autonomy for the Serbian-populated areas in its territory; the Serbs, with good reason, are sceptical. Such is the intermingling of populations that two rival nationalist regimes will always have "valid" grievances against each other.

The European Community, after first saying that it would not recognise any nations breaking away from Yugoslavia, is now nervously trying to manage and control the break-up of Yugoslavia, and both Serbia and Croatia are learning to feint and manoeuvre for diplomatic advantage.

Yugoslavia was patched together as a state by the victors of the First World War, in an area covering many nationalities, heavily intermingled in parts, and crossing historic fault-lines between Christianity and Islam, Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets, the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Ottoman empire.

"The conflict has reawakened hostilities from World War 2, with an intensity apparently little diminished by the lapse of almost half a century."

Possibly the Tito regime after World War 2 — enjoying relatively wide popular support because of Tito's guerrilla struggle against the fascist occupying powers — gave the federation more viability for a while. Tito pursued a much more careful and less centralistic policy towards the different nationalities than Stalinist leaders in other states.

Especially after Tito's death in 1980, however, the federation degenerated into a cartel of competing nationalistic bureaucracies. As the economy slumped, and the Yugoslav state weakened, in the 1980s, nationalism became the channel through which social discontent was expressed.

In 1987-8 there was a big wave of strikes. But it ended not with the consolidation of a strong radical

workers' movement, organised around social demands, but with the ascendancy of the chauvinist and demagogic Slobodan Milosevic as leader of Serbia.

In 1989 Milosevic suppressed the autonomy of the Albanian-populated region of Kosovo, using great violence, and clearly signalled Serbia's drive for domination. Such as the criss-crossing of historic conflicts in Yugoslavia that each nationality can lay claim to vast areas outside its heartland, either on historic grounds (Kosovo is reckoned to have been the heartland of medieval Serbia), or on grounds of dispersed fragments of its people.

The smaller nationalities sought independence as a protection against Serbian domination. Slovenia and Croatia, in the more prosperous north-west of Yugoslavia, were especially eager because of their better possibilities (or so they reckon) of linking up with Austria and the European Community, and because they regarded the more economically backward areas of Yugoslavia, to the south and east, as an unfair burden on them.

The conflict has reawakened hostilities from World War 2, with an intensity apparently little diminished by the lapse of almost half a century. Serbian nationalists denounce the Croats as "Ustashe", after the Nazi-sponsored Croatian fascist regime in World War 2; Croatian nationalists regard the Serbs as "Chetniks" (Serbian nationalists from World War 2 who, by all accounts other than Croatian, did not inflict the same level of chauvinist atrocities as the Ustashe).

The war between Serbia and Croatia could be followed by others. Bosnia-Herzegovina, with an intermingled population of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, could be torn apart by competition between Serbia and Croatia. Macedonia is likely to go for independence.

Only the right to self-determination for each nation, coupled with full democratic rights for minorities, can lay the basis for peace and the development of a strong workers' movement.



Tito pursued a much more careful and less centralist policy towards the different nationalities than other Stalinist leaders

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Labour must fight!

Support the "splitters"!

The decision of the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) to form itself into a new union has brought forth predictable cries of condemnation from predictable sources.

Frank Doran, the Labour Party's "spokesman on Oil and Gas", called the decision "damaging to the cause of workers off-shore"; Jimmie Airlie of the AEU called it "foolish and tragic"; while Alex Ferry, General Secretary of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) called upon offshore workers to put their faith in the "existing unions".

All of which is a bit rich, given that OILC has been attempting to work with the "existing unions" (and, indeed, to overcome their sectional rivalries) ever since 1988 — only to be stabbed in the back this summer when the AEU, EETPU and GMB signed another hated "hook-up" agreement, involving automatic de-recognition at a date determined by the oil companies.

The final straw was the refusal of the AEU and EETPU to even attend meetings for a united offshore union federation at this year's TUC. Instead, the TUC unions proposed a toothless sub-committee of the CSEU, from which OILC would be excluded.

OILC's leading figures (notably Ronnie MacDonald) had been resisting rank and file demands for a new offshore union and pinning their hopes on the creation of an Offshore Federation with executive power over its constituent unions. The "hook-up" sell-out, the sectarianism of the AEU and EETPU, and the failure of the other unions (notably the TGWU, MSF and RMT) to come up with any worthwhile proposals, made the creation of a new union inevitable.

Anyone who has doubts about the wisdom of OILC's decision should read the document they prepared for this year's TUC, *The Crisis in Offshore Trade Unionism*: this is a closely-argued critique of the existing unions' failure to organise effectively and it puts forward eminently sensible proposals for a campaign for an all-inclusive offshore industry agreement. In particular, the authors propose making use of the Cullen Report (into the causes of the Piper Alpha disaster) to give the unions a toe-hold in the health and safety process:

"Specifically, he [Cullen] laid down two conditions which the unions must fulfil if they are to play a part in the safety process: (1) the trade unions should achieve recognition in relation to a substantial aspect of labour relations; (2) that the union should have substantial membership on the installation in question. Those two conditions — recognition and membership on the installation — can only be achieved if the unions pool their resources in the kind of Offshore Federation which the OILC is calling for..."

Given the abject failure of the existing unions to seize what OILC describes as the "rather slender life-line" presented by Cullen, the new union will be concentrating upon health and safety as the first step in the fight for recognition.

All in all, the OILC "split" is the logical, responsible, and all-but-inevitable response to the failures and betrayals of the existing unions offshore. OILC are not really "splitters" at all: out of a total offshore workforce of 36,000, the TUC unions can claim only 6,000 members, most of whom already look to OILC for leadership.

The attacks on OILC from people like Airlie and Ferry were to be expected. What is strange, however, is the response of much of the "left" — including many of those who rushed to support the ill-advised and counter-productive EPIU split from the EETPU. The *Morning Star*, for instance, pontificated about how "at this time, when the unity of the TUC is under severe attack...the establishment of a new union outside the TUC can only make things worse and play into the hands of the extreme right."

But then, the leaders of the EPIU split were supporters of the *Morning Star*, whereas the leaders of OILC just want an effective, united organisation in their industry.

	TU Members	Non Unionists	Total
Percentage of employees who believe that the workforce would be more effectively represented by a single industrial union	85%	81%	83%
Percentage of employees who would consider joining an industrial trade union which represented all offshore workers regardless of occupation	82%	62%	71%
Percentage of employees who are trade unionists who feel their trade union adequately represents its members offshore	20%		
Percentage of employees who feel the OILC have successfully represented the feelings of offshore workers during the last 3 years	75%	50%	61%
Percentage of employees who feel that the action taken by the OILC & their supporters over the last 3 years has been responsible for improving:-			
a) Wage Rates Offshore			59%
b) Safety Standards Offshore			47%
c) General Working Conditions Offshore			36%

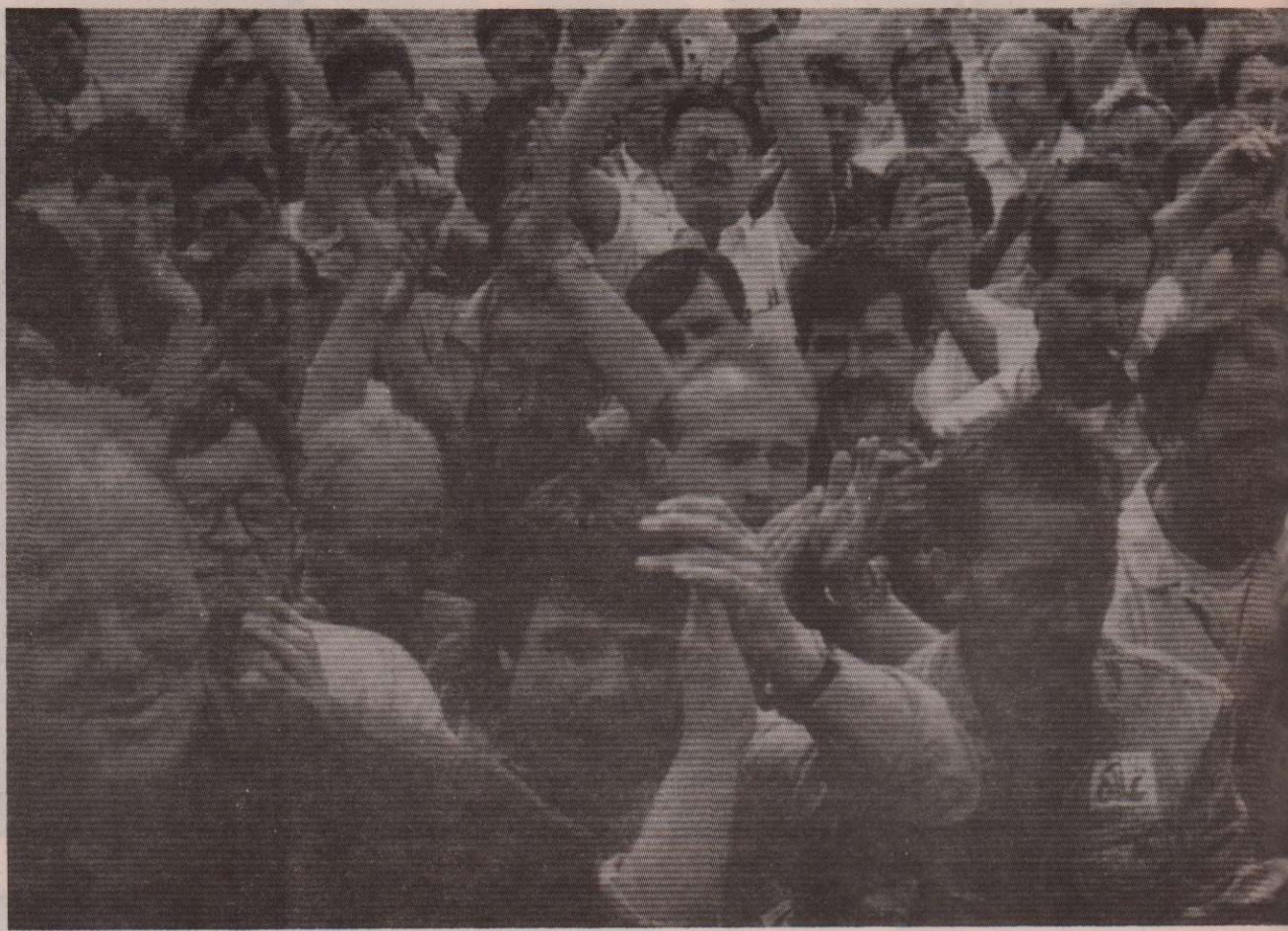
This poll was carried out by RGIT student Mark Gibson for the OILC. He interviewed some 524 offshore workers at the GAF terminal at Dyce. It shows that 83% of offshore workers want an industrial union.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Offshore workers



"The futur

The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC), which organised the unofficial strikes and rig occupations in the North Sea in 1989 and '90, has decided to form itself into a trade union for offshore workers. On this page the OILC Standing Committee explain their actions.

Anyone expecting euphoria at the formal announcement of the formation of an Offshore Workers' Union at the Queens Hotel in Brighton on 3 October was to be sadly disappointed.

The OILC had earlier been unofficially briefed on the outcome of a meeting held that morning, chaired by Alex Ferry of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, which was attended by national officers of nine unions with interests offshore.

They emerged declaring that the interests of offshore workers were to be placed in the hands of a loose alliance of the unions who would make up a sub-committee of the CSEU. Whilst it was commendable that all the unions had finally sat down and agreed on something, on examination it became clear that the structure being proposed fell far short of that which was advocated by the OILC in its analytical document, "Striking Out".

It was not to be in-

dependently certified, would not have executive control over its constituent members, may at some vague point in the future involve negotiating rights, the constituent unions would carry on much as they have been doing up to now, but would develop a "common strategy". There was to be no formal role for OILC nor any indication of support for the Offshore Information Centre. Dual membership was out.

In short, it had no clear identity as an offshore workers' organisation and was a recipe for the continuation of sectional interests. It was evident to those who would be expected to sell it, that it would be no more relevant to the workforce than the Inter-Union Offshore Oil Committee was!

What was surprising was that this represented a dilution of the proposals which were unanimously endorsed by local, some national officials and lay delegates at the IUOOC meeting at the TUC in Glasgow only four weeks previously. It became obvious that reducing any proposed structure to the level of a sub-committee was necessary in order to coerce the AEU and EETPU to become involved.

No alternative to new union

After discussion, the OILC representatives decided that they had no other alternative but to exercise the mandate given by the Standing Committee and announce to the waiting media that OILC was to apply for certification as an independent trade union for offshore workers.

No euphoria! It is difficult to be euphoric knowing that

you are bound to be accused to deserting the trade union movement when the reality is that it has deserted you, or at least some of the officials controlling it have.

In place of euphoria there was determination and confidence that, whilst regrettable, the step that was being taken was the correct one in the circumstances, was justifiable and more, it would work!

We cannot be accused of being hasty. More than three years has passed since the Piper Alpha and Ocean Odyssey disasters and in that time the OILC has repeatedly called on the unions to flag up an effective united front to the employers, the oil companies and the workforce. This has patently failed to do, despite the late, though commendable, efforts of some unions.

By their prevarication throughout the debate, and their hostility to an independent confederation, the AEU

and EETPU in particular have signalled:

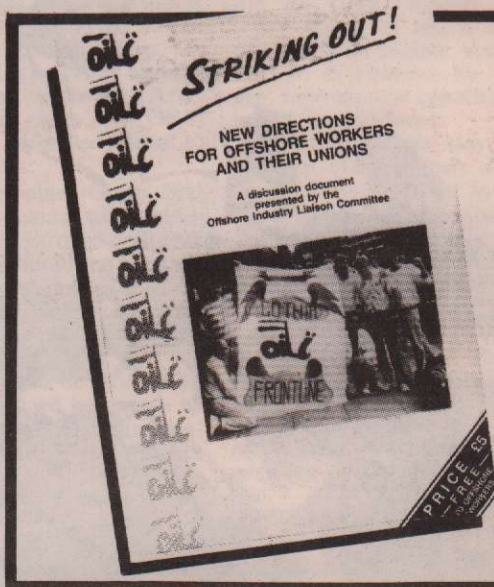
(a) that they are happy to continue the sectional divisions of the past;

(b) that they do not place any importance on the wishes of their offshore members;

(c) that the effective representation of offshore workers, especially in the area of safety, is a minor matter which is peripheral to what they regard as the more important matter of union power broking.

This group has ensured that the watered down "confederation" will be stillborn, with no relevance to the majority of workers.

Most people working offshore just want to get on with it. This does not mean, however, that they are unfeeling, unthinking robots. Most could be persuaded of the benefits of trade union representation (many already are), but it is small wonder that many have been disaffected and apathetic when



"Abs
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form new union:



This cartoon from *Blowout* shows the official unions as puppets of the oil contractors, who are in turn puppets of the oil companies.

e is ours"

faced with the confusion, disarray and downright insensitivity of those who previously claimed to represent them.

The only way out of the morass into which these unions have plunged us is the step now taken by the OILC.

Building a union for offshore workers

Our aim is to provide offshore workers with an organisation which is totally relevant to their needs. It will concentrate and campaign 100% on offshore issues, unlike existing unions, whose efforts offshore only represent a small proportion of their overall responsibilities. The only criteria we would set for membership is employment offshore in any sector. In particular we would hope to attract workers who would not previously have considered union membership.

It is worth emphasising, that offshore workers in the UK are at a crossroads with regard to the possibilities of improving their conditions and increasing their input into the process of consultation on the future of the industry.

There are many issues, current and approaching, which will require that the workforce has effective representation. These include the review of Safety Representative and Safety Committee regulations, the forthcoming Offshore Safety Bill, European Health, Safety and Working Hours directives (with all the possibilities they hold for improved work rotas) and the big question of 1992 with fears about the introduction of cheap foreign labour.

Until now the trade unions (with the notable exception of MSF) have failed to provide even the most cursory of efforts at putting our case in the relevant arenas. All the movement in this area has

been provided by the Offshore Information Centre and the OILC. This is a service which we will continue to provide and, indeed, improve on. We still have the friends, contacts and credibility to achieve results.

Our union is not being set up as a confrontational force to spread anarchy throughout the North Sea. Whilst industrial action can never be ruled out as a last resort, it has to be realised that as an official union we will be under the same legal constraints as others. The main thrust of our campaign should be force of membership and lobbying for legislative changes to force ballots for recognition on employers.

From moans and groans to organisation

Membership then is the key! We call on every offshore worker in the UK sector, regardless of

status or sector, to take a logical step in self-help and join us! We understand that some may still hesitate, particularly our colleagues in the Drilling and Service sectors, which are predominantly anti-union.

To these workers we offer the same legal protection as any other unions, and this advice: remember that you have a legal right to join a trade union of your choice and to freedom of association. Any company, or supervisor, who threatens you or tries to tell you otherwise is infringing those rights and breaking the law. A company may tell you that it does not recognise trade union but it cannot tell you that it will never do so. If we can succeed in having ballots imposed on employers, they may have to!

The challenge to all offshore workers is to transform their coffee shop moans and groans into support for an organisation that will take them seriously — OILC — the Offshore Workers' Union.

They will have to ask themselves if they are happy to continue as they are with no prospects of improvement — if they ever want to enjoy conditions similar to those of our Norwegian colleagues, or whether they will quietly accept losing their jobs with the introduction of cheap foreign labour.

The choice should be clear and we are confident that the workforce will vote with their feet and join with us in creating a formidable campaigning force.

We have everything to go for, new opportunities await and, as our Norwegian friends from OFS reminded us in a warm congratulatory telex on the day, "The future is ours".

"To do nothing is just not an option"

Ronnie MacDonald explains how the Oil Industry Liaison Committee plans to build the newly formed Offshore Workers' Union by focussing on health and safety issues and the need for workers' unity on the rigs

Among the many regulations under the Health and Safety at Work Act never extended offshore was the 1977 regulation on Safety Committees.

The trade unions have consistently maintained that these regulations should be extended offshore. But the Cullen Report on the Piper Alpha disaster said that Department of Energy regulations introduced under Parkinson should be given a chance and be reviewed two years from the introduction date.

Since then, the trade unions, individually or collectively, with the possible exception of the MSF, have developed no policy or response to that review.

Indeed, when the matter was discussed at the last inter-union offshore oil committee, the EETPU delegate claimed that we didn't have to worry about input to the review because an incoming Labour government would implement the 1977 regulations.

That's pie in the sky. Throughout the history of the industry, no union has been able to develop intelligent policy on the safety issues which are top priority for offshore workers. MSF is the sole exception although there are flaws with their position as well.

The EC directive which will be the framework for safety in the extractive industry will be integrated into member states' laws on 12 December 1992.

In the final drafting stage in committee, there were 19 amendments to the proposed legislation. Eight of these came from us, OILC, and none at all from the trade unions who purport to represent offshore workers.

Similarly, the lion's share of the submissions on behalf of the workforce to the Energy Select Committee investigation on safety in the industry, came from us although MSF did make a submission.

We have been making the running on these issues, and

we've also been trying to convince the trade unions that what we are doing should be done in their collective name.

We have been forced to launch a new union because the existing unions stonewalled.

When the unions met in Brighton, and announced they were going to form the offshore confederation, what induced the AEU and the EETPU to participate was the promise that the OILC would be wiped out. That was the only unifying factor in that room.

Now if we disappear, the workers' unity will disappear. Everything that we have done over the last two years will be undone. We had absolutely no choice in doing what we've done.

The workers' response to the new union has been extremely favourable, even though, officially, the recruitment campaign only starts today.

Many people want to support OILC and retain membership of existing

"Throughout the history of the industry, no union has been able to develop intelligent policy on safety issues."

unions, and I think we have to look at the Bridlington rules [of the TUC, governing conflicts between unions over membership.]

I don't want to be misconstrued as attacking the Bridlington rules. We need such a code of practice.

The original spirit of Bridlington was that every worker in the UK should be represented by an appropriate union. Bridlington has basically broken down on that score.

Our project isn't a right-wing piece of member-grabbing. We are ordinary workers asserting our right to adequate representation and organisation which has evaded us for 17 years because of the refusal of eight unions to have a unified approach.

The unions have failed to work together effectively not because of us but because their leaders couldn't get on with each other.

We already have a base on rigs, where a majority of stewards support OILC.

Offshore workers are going to be very hard hit by the freedom of labour provisions.

There will be compulsory open tendering on major engineering contracts of over £150,000. The whole series of directives is going to have a very serious effect.

Norwegians, Dutch and Danes are relying on having the UK sector unionised and vice versa. So it's absolutely crucial that we have the organisational wherewithal and the ability to organise in place.

We cannot mess about any more, it's crisis time. To do nothing is just not an option. Ronnie MacDonald talked to SO on 14 October.



The latest issue of *Blowout*, the OILC's paper, puts the case for a new union. Copies available from *Blowout*, Criterion Building, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB1 2NB. Price 50p plus p&p.

The OILC's own story

...tely brilliant - the best account of the offshore scene ever written."
HN HENDY QC, author and barrister specialising in employment law.

...ly satisfactory - we agree with 99% of it."
TIL KARLSEN, 2nd Vice President, Norwegian Oil and Petrochemical Workers Union (NOPEF).

Available from the Offshore Information Centre, 52 Guild Street, Aberdeen AB1 2NB. £5.00 plus 60p p&p

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

Trotskyism and Labour's youth

By Jack Cleary

The Labour youth movement of the early 60s was the seedbed of the modern British Trotskyist movement. The history of the struggles of the Trotskyist groups with each other within that youth movement and with the Labour Party leaders has a great deal to teach us today.

Many of the dramatic events of that time are closely paralleled by events now — *Militant's* lurch into sectarianism parallels that of the Healy organisation then, for example.

The political atmosphere in Britain then, as the Young Socialists got going after 1959 and the Trotskyist groups began to grow with it, has much in common with conditions now. Then too, the Labour Party was tightly patrolled and controlled by a political sect — Hugh Gaitskell; the leaders of the future SDP — at the top, socialism was declared dead, the bourgeoisie was very confident.

Then too socialists had to resist the pressures around them and at the same time redefine themselves in relation to the seemingly new world of prolonged prosperity.

In fact, without knowing it, the socialists in the LPYS were close to the eve of a tremendous upsurge of working class industrial militancy.

This is the first part of a series recounting the story of the Trotskyists and Labour's youth movement.

In 1959 the revolutionary Marxist movement consisted of one major organisation, possessing a continuous tradition, a cadre, a serious structure, and an implantation in the labour movement — the SLL, numbering a few hundred members — and a number of tiny groupings, without a cadre except for one or two leading figures and with little organisation or implantation in the labour movement to speak of.

The *Socialist Review* group (later IS and then the SWP) had a few dozen members. It was a mainly middle class group, organised loosely as a series of discussion circles. It did not then consider itself Trotskyist or Leninist. [It became "Leninist" in 1968 and after.]

The Grant tendency, the prehistoric ancestors of what mutated into the present Militant tendency, also numbered a few dozen people and was probably in a worse state than *Socialist Review*, unable to keep even a four page printed paper — nominally monthly — going except sporadically, and unable even to find the energy to contribute to a joint paper which they started with *Socialist Review* in 1961.

The seeds of the IMG, predecessor of the present day Socialist Outlook, Socialist Action and Communist League, had just separated from the Grant tendency. [They would unite again in 1964 and split completely in 1965.]

The SLL was launched as an open organisation in February 1959 — and immediately proscribed by Transport House, together with its small weekly paper, *The Newsletter*. To sell the *Newsletter* was to risk expulsion from the Labour Party.

The SLL had been formed from the merger of that Trotskyist group, led by Gerry Healy, which began working in the Labour Party in 1948, and a large number of workers and intellectuals who broke with Stalinism after the USSR dictator Nikita Khrushchev publicly denounced Stalin's tyranny at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 and then Russia

brutally suppressed the Hungarian uprising at the end of that year.

The Healy tendency won over some hundreds from the ten or fifteen thousand who broke with the CPGB in 1956 and '57, and made the greatest step forward any Trotskyist group in the world had made for well over a decade. It was strong enough to call five hundred workers, many shop stewards, to its industrial rank and file conference in 1958.

The setting up of the SLL marked a new departure from the previous practice of Labour Party work by the Healy tendency, in which there had been no public presence for the Marxists. In 1954 their paper *Socialist Outlook* was banned. For three years they did not even have a paper of their own, though they did very important work in industry, especially in the ports and in engineering, despite this.

Their experience after 1956 convinced them that to build an organisation capable of combining the tasks of Marxists as regards the trade unions, the Labour Party, and open recruitment, it was necessary to combine having a public face — even if the Labour Party bureaucracy disapproved — with continued work in the mass party of the trade unions, the Labour Party.

Thus, in the newly re-established youth movement, three of the tendencies that had survived from the collapse of the Revolutionary Communist Party at the end of the 1940s found themselves working and competing in the same organisation again.

All were factional. Whenever there was talk of unity (for example, from the Cliff tendency) it was a *factional* posture by the most uninhibited and unscrupulous of factionalists. The Grant tendency was so venomously hostile to the Healy tendency that it refused to specifically oppose the proscription of the SLL in February 1959.

On the Liverpool Trades Council they supported a resolution which evaded the concrete issue on the banning of the SLL by opposing bans and proscriptions *in general* but not specially the one just enacted. Earlier, in 1954, when the editor of *Socialist Outlook* and one of his comrades (Bill and Ray Hunter) were being expelled from the Labour Party in Islington, Ted Grant *abstained*.

The personal and factional animosities ran very deep and came sharply alive again in the YS. The smaller groups combined among themselves and with Tribuniters and others against the Healy tendency, often cutting across the grain of their nominal politics.

To round this picture out it needs to be added that it would not have been possible, because of the bureaucratic and authoritarian character of the Healy regime in the SLL, for the smallest tendencies to be in the main Trotskyist organisation. (Though, again, to explain the divisions entirely by the Healy regime is to be apolitical. Massive and urgent political questions were the first cause of the divisions; and Healy was right as against Cliff on support for Korea's right to self-determination in 1950, and as against Grant on the need to try to organise the Labour Party left.)

The history of the YS after 1959 can be divided into the periods of domination of different segments of the revolutionary left, first



Hungary 1956: ten or fifteen thousand activists left the British Communist Party after the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev and the

suppression of the Hungarian uprising. Hundreds were won over by Healy.

by the SLL, then by the Cliff group (which grew in the early '60s), and finally by Militant (which began to grow in the mid to late '60s). The history of the Labour Party youth movement in the '60s is also the history of the early shaping and development of British Trotskyism.

1960: Clause IV and the bomb

The Labour Party then was much closer to what it is now than to the open, say-what-you-like party it became over the 20 years that ended in the mid-1980s.

In the late '50s, as now, it was a tightly controlled social-democratic party. Then it was armed with a long list of banning orders ("proscriptions") against left-wing pressure groups. It was a party run by an ideological sect around Hugh Gaitskell; almost all the surviving members of that sect were to leave the Labour Party and help found the SDP in 1981 (Dennis Healey is the exception). In 1960 they were witch-hunting members of CND!

When the October 1959 General Election defeat led the Labour leaders to the decision to restart a youth movement with a national structure, what they wanted was a tame, apolitical election machine to serve them. But the youth who began to join the YS were far from apolitical.

A sizeable number of youth sections of Constituency Labour Parties already existed, which had survived as isolated branches after the disbanding of the League of Youth in 1955. There were 262 in 1959. Something of a national link between these youth sections had been kept up through the paper *Keep Left*, which, of course, also influenced them politically.

Keep Left was started by the Wembley Leagues of Youth at the end of 1950, and became associated with the Healy tendency in the early 1950s. It became a four-page printed monthly (more or less) at the beginning of 1958.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which began its famous Easter Marches from Aldermaston in 1958, had as many as 50,000 on the march by Easter 1959. In Easter 1960 and 1961 there were 100,000 people at the final rally in Trafalgar Square. Many CNDers were young people — often middle class, but there was a lot of support among left wing trade unionists too.

CNDers flocked into the YS, bringing with them the same politics which shook the Labour Party at the Scarborough Conference of 1960, when victory for unilateral nuclear disarmament split the party wide open.

Right at the beginning of the new youth movement, the leadership of the Party, around Hugh Gaitskell, attempted to amputate even the general aspiration towards a socialist society from the Constitution of the Labour Party; in the wake of the election defeat they tried to make the Labour Party respectable to "middle of the road" and middle class voters by removing Clause IV (which commits the party to public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange). This caused a big reaction against Gaitskell, which ultimately forced him to abandon the attempt. It put the youth on its mettle, too.

From the beginning of the YS and throughout 1960 the controversy over Clause IV raged, and it became clear as the year advanced that there was a serious chance that the Labour conference would commit the Party to a policy of unilateral British renunciation of the H-bomb.

Enormous support had built up for unilateral disarmament since the Norwood resolution, inspired and moved by the Healy tendency, had been defeated at the Brighton conference three years earlier. Unilateralism as Party policy would mean a break with foreign policy bipartisanship and pit the Labour Party against the vital interests of the ruling class.

Thus, tension rose through late 1960 as trade union conference after trade union con-

ference fell into line in support of unilateralism in the build-up to the October Party conference at Scarborough.

At Scarborough, unilateralism became Labour Party policy. Hugh Gaitskell flatly refused to be bound by it, and declared in a passionate speech that he would "fight, fight, and fight again, to save the party we love" — ie. to save it for capitalist politics.

The turmoil until the right wing did win at Blackpool the following year pitched the YS into the thick of battle. The YS was heavily unilateralist and known to be so. 200 Young Socialists, organised by *Keep Left*, had demonstrated outside the Scarborough conference with slogans like "Quit NATO", "Close Rocket Bases", "Stop Making H-Bombs", and "Bring Down the Tory H-Bomb Government".

1960-61: Keep Left campaigns against Gaitskell

After the victory for the left at Scarborough, the control of the Labour Party machinery remained in the hands of the right wing and of Hugh Gaitskell. *Keep Left* reacted to the Scarborough decisions with a demand that the left fight to consolidate its victory, as yet a paper victory. It called a conference of its supporters, trade unionists, and young CNDers for November 6th, in Manchester's Free Trade Hall, under the slogan, "Implement Scarborough Policy".

Keep Left for October-November 1960 argued that the Scarborough policy — official Labour policy — was the way to win youth to the YS and to build a mass youth movement. 150 youth, from 47 YS branches, attended the November 6th conference, and pledged themselves to fight for the Scarborough policies.

"We have come to bury Gaitskell, not to praise him", said Gavin Kennedy, organiser of *Keep Left* and secretary of Hendon North YS, which sponsored *KL* together with Wembley North. The conference also pledged that if the Labour Party did not call the promised YS conference at Easter 1961, then *Keep Left* would call a YS conference at Whitsun 1961. It was in tune with the atmosphere and the battles of 1960, and the open defiance of Labour conference by the PLP and its leader; it expressed the need to fight for the Scarborough decisions. Yet already here the characteristic Healyite note of braggadocio makes its appearance.

The NEC's reaction was swift and sharp. At its meeting of 23 November 1960 it decided to destroy *Keep Left*. "It is not the function of a branch, or branches, of the YS to issue a journal for national circulation", its representative wrote to Wembley North and Hendon North. They were ordered to cease publication. The keynote for the next four years had been struck.

The right of the party was beginning its assault on the unilateralist left with a seemingly easy target. Shortly afterwards, Michael Foot and four other MPs had the Labour whip withdrawn for voting against the Tory government's Air Estimates. Ernie Roberts, an elected Assistant General Secretary of the AEU, had Transport House approval withdrawn as Labour candidate for Hordsham, and was called to account for 400 speeches he had made! As late as 1962, there were attempts to exclude Bertrand Russell and Canon Collins from the Labour Party.

Keep Left's reaction was as decisive as the NEC's. The December 1960 issue had a banner headline: "Our reply to the disrupters and witch-hunters on the NEC: we shall not shut down this paper". And just under the masthead was a list of 16 YS branches sponsoring *KL* where there had been two!

By January 1961 there were 27 sponsoring branches; by February 32; and eventually the sponsors hovered around the 45 mark until *Keep Left* was proscribed in May 1962. This was the strongest argument against the right wing! Many labour movement bodies supported *Keep Left* and protected it. For example, 250 delegates to Liverpool Trades Council unanimously defended *Keep Left*'s right to publish.



1917: Bolshevik recruits gather in a Petrograd station. "How much" of the most "full-blooded" democracy in human history was left by 1921?

Democracy and the Russian revolution

By Liam Conway

Tom Rigby (*SO 500*) rightly warns us about the dangers of abstract arguments when referring to the anti-democratic measures taken by the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s.

But in his attempts to learn Lenin against Ian McCalman's charges I think he ignores, or only partly addresses, important issues about democracy and socialism that have plagued and hampered the movement down to the present day.

That Lenin was a consistent democrat there can be no doubt. But the Bolsheviks took measures in the early '20s that made it much more difficult for Trotsky and others to defend the gains of the revolution later in the decade.

If we are truly to learn the lessons of history, we would be wise to debate these matters seriously. Many of the arguments may be abstract at this historical distance, but this is no excuse for ignoring the mistakes of the past, particularly at a time when socialism and democracy are seen as polar opposites in large parts of the world.

It might be "arguing in the abstract" to doubt the wisdom of the decision to ban factions in 1921, but the growing influence of the bureaucracy was a pretty concrete and growing phenomenon even at that stage. It threatened the Bolshevik Party and the revolution "from the inside". In trying to defend the revolution from its enemies the genuine Bolsheviks underestimated those standing menacingly at their backs.

Tom says that "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, etc". If this was the concrete reality of the day then banning factions could not serve the interests of the revolution. In fact the banning of factions at the end of the war could only have helped Stalin and the time-servers to make the exceptional decision of 1921 a permanent feature of the party.

Yet it is still important to understand that the decision of 1921 was exceptional, one based, at least in the minds of genuine Bolsheviks such as Lenin and Trotsky, on the extraordinary dangers facing the workers' state at the time.

This is an important matter because Lenin and Trotsky saw internal democracy and debate as the oxygen of the movement. Looking around at the left today, with the odd exception, one is struck by the lack of democracy that infects their organisations. The two largest, the SWP and the Militant, have learned a lot from Stalinism and little from Lenin.

In organisational terms they are stuck in a 1921 time warp. Given such internal rigidity is it surprising that they stick religiously to their respective theories on the nature of the Eastern Bloc states even after history has consigned such ideas to the wheely bin?

Serious socialists who take the trouble to read the writings of Lenin and Trotsky will find it difficult to accept that the methods of Militant and the SWP are in the same tradition. And it is important, especially at a time when socialism needs to re-establish its democratic credentials, that the record on this matter is set straight.

"The implications of an end to internal democracy were clear to Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The dying out of inner-party democracy leads to a dying out of workers' democracy in general — in the trade unions and in all non-party mass organisations."

Lenin and Trotsky never meant the 1921 decision to become permanent. Unlike the left today who face no war, who do not have to defend the gains of the revolution, who confront only the witch-hunters of Walworth Road, Lenin and Trotsky saw the decision of 1921 as the exception, not the rule. In fact, up to 1921, despite the dangers of the civil war, full discussion and debate continued in the party. Often Lenin himself insisted on it. At the time of the internal disputes over the Brest Litovsk treaty, Lenin demanded that all views be aired. The "Left Communists", at Lenin's request, had full rights to make their views known both internally and through the pages of *Pravda*.

Trotsky re-asserted these ideas in the "Platform of the Left Opposition". Written in 1927 at a time when Stalin was striking the final fatal blows against the workers' revolution of 1917, it speaks volumes against the latter day left who ban factions, impose the line from the top down, and, in the case of the SWP, face up to debate by throwing opponents out of their meetings.

The Left Opposition were ruthless in their opposition to what Stalin had done to the life of the party. If the party must be looked at

from the top down, wrote Trotsky, "the Leninist party...no longer exists".

The implications of an end to internal democracy were clear to Trotsky and the Left Opposition. "The dying out of inner-party democracy leads to a dying out of workers' democracy in general — in the trade unions, and in all other non-party mass organisations." The association made by Trotsky between party democracy and workers' democracy should not be lost on those organisations who profess to support the latter yet stifle the former.

And while the opposition were denied the right to reply the Stalinists used every opportunity to carry out a vicious polemic at all levels of the party against the views of the Left Opposition.

To remedy the situation the Left Opposition proposed party unity. They opposed splits and expulsions and supported not a fake unity but one built around the "free discussion and decision...of all disputed questions". Party members should be entitled to accurate information and all relevant documents, taken from every viewpoint, so as to ensure genuinely collective decision making.

And should these discussions take place in the press? Why certainly! "Every comrade and group of comrades ought to have an opportunity to defend their point of view before the party, in the press, at meetings, etc." Was this restricted to internal party press and journals? Certainly not! "The draft theses (the platform) of the Central Committee, of local organisations, of individual members of the party and groups of members, ought to be published in *Pravda* [Trotsky's emphasis]".

Finally, the debates should be conducted in a business-like and comradely manner, without personalities and exaggerations. Compare that to the campaign of whispers that goes on between the "Trotskyists" of today, where in the case of Militant, you can never be sure what they are saying about you because it is rarely said, and certainly not written, in public.

The issue of democracy is a vital one for socialists at this time. In the aftermath of Stalinism and its untold damage to the life of the whole movement, we should leave no stone unturned. Tom is right to pose the question, "what kind of democracy?" But "how much" of the most "full blooded" democracy in human history was left by 1921? And is it enough to blame the lack of revolutions in Western Europe for the total destruction of democracy in the Soviet Union by 1929, only 8 years after the decision to ban factions in the Soviet CP?

These are important questions in their own right, but given the state of the movement today we need some answers urgently.



Royal Pride strike 1982

Women must fight for rights as workers!

CONTROVERSY

By Liz Millward

The first thing to say to my outraged critics is that when it comes to the "woman question", socialists who on any other subject display intelligence and curiosity seem to switch off their minds.

Socialist Organiser is above all a paper which encourages debate, and stands out against many of the untenable "left orthodoxies". *SO* tries not to hide behind optimistic slogans or world-revolutionary theories, but looks at the facts.

What I am trying to do in "Women's Eye" is not only to point out how the sick society we live in affects and oppresses women, but also to question (and if necessary outrage) received feminist dogmas. The reason for this is that much recent "radical" feminism, with its "lifestylism" and its prejudices is inaccessible nonsense, with no relevance to most women's lives. Much modern feminism does have a middle class bias. So if I deal with those ideas, I am dealing with a subject with a middle class bias.

Nonetheless, such ideas require attention. The "radical" feminists use moral pressure to bash women with whom they come into contact. In the sometimes rather inward-looking world of left and women's politics, their ideas are put across forcefully, and people who don't agree are ruthlessly witch-hunted. Many feminist events are not for the faint-hearted.

Often the response of "socialist feminists" is to descend to the class-reductionist ideas of the SWP. Both sets of ideas come with the pressure to "believe", rather than think. I would argue that that pressure is affecting you, O critics, which is why you are in such a hurry to shut me up.

Now, my article had many faults, but they are not the faults I am accused of. My problem was in extrapolating from a couple of anecdotes into a general "theory". Even

so, I think the theory is valid. And I am astonished that no one commented on the story of a woman who could not support herself on \$15,000! Do you all think she is a victim?

In defending my "theory", I want to draw on three main themes: the history of the women's movement, the idea of choice, and the relationship between the individual and society.

Firstly, the history of the women's movement is the history of women's struggle to play an equal part in society. For example, the struggle for the vote, not to be slaves to fertility and the struggle for the right to work. Society gives credit to those who work. Not the

"Obviously the Tories have not advanced working women's cause, but they have not pushed women back into the home on the scale of the 1950s either."

credit that the workers are entitled to, but credit nonetheless.

This struggle has largely been fought by middle class women, because working class women have never been stopped from working. But just because Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf were fighting against well fed but enforced idleness does not mean that fight is not important for all women.

Middle class women's struggles to enter the universities and the professions are part of our history — part of the fight for women to be taken seriously as intelligent beings. Those women were fighting against a society which on the one hand exploited female labour and on the other set women up as a civilising influence emanating from the home. Other daily struggles for equal pay, fair promotion prospects, maternity and childcare provision, etc. at work are a continuation of that struggle. Those women who opt out let us down.

Some women make me angry. The women who have taken on the protective covering of male values, who run themselves down (and by implication all women), who pretend to be helpless, and simper that their goal in life is to marry a millionaire. I dare to suppose that Sylvia Pankhurst and Rosa Luxemburg would have found them pretty objectionable too.

Of course the truth is that most of these women are just as pissed off by the low pay and rotten childcare as I am. 9 times out of 10 they turn off the simpering when the last man leaves. Feminism is about saying to such women — you agree with us, so join us! Events like strikes, trade union activities, issues like health and safety and their own experiences can be the biggest eye-openers.

But these women are not passive receptacles of ideology, waiting only for the struggle to kiss them into wakefulness. Some of my critics fall into the "world historical process" trap when they perceive all women as a homogenous mass. When a worker crosses a picket line we call her a scab. She has chosen to side with the bosses against her own class interests. She is doing what all the media, the lying propaganda machine is telling her to do.

We have the right to make demands on women who fall in with the dominant ideology, who side against all our interests as women. To stand up against the propaganda, to defy society and take your place with the minority who are actively struggling for better conditions is a hard choice. But it is a real choice, and most women are aware of it, however peripherally. Otherwise what the hell are we all doing?

Of course, once you have children, a home to keep up, elderly relatives to care for, the choices inevitably lessen. Even so, the ostensible narrowing of choice frequently leads women to join the struggle for something better, particularly when they are the sole "breadwinner". But my criticism is not of women with dependents (and I made this quite clear), but of healthy, childless, single women who devote their energies to finding someone to take care of them.

This is essentially a wasteful ac-

tivity and it is the fault of capitalism. But it is not acceptable to say "blame capitalism" and that's the end of it. Capitalism will not just end, and everyone be free. Part of the ending of capitalism will be the erosion of its ideology.

Although the economic fight is pre-eminent, the ideological battles have an important place. The ideological battle here is to demand women's rights to be taken seriously as workers and to condemn those who won't (not can't, won't) take part.

There are bigger and more important things to worry about on a material level than a minority of women who won't work. On an ideological level, there is a lot of work to be done to kill the myths about women not being "real" workers (and consequently not needing "real" wages or "real" opportunities). Every time the papers find some man to say that "my wife doesn't have to work" and some women to display her starched antimacassars and matching place mats, and say "my place is here", the struggle gets harder for the rest of us.

My critics suggest that many women would like to escape from work. Yup, count me in. Many men would like to escape from work too. But that isn't the point. There is no escape from work, either "at home" or in society. Someone has to do it, and someone will have to do it in a socialist society. In a socialist society, work will be different, better, more rewarding and more equally shared — but no one will miss out on it!

Under capitalism we can make improvements to our working lives, too, and the battles for those improvements we want is to be taken seriously, whatever job we do, or even if we are unemployed.

Finally, I want to say that things have improved for women workers. Women have been pulled in and out of the home depending on capitalism's needs. Women are, after all, part of the "reserve army of labour". But we are far less a "reserve" army than we were. Equal pay legislation is not enough, but it makes women less attractive temporary labour, less reservists.

Essentially the Tories have failed

to push women back into the home. More women are now principal breadwinners than before the wave of unemployment. Equal pay legislation and unemployment, along with EC tax and benefit reforms are killing the idea of the family wage. The Tories are holding out against these changes but (I hope) they can not totally reverse them.

Obviously the Tories have not advanced working women's cause, I am not saying that they have, but they have not pushed women back into the home on the scale of the 1950s either.

On the ideological front, the mainstream women's magazines are debating the question of work vs home for women. But unlike in the past, it is a reasonably balanced debate. Women are not stupid. They know (as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir did) that paid work confers status and that the "joy" of being a civilising influence is a false joy.

We must demand of women that they fight for their rights as workers, as full, independent members of society and don't give in to all the pressures to sit at home embroidering napkins. Or more likely cleaning the toilet.

The case for Socialist Feminism



A Women's Fightback pamphlet £1

Available from Women's Fightback, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. £1 plus 32p p&p

The politics of Citizen Kane

By Mick Ackersley

Citizen Kane, at fifty, is exactly twice as old as Orson Welles when he made the film which so many critics place at the top, or close to the top, of their list of the greatest movies ever made.

The twenty five year old Welles (and his co-writer Herman Mankiewicz) made a technically dazzling and hypnotic film about Kane, the mythical super-rich American plutocrat.

Kane's story is told first in a pseudo newsreel in the style of the late 1930s, and then through reminiscences and flashbacks as a journalist talks to Kane's surviving associates. Kane's life has been written large in the public records of America, but he remains an enigma.

Significantly, Kane's last word, "Rosebud", can not be deciphered by any of them. The journalist never finds the meaning of it.

Citizen Kane, on one level, seems to be just a parable — and maybe that is all it is — exemplifying the answer to the Bible's rhetorical

question: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?". Not much, says Citizen Kane.

Kane, though, may never have had a soul to lose in the first place, and he was, as a child, already one of the richest of the American rich. It was not quite myth: Kane was plainly meant to be — and plainly intended by Welles to be identifiable as — William Randolph Hearst, the then still-living, very powerful, and ultra-reactionary tycoon who (like Kane) ran a chain of mass-circulation papers.

It probably took some daring for Welles to go after such a powerful man, and bait him so openly and so unmercifully.

For instance, it seems that the answer to the movie's unsolved mystery of the meaning of Kane's last word, "Rosebud", was quite simple and well-known in Hollywood: it was William Randolph Hearst's pet name for his long-time actress paramour Marion Davies's clitoris!

A long sequence in the film in which Kane uses his money to try to make an opera star out of a mediocre singer exactly parallels

Hearst's efforts on behalf of Marion Davies, whom he starred in a lot of "vanity movie-making" films. (Though no less than Charlie Chaplin himself described Davies as a talented comedienne, and most accounts make her out to have been something like a decent human being.)

Hearst tried to have Citizen Kane banned, and when that failed his press hounded it, and, for many years after, Welles himself.

Citizen Kane vividly shows the corruption of US life by graft and by money. It shows the craziness of a capitalist system which allows vast accumulations of the social wealth in the hands of the rich. The old Kane lives in an uncompleted castle filled like an old attic with junk and with the rich artistic plunder of the world, most of it still unopened and in crates.

In one scene, in a vast space filled with crates, some of them upended to look like skyscrapers, Welles creates the image of a city, and that evokes the cities and the people whose lives are owned and played with by the Kanes and the Hearsts. The futility of it is suggested after Kane is dead by a great plume of black smoke coming out of the castle's main chimney, pro-

duced by the burning junk.

And it may indeed be that this is all the "message" there is in the film, the Bible's assertion of the ultimate personal futility of the search for vast wealth.

And yet the film is replete with the echoes and reflections of the political struggles of the '30s.

Welles was, it seems, a New Deal Roosevelt Democratic liberal, perhaps, then, on the left wing of the wide spectrum of opinion that rallied to Roosevelt, whose use of state power to revive the US economy was a very radical departure in US politics. Hearst was a stone-bottomed reactionary, whose press made propaganda, for example, for the Spanish fascists during the Civil War there.

Thus Hearst-Kane is shown as a would-be paternalist who goes sour when "the people" won't elect him, a "friend of the working man", who turns hostile when the workers confront him as an organised force, as "organised labour".

And yet it is here, as a political fable, that you see that Citizen Kane is shot through with political lies, in fact with the typical official lies of New Deal Liberalism and of

bourgeois democracy everywhere.

Politically and ideologically it is on exactly the same plane as the sentimental comedic parables of Frank Capra (who died recently), in which, typically, an honest "Mr Smith goes to Washington" and sorts out the connivers and cynics, converting some of them.

Citizen Kane is, politically, that tale told from the other side. Mr Kane does not go to Washington. He fails in politics. His failure is asserted to be a result of "the people" and "the workers" outgrowing his early paternalism and coming into their own.

Kane is shown as a marginalised figure, extruded from politics by a sex scandal, and politically impotent despite his great wealth. His political failure seems to show the limits of money power.

If not the wealthy, then who rules? Mr Smith and his friends, of course. Kane the mythical plutocrat is thus presented in the film as the precise opposite of the real American rich in real American politics, then and now.

In fact the American rich buy political power and influence. They buy senators by putting up — usually on a shared-ownership basis — the \$25 million needed to run an effective Senate campaign. Their representatives can be seen in the Senate telling the senators how to vote.

It is not Kane who is true to the reality of American plutocratic politics — where less than half the people bother to vote — but John F Kennedy, whose father bought him the presidency.

The Bible parable that it profits nothing to gain the whole world if you lose your soul here turns into the great political lie that wealth, which allegedly cannot bring you happiness, cannot bring you political power either.

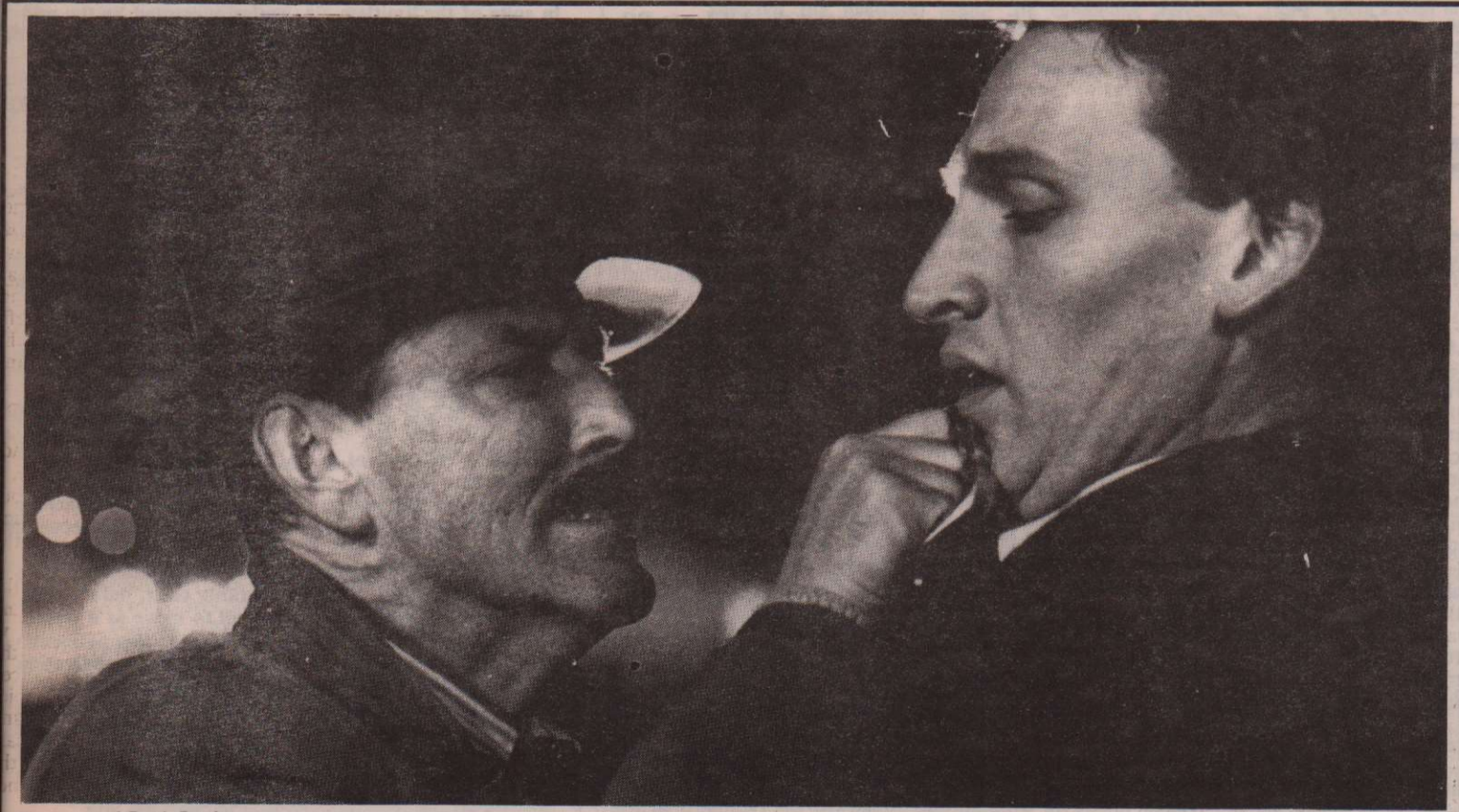
But yes it can! William Randolph Hearst proved that in his own way. For all Welles's evident relish in baiting Hearst, his picture of Kane is in fact a sanitised picture of the man. The real Kane, Hearst, could, and it seems did, get away even with murder.

In 1924 Hearst took a party of movie people on his yacht. They included the movie director Tom Ince and Charlie Chaplin. Hearst caught either Ince or Chaplin in flagrante delicto with Davies. He went out, came back with a gun, and shot dead Tom Ince (who may just have entered the room, as Chaplin scarpered).

Tom Ince was cremated very quickly. His death certificate said "acute indigestion"! Hearst paid Ince's wife a life-long pension. A journalist on board, Louella Parsons, had a lifetime career as a movie gossip columnist with Hearst's press ahead of her.

Though the story was widely known, there was no investigation. It was summed up in a joke about William Randolph Hearse...

Capra's sympathetic, sentimental, and good-hearted Mr Smith myths, and Welles's great Kane myth, notwithstanding, US politics is living testimony to the power of money, not to money's futility or powerlessness.



The arrest of Derek Bentley

Hanged for his mate

Cinema

Vicki Morris reviews "Let Him Have It"

Derek Bentley was a nineteen year old hanged for being the friend of Christopher Craig who shot a policeman and tried to shoot several more.

Craig was too young to hang, so they hanged Bentley, who was already in police custody when Craig shot the policeman.

In the film, Bentley is portrayed shouting the words "let him have it, Chris" which got him hanged for complicity in the murder.

Craig and some of the policemen who were there on the night say that Bentley didn't even do that much. The police lied in court.

The film brings out other aspects of Bentley's trial to show that it was not a fair one.

There wasn't the time to prepare a doctor's report about Bentley's state of health — he was an epileptic — or his 'mental age' — 11 years it turned out.

The trial took place a matter of weeks after the crimes, and the jury and the judiciary, evidently shocked by them, wanted to convict.

All this is greatly unfair. When the film has built up a picture of Bentley as a young man who has had a raw deal in life but who, nice beyond words, now struggles to please his parents and get back on the straight and narrow after his boyhood misadventures, the sense of injustice is magnified.

There is some sense of the fight that his family and supporters put up to save his life. But the sadness is a bit too exquisite for you ever to believe that life is about more than

just sadness and comfort.

It's about joy sometimes, but, when there is sadness and wrongdoing it is about rage too and the struggle to overcome injustice.

The film is about Bentley's particular misfortune, but it ought also to be about capital punishment as such — after all, where there is no death sentence, there remains a chance not just to rescue the name of a wrongly convicted person, but to save his skin, even if it is after he has spent a good part of his life in prison.

The cases of the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six have taught us that very recently.

Compared to earlier films which formed part of the propaganda campaign to abolish the death sentence, this film lacks the stark and horrible portrayal of hanging itself — judicial murder.

The days leading up to the hanging are filled with the struggles of

the family, their feelings, moments of pathos.

There is not much about what the man to be hanged goes through — the psychological torment, the knowing you are going to die, the knowing how many hours or minutes you have left.

An ironic tone is struck at the end where the credits say that Craig served ten years and now lives "a law-abiding citizen" — what is the message here? That he learnt that it's dangerous to play with guns?

So the film might send its audience home feeling "life's sad, the weak are to be pitied." This is not a very dynamic message and a shame to come out of such a moving and dare I say it, attractively filmed picture.

Let Him Have It is a bit too cathartic to be a completely effective anti-hanging film, or even fully to convey the injustice that was done to Derek Bentley.



Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty!

Orders reign in the Labour Party. Neil Kinnock thinks he has put a secure lid on the class struggle, and turned the Labour Party into a marketing machine dedicated to installing him and his friends as more humane administrators of capitalism in place of the Tories.

Yet the case for a socialist revolution to replace capitalism remains as strong as ever. In the Third World capitalism today means increasing poverty and misery, imposed in order to meet the interest payments demanded by international banks. In the advanced capitalist countries unemployment is high and rising, and the welfare systems won by decades of working-class reform effort are everywhere under attack. In Eastern Europe and the USSR, the rush towards capitalism will



turn millions into paupers. Capitalism can inflict defeats on socialism and the working class. It can never abolish the working class, and so it can never abolish the class struggle and the ideas of socialism. The class struggle continues — and the ideas of socialism must be fought for, on every front of that struggle. *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. Contact the AWL c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Resist USSR capitalism!

LETTER

Anatoly Voronov's eyewitness account of the anti-democratic actions of Russian premier Boris Yeltsin in SO 499 must finish, once and for all, any ideas that Yeltsin opposed the recent palace coup out of any concern for democracy or for the rights of working people in the USSR.

Yeltsin heads up a faction that came out of the old Communist Party apparatus because it hoped that by sacrificing the fake left rhetoric of the past and a part

of the bureaucracy itself, it could stem workers' actions and bring itself into power as a new capitalist class. The leaders of the palace coup were concerned at the break-up of the USSR, the speed at which it was planned to introduce capitalism, and the growing space for the political action by ordinary people. But the real issue was whether the layer of the bureaucracy within the state — and so outside industry — could gain a place in the new capitalist class by ensuring that the CP and federal set-up was used to oversee the turn to the market. Almost all the soviet bureaucracy recognised that they had to pre-empt workers' actions against them. So the policies of Glasnost and Perestroika were used to try to gain active consent from working people for a renewal of the

bureaucratic system. Because they failed, it was possible for a figure like Yeltsin to gain support. But he realised that a greater political price would have to be paid to ordinary people to keep them out of politics — the break-up of the federal state machine and the elimination of a backward layer of the bureaucracy. Yeltsin is not a bourgeois democrat who champions the powers of elected assemblies against the old order. He takes powers away from elected assemblies. His actions, much like his investiture as premier by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, stamp him out as an authoritarian Czar-in-waiting. The restoration of capitalism in the USSR that Yeltsin hopes for would bring a massive defeat to workers there. As a first step, imagine

that the rouble were made a convertible currency. Currently the rouble costs around \$1.60 officially, while its real value is around 3.6 cents. With no big pool of overseas investors waiting, and no native capitalist class that could invest it effectively, Yeltsin has to force a 98% drop in wage value on Soviet workers. Yeltsin can only carry out his project through massive repression. In this context, every democratic right has to be defended. The property of the CP taken by the Russian Republic must be given back to the people... broken up between all the different political groups according to their level of support in elections. We must also stand for basic democratic rights — even for the remnants of the CP — so that working people can freely organise and debate against Yeltsin. If, for example, the CPSU newspaper *Pravda* were still banned then the important call of Boris Kagarlitsky and others for a new workers' party would not have been heard by thousands of working people. Workers in the USSR face massive challenges which, like those of 1917, will produce and destroy many new leaderships before a party can be built that leads the soviet workers to political power once more. Faced with de-industrialisation, workers must either face starvation or defend the economy by taking control of factories and other workplaces. Faced with repression, workers must be prepared to physically defend their democratic rights and those of others, or to lose the gains of the period opened by the Glasnost campaigns. Working class independence from Yeltsin is the road to workers' revolution and socialist democracy. **Duncan Chapple, Manchester**

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 17 October

"The case for socialist feminism", Glasgow SO meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Hall
 "Arabs, Jews and Socialism", Manchester University SO meeting. 5.00. Speaker Dan Judelson
 "What is socialism?", York University SO meeting. 1.15, G020. Speaker Mike Fenwick
 "Socialists and the Labour Party", Kent University SO meeting. 7.00, Elliot College.
 Debate on Education. Janine Booth debates Tory students. 6.30, Essex University

Friday 18 October

"Stand up for real socialism", Huddersfield Poly SO meeting. 1.00. Speaker Alice Sharp

Saturday 19 October

Demonstrate against the poll tax. Assemble 1.00, Caledonian Park, London N7. March to rally in Trafalgar Square.

Monday 21 October

"Socialists and the Labour Party", SO London Forum. 7.30, Lucas Arms, Gray's Inn Road, London

Tuesday 22 October

"Why you need socialism", SO meeting at West Sussex Institute, Macklin, Bognor site. 1.00. Speaker Mark Osborn

Wednesday 23 October

"Socialists and democracy", Essex University SO meeting. 6.00. Speaker Cathy Nugent

Thursday 24 October

"The Labour Party and the General

Election", Leeds SO meeting. 7.30, Packhorse Pub
 "The fight for women's liberation", Northampton SO meeting. 6.30, Nene College Park Campus.

Saturday 26 October

"Women, war and resistance", organised by Women for Socialism. 10.45, Wesley House, Wild Court, London WC2. Speakers include Bernadette McAliskey

Glasgow Socialist Organiser dayschool 10.00-6.00

Saturday 26 October Queen's College
 Speakers include: **Ronnie MacDonald (OILC), Bob Arnot (Critique), Mariam (CARI), John O'Mahony (editor, SO)**
 £4 waged, £2 unwaged
 Followed by a social

Temptation in the wilderness

EYE ON THE LEFT

We invited an independent, non-Socialist Organiser reviewer to cast a critical eye over our pamphlet, "Socialists and the Labour Party: the case of the Walton by-election". Al Richardson is joint author of a number of books on the history of British Trotskyism. This is his report.

This pamphlet is a detailed blow-by-blow analysis of the utter debacle of the Walton by-election.

In spite of the limitless capacity of the left to delude itself that defeat is victory, there can be little doubt that debacle is what it was. The size of Mahmood's vote was a derisory advertisement of the real weakness of the movement; more socialists have been witch-hunted out of the Labour Party, including two of our best MPs; a fresh splinter group (the Liverpool ILP) has been created, devoid of direction, with its own bans and proscriptions in place; Militant itself has been left in that half-in, half-out state already rejected by the revolutionary movement in the 1930s, and has now commenced to split as a result of the unviability of its position.

What also plainly emerges from this collection is that the leadership of Militant has suffered a loss of direction and a loss of nerve. Militant had recruited large numbers of young people as paper sellers on a low political level (its education department has not functioned for a year and a half), and then found that possibilities had dwindled in the Labour Party.

Instead of changing the name of its paper and moving its office (the time-hallowed answer to bans and witch-hunts) it saw its opportunity to direct its supporters' energies into the Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

It was easily able to make a takeover bid due to its numbers. When the Tories pulled the rug from under this, and its own dead hand had bored everybody else away, momentary success in the council elections seemed to offer a new orientation. An extraordinarily bureaucratic leading apparatus, consisting entirely of full-timers!, has allowed two areas, Glasgow and Liverpool, to alter the entire policy of the group — without any conference being held at all!

This does not mean that there are no real class forces behind this movement. The very existence of the new political formation (ILP) separate from Militant shows this to be the case. It



is one of the weaknesses of this collection that it analyses the situation in terms of stunts rather than of the movement of classes. In a city of high unemployment, where the local authority is the largest single employer, cutting council jobs means real deprivation for considerable numbers.

It is not surprising, either, that this lays Militant open to charges of jobbery, though it says volumes about the state of the labour movement that they can find this repugnant in the case of a park attendant or a dustbin man, while forgetting conveniently the hated "jobs for the girls" on top salaries created by the middle class cliques in charge of some London councils, which is sure to cost Labour valuable seats in the coming general election.

Nor is the present reviewer impressed by the implied support given to the "Black Caucus" over Sam Bond — we have already had quite enough — and the United States far too much — of self-styled "representatives" of communities, who never appointed them, with their eyes on the public purse.

What is plain is that Militant bent to the pressures of these class forces. It is allowing an advanced section of the class to become consumed by impatience and become isolated from the main organisations of the working class, before they began to move as a whole.

It was, as this publication makes clear, an abdication of political leadership.

That does not at all mean that no others are to blame. This observer was shocked and disgusted by the violation even of bourgeois legality by allowing Bleasdale's *GBH* to be screened while the Walton by-election was in full swing — an interference with the electoral process that would have led to an outcry if it had been applied to one of the main bourgeois parties.

In this context some of the language of these articles ("bully boy", "Tammany Hall jobs-for-the-boys corruption") makes no contribution towards defending the left against the propaganda barrage directed against us.

But the main thrust of the pamphlet cannot be ignored. The Labour Party is sure to dominate the politics of the working class as we move closer to a general election. Those who think that they can make it disappear by denouncing it from outside only advertise the impressionism of their own politics.

The very fact that the Kinnockite apparatus is desperate to get socialists out of the Labour Party is a strong reason for staying there.

INDUSTRIAL

Selling our future

By Maria Exall, BT Engineer, Westminster NCU

Voluntary redundancy deal with British Telecom has been signed by the National Communications Union (NCU) leaders on behalf of many BT staff whose jobs are under threat.

BT has been looking for ways to reduce staff for several years now and have been very successful so far: in the last couple of years, thousands of staff have taken early retirement, but this deal represents the first time the NCU has co-operated with BT over job cuts.

The simple reason why more jobs have to go is that BT have not yet achieved the reduced level of staffing that City analysts predict will be necessary for BT to enhance its already mega-profitability. Such faith in the ability of financial institutions to know how to run an effective telecommunications industry is touching.

Current BT strategy is a testament to belief in the higher principle of profit above mere human concerns such as the right to job security and a commitment to service in the public interest.

Whilst modernisation has created surplus staff through new technologies that are less labour intensive, and more reliable technologies that require less maintenance, it is BT management strategy together with Tory government policy that has been the main initiator of staffing cuts.

The recession has less of an impact on telecoms than other industries, and cannot be blamed for the massive redundancies we will see.

Government policy toward BT — regulation in the name of free competition — has limited BT's options in many areas including staffing policy.

But ultimately the aims of BT and of the Tories are the same: to create a company that is unrestrained by the demands of workers in the industry or by the needs of workers as consumers.

In BT speak, the redundancy policy they are pursuing is called a "Rebalancing and Release" scheme for the workforce. Staff are 'invited' to apply for redundancy and then receive personal offers of 'release'.

Behind this apparently painless process is the threat of compulsory redundancies if BT

DHSS: time for a fight

Dave Armes reports from the CPSA DHSS Section Executive

Whilst discussing the last item of business, the date of the next meeting, another executive member remarked to me, "if every meeting is going to be as useful as this one, then I don't care if we don't have another."

doesn't get enough 'volunteers'.

Part of the union deal includes the possibility of a 'voluntary preference exercise' to identify staff who wish to leave. The experience of the voluntary redundancy of BT managers under the management early release scheme a couple of years ago, was that for many individuals there was no choice.

The NCU is resisting the idea of compulsion and targeting but

Dave Kowalski, in the chair, is an obstructing force to the Broad Left majority we could well do without. Kowalski and the BL84 minority worked hard to ensure that the main discussions centred around bureaucratic issues such as who sits on what committees, and ensuring that prominent BL84ers keep enough facility time to keep them well away from the work their members have to do.

We managed to pass a motion supporting individuals and groups of members refusing to comply with name badges and revealing their identities.

they are unfortunately the likely result of co-operation over a redundancy deal.

The only way to safeguard our jobs is to use the strength we do have — collective action.

Rights to redeployment, for retraining and a guaranteed grade are being eroded. BT can well afford to organise the retraining necessary to modernise their workforce, but there is no will to do anything of long-term benefit to us.

It was agreed to seek co-operation with NUCPS in producing a workers' charter to counter the vindictive citizens' charter. Kowalski refused to even allow debate on issuing a call to our members not to cross the picket lines during their strike over the removal of counter screens on 1 November.

More positively, the Benefits Agency Committee has agreed to begin a staffing campaign. All branches should be handing in details of how many staff we need in all offices, and inviting committee members to address meetings.

The NCU redundancy deal has compromised on 'personal rights' to grading too: a very important issue in a redeployment situation. We are only guaranteed our present grade for four years if we are redeployed to a job of a lower grade.

And we lose our right anyway if we refuse a 'reasonable' offer involving relocation. The deskilling and devaluation of our job will be accelerated by this.

We must fight back!

Why the Camden strikers are still fighting

By a Camden social work striker

Camden strikers who are in the 20th week of their strike to have the National Agreement on the regrading of social workers implemented, today (14th

October) considered and rejected the proposal made by Camden Council.

The council is one of only three boroughs in Greater London not to have implemented the National Agreement and the lowest paying inner-London borough.

The council offered one increment to social workers in

post on January 1992 provided six conditions were met. The offer was made subject to the maximum of the scale not being exceeded. As 45% of Camden social workers are paid on the maximum of the scale, they are excluded from the offer.

The offer also excluded social care workers. This in effect means that the offer was made to only slightly over 50% of social workers.

The national regrading agreement was initially awarded in recognition of the increased responsibility and skills needed to implement the three major pieces of legislation affecting social workers over the past 10 years.

These are the 1983 Mental Health Act, the 1988 Community Care Act and the 1989 Children Act.

The regrading recognised the need to retain experienced skilled workers. Camden's offer does not even acknowledge the need for the regrading and positively discourages experienced social workers from remaining in the borough.

14th October is the implementation day of the Children Act. Throughout the country, social workers have been trained not only to be able to work under the Act but also to try to implement the spirit of the Act. Camden has no social workers available to carry out the Act.

Since they have not been trained, the social workers will be unable to implement the Act when they return to work.

In the past Camden has claimed that it did not have to implement the national agreement as it was not on the national pay scale.

It claimed that its pay scale was better. However, during the talks at ACAS in August, it acknowledged that it had never departed from the national pay scale, "just enhanced it".

During the Whitley Council conciliation, Camden initially claimed not to be on the national pay scale. However, in the light, yet again, of documentary evidence, it retreated to the position that its pay scales were 'better' than any other borough's.

Camden's position is in the bottom three of Greater London employer scales. Had the offer been accepted, Camden would still be in the bottom five of the Greater London boroughs.

The offer also seeks to give the council the right to unconditionally redeploy staff without any consultation. There is no indication that specialist skills and knowledge built up over the years will be taken into account.

It is an offer which encourages the most skilled and experienced social workers to leave Camden.

Ford: fight for the full claim!

Unions at Ford have put in a claim for 7%, a return to past practices, together with a two-hour cut in the 39-hour week.

They also want management to establish a fund to retrain and redeploy workers whose jobs are threatened by new technology or market fluctuations. This is in line with Ford's practices in the US.

This claim, 7% for 37 hours, is

worth pushing for. In recent years the unions have taken to claiming "a substantial increase" only to backtrack on this.

Wage increases in manufacturing (at least for skilled workers) have held up better than most in recent years. A pathetic deal at Ford could prove contagious.

With workers at Jaguar set to receive a 7% rise from next month Ford workers have got to fight.

Civil service pay: beware the dangers of delay

By a civil servant

Treasury officials have now told civil service union leaders that they will not be given the Tories' precise amendments to the various national long-term pay deals until mid-November.

And yet the Tories are standing by their decision to withdraw from those agreements on the 31 March 1992 if the unions refuse to accept the amendments.

The Tories are deliberately ratcheting up the stakes in an attempt to break up national pay bargaining and extend performance pay as a proportion of take-home pay.

They are not content with the gun to the head threat of withdrawing completely from national bargaining if the unions do not agree fundamental inroads to it: they are cutting the negotiating period as finely as possible to test the nerve of the union leaderships.

There is a real danger that

their tactics will work. Despite union leaders denouncing the Tory blackmail tactics, there has been no move to mobilise members on this issue.

Over the next couple of weeks, all branches of all the unions must hold emergency members' meetings and pass motions demanding special pay conferences to force our leaders to fight.

If we fail to fight on this issue — and the Tories break up national pay bargaining — members' pay will be driven down under all sorts of pretexts. Members in departments undertaking major staff run-downs, or working in areas of high unemployment, will find themselves under tremendous pressure. It is vital that all unions fight and fight together!

John Ellis, CPSA's right-wing General Secretary, who has hitherto set such store by the CPSA's long-term pay deal, is wobbling all over the place. He knows the seriousness of the threat, understands the determination of the Tories, but is talking of a 'core' agreement which will set a basic national minimum for CPSA members.

This is wrong-headed. A na-

tional Treasury agreement, on the basis of departments being able to vary or withdraw altogether from any national deal, will more likely become the ceiling for any departmental, agency or local award. The clear demand has to be, the national rate for the job.

All unions should therefore be linking the fight for national bargaining to a serious 1992 pay claim which will enhance members' living standards. Members will be far more willing to fight for national bargaining if it is tied to a defence of living standards.

The NUCPS NEC are promising to issue a third pay bulletin soon, to organise special district committee meetings in late October/early November to consult activists, and to convene workplace meetings in late November. This is more than the other unions, but it is not enough. NEC members must address all membership meetings now. Members have to be honestly told that industrial action will be needed.

Members must now demand serious action from their leaders. Hold membership meetings, demand pay conferences!

The left and the unions

Singing a dirge at the birth of a new union

By Tom Rigby

The decision of the rank and file based Offshore Industry Liaison Committee to form themselves into a new union for offshore workers is potentially one of the most positive things to have happened in the British trade union movement for many years.

If the offshore workers despite adverse circumstances, succeed in their aim of establishing a solid industrial union with real strength on the rigs, and substantial control over health and safety matters, it will be a substantial victory for all working people.

The offshore workers will have shown that workers can effectively organise even in the most difficult of situations.

This will give courage to union activists across industry where a clear majority of the workforce are no longer

To tell a relatively compact and autonomous group such as the offshore workers to hold back in their industry [where the balance of forces is not so much in the bureaucracy's favour] until such time as a broad movement does exist is to preach passivity and cowardice.

And it's one rule for the rank and file, another for the "Marxists"!

Militant supported and sponsored the counterproductive and pointless 'breakaway' from the Liverpool Labour Party which led to the Walton by-election fiasco, an adventure that only helped to weaken and divide the left in the Labour Party and provided an opportunity for mass expulsions.

If Militant are to be consistent, they are saying that a few dozen of their disorientated supporters and friends meeting in a pub room have the right to be supported unconditionally no matter what desperate gambit they propose, whereas the people who shut down the North Sea for two summers in a row deserve to be lectured from the sidelines.

Socialist Worker agrees with Militant. It uses two main arguments against the offshore workers' union.

Firstly, "past experience of breakaway unions suggests the OILC's move will prove a mistake".

Does this mean all breakaways are wrong? That is not possible to argue in the light of constructive, liberating breakaways such as that which led to the formation of the great industrial unions in the USA in the 1930s. So we have to judge each breakaway concretely.

Socialist Worker's second argument: "Even if the OILC succeeds in becoming a major body organising the offshore workers, it could easily end up replicating the bureaucratic structures of the existing unions".

Yes, an offshore union could become bureaucratic — but even if that happens, the establishment of an industrial union for the North Sea would be a major step forwards for the workers, wouldn't it?

Without a union, without organisation, the working class can only be a class of victims. An effective union, bureaucratic or not, represents a massive advance in comparison.

If Socialist Worker can't see that, they can't see anything.

Lenin often insisted that serious working class politics had to be based on 'concrete analysis of a concrete situation'. To illustrate the point, he would tell the story of the village odd ball who sings wedding songs at funerals and dirges at weddings. In both cases he gets a hostile response.

Militant and Socialist Worker deserve the same kind of reception for promoting toy-town 'breakaway' politics in one constituency one minute and denouncing a genuine working class jail-break the next.

"If the offshore workers despite adverse circumstances, succeed, it will be a substantial victory for all working people."

unionised. It could be the start of a revival for trade unionism.

Yet some people on the left, particularly Militant and Socialist Worker, have come out against the offshore workers' union.

You would think that self-avowed Marxists with no base in the industry would have to have pretty strong reasons for standing against the course of action that the majority of working class activists in the field have embarked upon. But that would be too modest for Militant and Socialist Worker!

Militant said the offshore workers' union was a big mistake because "The task is still to replace the so-called leaders at the head of the official unions".

So Militant are telling activists in the OILC that a real breakthrough for offshore workers must wait until we have a rank and file movement in the GMB, AEU and EETPU, strong enough to kick out Edmonds, Jordan and Gallagher. That is, a rank and file movement across the great bulk of manufacturing industry!

Sadly, such a movement is not on the immediate agenda.

Oil workers' OILC forms breakaway union

Real question is how to lead a fight



Socialist Worker: but who will lead a fight — Airlie or the OILC?

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Fighting for real socialism!



The privatisation of coal has been predicted for a long time. British Coal want to smash the NUM. They did not succeed during the 1984-85 dispute. Miners must fight back now

Privatisation and victimisation threats:

Miners must fight back!



The energy secretary John Wakeham has drawn up plans to privatise 14 pits and sack four-fifths of Britain's miners if the Tories are re-elected.

Paul Whetton argues that it's time for miners to fight back.

The Tories have announced sweeping plans for pit privatisation and closures.

We could see this coming as long ago as 1983. Now it is all out in the open.

Mining communities will be wiped out. Morale has already been devastated in the mining industry.

In Manton pit recently, a young lad was sacked for allegedly being asleep. The men came to the branch

meeting and demanded action to get his job back.

A ballot was held. Around 70% were in favour of industrial action. They went for a full overtime ban without safety cover.

The management turned on the union. They are talking about closing the union office and putting the officials to work so that they are unable to do their union jobs.

Last Saturday there was a union meeting. It overwhelmingly backed the branch officials, promising support if management made moves against them. That's typical of the way things are in the coalfields now.

After the case when a young lad was sacked at Frickley, the Frickley men looked for support across the coal-field and none was forthcoming. The management began to assert their authority even more brutally.

What they want beside a small number of pits, is a compliant workforce — demoralised and unorganised workers.

British Coal wants to smash the National Union of Miners. They did not succeed during the great 1984-5 strike. But they are still trying. I hope the lads will act in defence of their jobs and of the union.

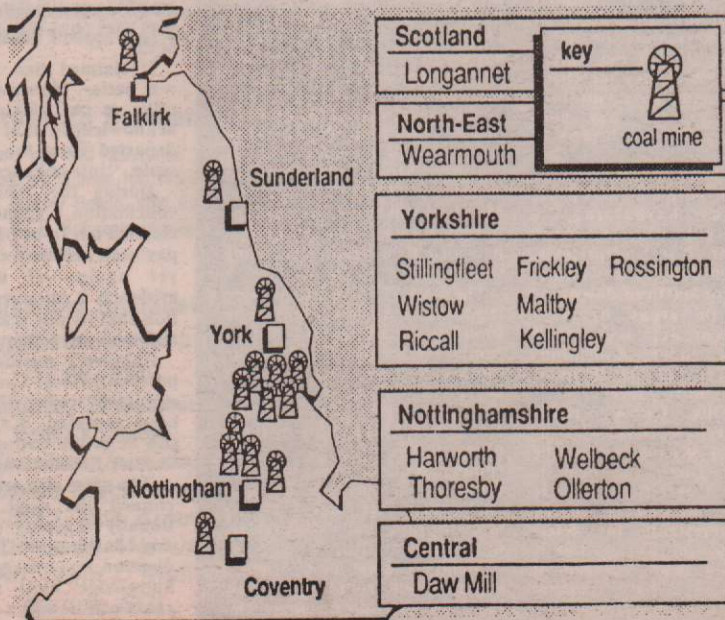
The UDM has been deliberately propped up by British Coal since the end of the '84-'85 strike. Now the management hopes that the

UDM will smooth the way to privatisation. But if it does, that job will be quickly thrown away.

The NUM is taking a campaign into the coalfields over the wage issue. I hope there will be action, not only around wages, but extended to securing a stable future for their jobs.

I hope rank and file workers in other industries will see that opposition to the destruction of the coal industry is their fight too.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire, and was secretary of the Notts Rank and File Strike Committee in 1984-85.



The 14 pits that are to be privatised

Stand up for Real Socialism is a campaign initiated by Socialist Organiser.

We aim to restate the case for democratic, working-class control of society. We are fighting to replace both Stalinism and capitalism with real socialism.

Socialist Organiser always argued against those who said the Stalinist states were socialist. Stalinism was the opposite of socialism — it meant vile tyranny against the working class.

But the real socialists have faced the following problem; the Western capitalists and the Stalinist bureaucrats said the USSR was socialist! For years British workers have been fed this lie.

This great lie has been one of the central ideas that the capitalist class have used to stop the emergence of a mass socialist movement in the West.

So we are glad that Stalinism has collapsed in Eastern Europe. One of the main ideological obstacles between us and the mass of the working class has begun to fade.

Now we are back to where we started: international socialism versus the terrible reality of world capitalism. Nothing now stands between us and the reality of the bosses' system.

Stand up for Real Socialism believes that the genuine tradition of working class socialism must confront and destroy ideas of the right. Their justifications for the status quo are shot through with hypocrisy and double standards.

Some of the sessions at our 2 November conference will pit right-wing thinkers against the Marxist tradition.

Conference

Is Socialism Dead?

Saturday 2 November

11.00-5.00

Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, London

• *Is Socialism Dead?*

John O'Mahony debates Professor Kenneth Minogue of the London School of Economics.

• *Free market or socialist planning?* Martin Thomas debates Professor David Marsland of the West London Institute.

Other discussions will deal with the "problems of socialism" — Is socialism democratic? Did Lenin lead to Stalin?

Tickets are £6 waged; £4 students and low waged; £2 unwaged.

For more details and tickets please contact "Stand up for Real Socialism", c/o 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.