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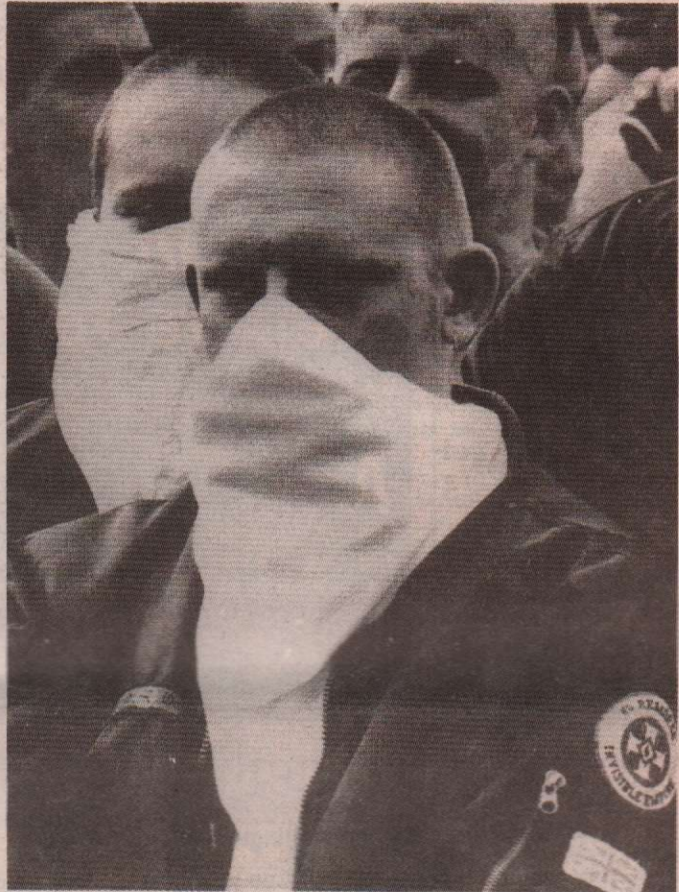
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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

## 100,000 march against the Nazis in Paris



Together we can beat this scum

# Unite against racism!

One hundred thousand anti-racists from 50 labour and anti-fascist organisations marched against the Nazi *Front National* in Paris last Saturday. On the same day, 100,000 marched against Italian fascism in Milan.

This shows what can be done! It shows what a determined and united anti-racist campaign can achieve.

The Paris demonstration was a big boost for all those who want to see the back of French fascism.

The lesson for Britain is clear: *unite* to beat the racist Tory government and the growth of the British far right.

More on the anti-fascist fightback — see pages 3, 4 and 5

French left shows the way

ANC vacillates between state and working class

# South Africa's "historic compromise"

By Ann Mack

The nature of South Africa's "historic compromise" between the African National Congress and the racist regime became a little clearer this week.

De Klerk opened the racist parliament this week by making it clear that there will never be another whites-only election. Instead, there will be a whites-only referendum on "constitutional change" which will almost certainly take the form of De Klerk putting forward an

ultimatum to the white minority along the lines of "Vote for this or it's racial civil war". Despite the hot air from the far right, he is unlikely to lose.

Meanwhile, the ANC continued to call for a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of one-person, one-vote. But, at the same time, the ANC leaders are getting more and more involved in various joint legislative committees set up as part of the process of reform from above.

De Klerk's strategy of drawing the ANC into government 'responsibility' while maintaining a firm hand on the repressive

machinery of the state seems to be working. The ANC leadership are vacillating between the state which can offer them power and prominence, and the working class who provide the pressure to keep the reform process going.

Already, ANC supporters in the unions are talking about a 'social contract' of minimal reforms in return for an end to industrial militancy.

Perhaps, more black workers can now see why leftwingers in the trade unions used to call Miners' leader and ANC notable, Cyril Ramaphosa 'The Commissar for Labour'?

## German steelworkers prepare for battle

By Tom Rigby

At last the giant stirs. The world's biggest trade union, IG Metall — the German steel and engineering union — is balloting its steelworker members on strike action over pay. A yes vote topping the required 75% looks likely.

The strike when it comes will be a major test case. German bosses want to hammer the steelworkers to teach the rest of the German working class a lesson. Their aim is to hold down wage levels across the whole of industry.

German workers are being told by finance ministers and central banks across Europe that only wage moderation on their part can secure an economic recovery.

But the workers are not

prepared to accept the bosses' arguments.

"The mood here is that anybody who earns in a month what we earn in six months can easily afford to call for reasonable pay settlements", argued Mannesmann tubeworks shop steward, Joachim Grossmann.

So much for the German economic miracle, looks like the return of class war. Watch this space.

## Kenneth Clarke's Japanese ally

By Ian Hollingworth

Mr Takao Kashima, managing director of the Tokyo-based Kumon Institute of Education, is about to launch a series of "back to basics" special schools in this country.

Victorian methods, long abandoned, will be the norm, according to the *Observer*. Out will go discovery learning and project work. In will come old-fashioned drill, lots of worksheets and endless testing. Calculators will be banned.

number of students find it difficult to conform to the barrage of rules and regulations enforced by many schools".

A demanding national curriculum has been blamed for the non-attendance of slower learners who find it difficult to keep up with their classmates.

We are unlikely, however, to expect much sympathy from Kenneth Clarke, who will, no doubt, be attracted by the cheapness of Mr Kashima's special schools.

These schools rely not on trained teachers, but *instructors*, expected to handle classes of up to 50 and work till seven in the evening.

Here is the reality of the Tories' "Victorian values", large classes, cheap materials, and the devil take the slowest. In short — shoddiness from on high.

Mr Kashima is searching for instructors and suitable premises. He will be placing advertisements in the local press to attract his "customers".

**"A demanding national curriculum has been blamed for the non-attendance of slower learners who find it difficult to keep up..."**

Lessons are timed to start at 4.00pm, just as normal school is ending.

But before Kenneth Clarke grasps at yet another pre-election straw, perhaps he ought to note a report in the *Times Educational Supplement* this week, which reveals that nearly half a million schoolchildren in Japan dislike the regime so intensely that they each truanted for more than 50 days in the past academic year.

Education lecturer, Fumio Ichigawa, says "The rigid regimentation and strict discipline of the Japanese education system has created a stifling regime. A growing

## IMMIGRATION APPEALS



Prakash and Prem face deportation to Mauritius. If they are sent back she will have no job, no house and will face hardship, social isolation and humiliation.

For more information contact West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH. Photo: Mark Salmon.



Students need a democratic and fighting union

## Defend student democracy!

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer

Student unionists around the country are coming out in opposition to the organisation of an extraordinary conference on NUS Reform.

Points being made include:

- The conference will be less representative than an ordinary conference, as delegates do not have to be elected.

- The conference will last for one day, and be inaccessible to many colleges, especially far-flung unions and FE unions with limited funds.

- The conference will be expensive and National President Stephen Twigg has refused to say where the money is coming from.

- Organising this conference has meant that other planned conferences — including the Students with Disabilities, Childcare, and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual conferences — have been cancelled.

• Extraordinary conferences should be for real emergencies. Perhaps student hardship or the rise in racism and fascism — but NUS Reform?!

Those who support the conference have developed an arrogant and contorted logic. It goes something like this: yes, we know the extraordinary conference is undemocratic, but NUS Reform is so important that it is OK to be undemocratic in achieving it. Why is NUS Reform so important? To make NUS more democratic!

The simple truth is that the main Reform proposals will make NUS less democratic — abolishing a national conference; getting rid of pluralism on the National Executive; replacing responsive local Area structures with unwieldy regional bureaucracies.

NUS Reform is nothing to do with democracy. The Kinnockite leadership is cynically using student unionists' justified dissatisfaction with NUS to push through changes that will safeguard their careers.

## Defend Paul Ramsamooj!

Socialist Organiser supporter, Paul Ramsamooj, is being witch-hunted from his post of President of Essex University Students' Union. A campaign based on trumped-up charges of financial corruption and neglect of duties has united a small group of Labour supporters with Liberal Democrats and Independents, with the ready support of Tory students.

The campaign against Paul is an attack on the left, as one Tory put it: "We know he's innocent, but it's a good chance to get rid of him".

It is also a diversion from building a student campaign for Labour and the NUS National Demonstration on

February 12. Paul has not even been afforded the most basic justice: the witch-hunters were not prepared to outline their "allegations" against him.

The Labour Club has swung behind Paul. At one meeting it passed overwhelmingly a motion censuring the witchhunters and instructing the Labour members involved to cease their involvement in the campaign.

Paul's witch-hunt is similar to those run against *Socialist Organiser* supporters in 1988 when a candidate for the NUS NEC was accused of being a drug-addict! *Socialist Organiser* was accused of using drugs and sex to entice young recruits!

Messages of support should be sent to Paul c/o Essex University Student Union, Wiverhoe Park, Colchester.

## Witchhunt in Leeds stepped up

By Jo Colline

In its latest move against the left, the Labour Party NEC decided last week to suspend the University Ward

Branch in Leeds.

Following months of harassment and victimisation of branch officers, the Party's organising committee has suspended the branch without formal charges being presented.

### The lie machine



If you doubt that bourgeois politics is a corrupt and dirty business, watch the Tories in the months between now and the election. Already they are buying votes, scaremongering against "high tax" Labour, and manipulating and using the state Treasury blatantly and shamelessly for party political purposes.

In a proper self-respecting democracy what the Tories and press barons are doing now would land them in jail for fraud, corruption and electoral malpractice!

But not all is politics. "The Darling Buds of May" is back on telly, and a story which ties in a sick woman and Catherine Zeta Jones is just perfect!

# Unite against racism!

Ken Livingstone supports the Anti-Racist Alliance, (ARA). Last week, Livingstone wrote a newspaper column denouncing ARA's rival, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which runs it.

Where was this piece of intra-left polemic printed? In *Tribune*? In *Socialist Organiser*? *Campaign Group News*, the *Morning Star*? No — in the *Sun*! The *Sun*! The *Sun*, which itself deserves to be the target of anti-racist demonstrations!

For the future Lord Redken to use his column in the *Sun* to attack an anti-racist campaign, or a socialist organisation like the SWP, is a major scandal.

Livingstone's attack on the ANL came only a few days after supporters of the two campaigns engaged in a public fist-fight to decide which group should march at the head of the previous weekend's anti-racist demonstration!

The new drive to mount a powerful anti-racist campaign is only three months old. But already, as these incidents and others demonstrate, we find ourselves once again ensnared in lunatic, self-destructive, intra-left faction-fighting of the sort which crippled the movement against the Gulf War one year ago. And the same political groups and individuals are responsible.

Because of that faction-fighting, we did a great deal less against the Gulf War than we could have done had the left been united. We will pay a heavy price if we waste our strength in irresponsible intra-left factionalism now *instead* of organising a serious campaign to stop the growth of British racism and fascism.

How can we stop this crippling factionalism? The truth is you can not stop factionalism in the present state of the left and the labour movement — anyone who tells you otherwise is a demagogue or a fool. What you can do is prevent factionalism crippling us.

The root of this poisonous ARA-ANL factionalism lies in the conflicting claims of the two groupings to a monopoly in anti-racist organising. Everything flows from this claim and from the way the campaigns making such claims are structured.

In turn, this is rooted in the desire of competing political groups to have and use "their own" factionally policed and controlled anti-racist campaign.

"Inside" the ANL, running it as an "operation", is the SWP. Inside ARA is Socialist Action entwined with prominent individuals like Livingstone. These are the bone struc-



## Tax the rich!

**S**mall children in tears in supermarkets all across the country because their parents can't afford chocolate biscuits after paying increased taxes: that was the picture of Britain under a Labour government presented by the last Tory political broadcast.

Such is the look-after-number-one mentality bred by 13 years of Tory economics that this ludicrous paranoia even seems to be having some effect. Never mind the facts!

• *The Tories' scare-stories about Labour taxes are based on adding up all the increases in public spending which Labour people have mentioned as desirable or possible and assuming that they are all made in one year. The same method of*

*calculation, applied to Tory statements, would show them running a budget deficit next year bigger than Labour's alleged £35 billion spending increase!*

• *Since 1979, the Tories have increased taxes for most people — while cutting them drastically for the very rich.*

• *Labour proposes to raise taxes only for the rich and well-off — many of whom now pay a lower rate of tax than the average person, because they are exempted from the nine per cent deduction for National Insurance.*

• *Labour's proposals would only go a small way towards reversing the greater inequality of after-tax income developed since 1979 by Tory tax and other policies.*

• *Never mind all those facts: the Tory-dominated press has been*

*shouting at the top of its collective voice about the Labour threat to well-filled pockets.*

The din is having some effect only because Labour is running scared, piteously protesting that it will raise taxes only very slowly and gradually. The facts are clear: so is the destruction and barbarism created by the Tories' denial of cash to the Health Service, to public sector housing and to other public services. Repeated opinion polls show that most people would rather pay more taxes and have better public services.

The top ten per cent in Britain today own 53 per cent of all marketable wealth and almost all privately-owned land and shares. Labour should say boldly that it will tax the rich to provide services for the working class.

tures: the affiliated organisations and celebrities are the loose flesh of the organisations. The SWP is a sizeable organisation; Socialist Action is a minuscule splinter of the old IMG dependent on its symbiotic links with Livingstone and others.

In the anti-war movement a year ago, Socialist Action's influence came from people like Livingstone and from having committed members like Carol Turner in key positions in CND. Its influence was utterly destructive and pernicious. Itself committed to "Victory to Iraq" as a (private) slogan, Socialist Action with its friends *witchhunted* others in the anti-war movement who dared go as far as calling for American troops to withdraw from the Gulf. As we said at the time, they and their allies thereby reduced the anti-war movement to "the

politics of the madhouse".

The rivalry of the ANL and the ARA now threatens to reduce the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement also to the politics of the madhouse.

The problem lies not only with Socialist Action and Livingstone (whose own anti-racist credentials are far from impeccable: he worked very closely and for a long time with Gerry Healy's now scattered WRP, which was blatantly anti-semitic). The SWP also pursues grotesquely narrow aims in this work.

The SWP decided to set up the ANL only when it saw the scale and scope of the anti-Le Pen demonstration last November: at its conference only a couple of weeks earlier, there was no mention of any such initiative. In these matters the SWP is not entirely devoid of a fun-

damental sense of responsibility, but in practice it does tend to operate according to the principles, the guidelines and the morality of the Stock Exchange speculator.

It arbitrarily wound up the original ANL in the '70s when the SWP leaders felt they could gain more in narrow party terms by so doing. (And after they had led the ANL to the disgrace of choosing to go ahead with a pop festival instead of mobilising to defend the Bengalis of Brick Lane in East London, on which the fascists chose to march at the same time.)

The SWP's idea of the work of the ANL now is best illustrated by the fact that ANL bookstalls in colleges carry the full range of SWP "anti-Zionist" literature denouncing Israel — this in conditions where Nazi anti-semitism is ram-

nant again and where, in consequence, fighting anti-semitism will have to be one of the central concerns of any adequate anti-racist movement. On our letters page, we carry an account of rank and file SWPers in the teachers' union responding to proposals that their union opposes anti-semitism with... diatribes against Israel.

What can we do to escape from the craziness of ANL-ARA faction-fighting into the world of seriously building against racism and fascism?

• Reject and fight against the idea that any permanently organised campaign, either ANL or ARA, or another, has a monopoly on organising.

• Insist on properly accountable democratic structures for such bodies.

• Organise major demonstrations and campaigns not through either of the pretenders to a monopoly but through ad hoc committees which will include ANL and ARA, and others.

• Reject all attempts — of the sort we saw on the Gulf War demos — by committees or campaigns to impose narrow restrictions and controls on what slogans can and can not be carried on demonstrations.

Hard decisions will sometimes have to be taken and imposed — tactical decisions about physical battles for example — but such decisions will gain greater authority coming from ad hoc, truly representative committees set up for a particular action than they could possibly have as decisions of any grouping claiming a contested monopoly in this work.

Not the least argument against the present state of affairs is that it precludes serious *action* because the authority claimed by both ANL and ARA is not, and will not be, generally accepted.

The great anti-Vietnam war demonstrations were organised ad hoc and so was last weekend's giant demonstration in Paris. Dozens of organisations co-operated loosely and democratically for a specific purpose and Paris saw a tremendous demonstration of anti-racist strength.

Both the ANL, organised and controlled by the SWP, which is already peddling thinly-disguised anti-semitism within the ANL, and ARA, fronted by Ken Livingstone, must be called to order by those who are concerned to build a strong anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Britain, now, while there is still time!

The best thing now would be for the ANL and ARA to hold joint discussions, inviting other interested parties, with a view to dissolving existing structures, and replacing them with one campaign organised more loosely and more democratically.

Meanwhile, democratically broad organised local committees should be set up under the rubric of "ANL/ARA". They should affiliate to both organisations, and fight for unity.

"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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## "Anti-working class, anti-TUC"?

**B**allot papers on the AEU/EETPU merger will be going out as you read this. Laird, Jordan, Hammond and Gallacher have spent the last three weeks charging round the country, popping up unannounced all over the place, extolling the

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

alleged benefits of their proposed "super-union".

The roadshow kicked off at Heathrow, where Hammond and Gallacher were joined by the British Airways engineering manager, whose enthusiasm for the merger may be explained by BA's plan to transfer all its jumbo fleet maintenance to Cardiff, where it wants a single-union deal. Bad luck on all those TGWU, MSF and GMB members at Heathrow.

Unfortunately, the pro-merger barrage from the AEU/EETPU frantic four has not been met by a comparable response from those who might be expected to know what a disaster the merger would be and to lead a campaign against it.

The major "left" grouping in the AEU, the *Engineering Gazette*, remained conspicuous by its silence until November of last year, when it belatedly announced its opposition. Now the *Gazette* has bottled out and will not campaign for a "no" vote after all. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that the *Gazette's* two members on the AEU executive, Jimmy Airlie and Roger Butler, both voted in favour of the merger?

Whatever the reasons for the *Gazette's* pusillanimous performance over the merger, one thing should now be clear: this organisation is useless.

Whatever the outcome of the ballot, the *Gazette* will never regain the credibility it once had amongst militant engineers and is doomed to a semi-moribund existence as a fanzine for James Airlie and his diminishing band of acolytes.

A real rank and file based broad left will have to be built in engineering, whatever the outcome of the ballot. If (and I stress the "if") the merger goes ahead, the need will be all the more urgent. A crucial campaigning issue will be the new union's policy on TUC affiliation. One of the most dishonest aspects of the AEU leadership's recent propaganda has been their attempt to portray the merger as a pro-TUC move and opponents as "anti-TUC" (and even "anti-working class", according to Gavin Laird).

Eric Hammond's successor as EETPU general secretary, Paul Gallacher, seems to see things somewhat differently. At the Heathrow press conference, he stated that he had "yet to be persuaded about TUC affiliation" and that the union "had not missed being outside" the TUC.

Eric Hammond backs up this stance in the latest edition of the EETPU's journal *Contact*: "If the TUC cannot convince the new union membership of its worth then I have no doubt that they, and certainly I, will vote against affiliation".

If the merger ballot goes in favour, the new union will ballot on TUC affiliation in one year's time. For now, the campaign for a no vote on merger must concentrate on the very real danger of the EETPU leaders pulling the new union out of the TUC altogether.

Now who's "anti-TUC", Gavin?



Eric Hammond is ambivalent about TUC affiliation of a merged AEU/EETPU. But it's the anti-merger activists who are accused of being "anti-TUC" by AEU's Gavin Laird.



100,000 march in Paris against racism and fascism, 25 January. We need such a united campaign in Britain

# How the Fren

Christian Picquet, editor of the French socialist weekly *Rouge* spoke to *Socialist Organiser* about the 100,000-strong united anti-racist demonstration in Paris on Saturday 25 January

**T**he biggest contingents were from the anti-racist movements, especially SOS-Racisme; from the local anti-fascist coalitions; and from the political organisations.

The Communist Party had a big contingent, and there was a sizeable contingent from the far left, including from the LCR [Revolutionary Communist League, the group which publishes *Rouge*.] The Socialist Party also supported the demonstration.

There were relatively small trade union contingents, but it was important that all the sections of the trade union movement had decided to support the demonstration, including the regional organisations of Force Ouvrière (the most right-wing of France's three politically-oriented but union-intel-

tions).

The idea of anti-racist unity has been in the air for a long time. The "Appeal of the 250" [an anti-racist appeal signed by 250 personalities] had popularised the idea for a year and a half

that we needed a big, unitary national demonstration against Le Pen in particular, against racism, and for equal rights for immigrants.

Up until now, it had not been possible to concretise that idea, but the rise of Le

Pen sparked off a sort of dynamic over recent months which broke through the obstacles and made possible a broad agreement between fifty organisations to call for the demonstration.

After the demonstration, people who took part will be organising systematically in their towns and cities to develop mobilisations each time Le Pen takes the initiative. Now there will be a united demonstration in every town in France every time Le Pen comes there.

The next big date for the national anti-racist and anti-fascist movement will be 1 May.

Each year, for several years now, Le Pen has been holding a demonstration on 1 May, trying to take over the workers' May Day. Back in October, the "Appeal of the 250" called for a demonstration on May Day, and now that call has been taken up by all the organisations involved in last weekend's march.

So there will probably be another big demonstration on 1 May. That will come just after the regional elections in March. Those elections, by all indications from the polls and so on, will show big gains for the National Front.

The main lesson is that unity is imposed from outside, or largely from outside, on the traditional political machines.

## What they marched for on 25 January

**W**e have had enough of immigrants being made scapegoats for the social and political crisis in our country in the run-up to every election.

If youth, and the people of the working class suburbs, are relegated to training schemes and odd jobs, job discrimination, police checks on the basis of their facial appearance, and threats against the right to asylum, then what does the talk of encouraging the integration of immigrants amount to?

The centre of debate is drifting today, and that is because the situation has been allowed to get worse on the ground, and inequalities to grow, which encourage law-and-order reflex responses and recourse to populism.

If we want to build a Europe of citizens and of equality, open to the rest of the world, can we compromise our future with the divisions of racism.

Groups are mobilising daily for the right to housing, for equality before the law, for respect for the right to work, and for social welfare for all.

All anti-racists and democrats who hold to the values of human rights and democracy should rally behind this activity.

We call on them to demonstrate together on 25 January in Paris: against deportations; for equal rights; against the far right and racism; for a new citizenship and the right to vote for all immigrants.

[Supported by 50 immigrant, human-rights, socialist, trade-union, and student organisations.]

## Students for a Labour victory



By Alice Sharp (National Union of Students Executive Committee)

**Y**oung people are amongst the worst off in Britain today. Yet, despite this, it is claimed that around 42% of under-21s will be voting Tory in the general election.

We're living through the gloomiest recession in years. Compulsory Youth Training (YT) for pitifully low pay and sub-standard training is all that's available for millions of young people.

Homelessness, poor public services, reduced social security benefits, and no financial support for further education students is what's on offer.

Yet the opinion poll published earlier this week in *Today* newspaper shows that Labour are 10% behind the

Labour is still only neck and neck with the Tories.

There is no youth movement in Britain. The Tories' selfish, look-after-number-one ethos of the 1980s has no doubt had its effect on young people. But Labour's decision to close down the Labour Party Young Socialists has meant that layers of young people have been left without the potential to organise.

The student movement has the highest concentration of organised youth. It is around one and a half million strong. Many of these students are under 21, and first-time voters. Many more remain unconvinced to vote Labour.

As socialists organised in the student movement we have a duty and a responsibility to work hard to deliver a Labour vote.

The confidence of young people reflects the general level of confidence of the working class. Uninspired by the Labour leadership, cynical about what a Labour government can achieve, we have to fight hard to win them over.

A simple comparison of each party's policies will be sufficient to convince some to vote Labour. Many others will need to be inspired about what's possible under a Labour government.

The potential for change grows as the confidence of the class grows. The point is not what a Labour government can achieve, but what the class can force a Labour government to deliver.

On a practical level, students should be calling "Students for a Labour Victory" meetings and rallies; organising debates between the main parties, inviting PPCs, MPs, etc; producing propaganda and canvassing students in common rooms, canteens and halls of residence.

The build-up to a general election is the best opportunity so far to relaunch Labour Clubs. Run down for years by the right-wing Kinnockites, Labour Clubs are now amongst the smallest societies on campus.

If Labour wins the general election, Labour Clubs will grow. There will be a rush by the right wing to take them over. If the left get themselves in place now it will be all the more difficult to remove us.

The Kinnockite leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) appears to be unable to focus on the general election and kicking the Tories out. Their failure to organise youth over the last decade is reflected in young people's opinions now.

The leaders of NUS are tied up in knots over the internal reforms of NUS. Breaking the constitution has become an almost daily activity at a time when the only daily activity should be canvassing and mobilising support for a Labour government.

The drive for any serious socialist during the coming months is the need for a Labour victory. That drive has to take us out into the colleges, and onto the estates, building the campaign that will turn the tide of defeats into one that gives us the potential to fight and win.

*"The confidence of young people reflects the general level of confidence of the working class. Uninspired by the Labour leadership, cynical about what a Labour government can achieve, we have to fight hard to win them over."*

Conservatives for the under-21 votes.

47% support Major for Prime Minister, compared to only 19% for Kinnock. Apart from this saying a lot about the general level of conservatism amongst Britain's youth, it also says a lot about Neil Kinnock.

His stumbling, rank amateurism makes him less attractive to younger people, even when compared to the "Grey Man" himself.

Overall, young people back Labour, but half of all those asked believe a Kinnock government will do no better than the Tories.

Labour are not winning the arguments. The dice are loaded in favour of the Tories; Labour's job has always been a difficult one. However, after 13 years of Tory rule, and some of the most vicious and retrogressive legislation, Labour should, by now, be well in front.

The situation is that

# ch left united

There is a deep-going mobilisation against Le Pen of sections of the workers' movement, and more fundamentally, of youth. Saturday's demonstration was a very young demonstration.

In the localities it is thousands and thousands of youth who are mobilising to

day to stop Le Pen and the racists.

For that broad mobilisation to produce results, a second element was necessary: an organised force working on the issue long-term, often against the current.

The LCR has been emphasising the dangers of the

rise of Le Pen for many years, and now the danger of Le Pen challenging for power in France.

The "Appeal of the 250" has also played a part in preparing the ground — in setting up local anti-racist collectives, conducting struggles in the trade unions etc.,

saying that it is time for a counter-offensive.

Now we can see the patient long-term work producing results, above all because it has been able to key into a deep-going youth mobilisation.

[Additions in square brackets from *Socialist Organiser*.]

## Algerian socialists denounce military repression

**F**ollowing the coup of 12 January, Algeria's new military-dominated government is beginning a crackdown on the Islamic fundamentalists [FIS] who came out in front in the elections on 26 December.

The PST, an Algerian Trotskyist group linked to the LCR in France, has declared: "The authoritarian tendencies developing from this civilised coup d'état will allow the imposition of a social order based on unemployment and poverty, just as an FLN-FIS government would have imposed. The FIS, which feeds on

social despair, will be strengthened by it, although it is complicit in the same economic policy.

"Between those who weighed in with disloyal methods to swing the election, and those who through a coup d'état stopped the expression of the popular will by equally disloyal means, the PST will not choose.

"Far too many workers and intellectuals have illusions in the military solution; far too many young people believe in the FIS. The fundamentalists threaten women's rights, the expression of opinions, and the existence of political parties; they promise a regime of oppression; but the tanks cannot guarantee liberty."

The other main Trotskyist group, the PT (linked to the PCI in France), focuses its denunciation much more on the military and much less on the fundamentalists. Its leader Louiza Hanoune states:

"The immense majority of the Algerian people condemns what is defined — even in the international press — as a coup d'état. To think that this coup d'état has anything to do with the defence of democracy seems to me the greatest fantasy..."

"My party declares itself for the only possible way out: democracy. That is not an empty phrase: democracy has a content. It means giving a vote to the people so that they themselves can define

the institutions which will allow them to get out of the impasse.

"It means institutions, and a government based on a popular vote, which will in the first place commit themselves to cancel the agreements with the IMF and no longer to pay the foreign debt, which is not the debt of the Algerian people..."

"Who can constitute [these institutions and this government]? The sovereign Constituent Assembly, elected by universal direct and secret ballot, with proportional representation..."

The PT has also called for the creation of an all-party government of crisis to organise the elections for a Constituent Assembly.

# Poor pay double tax

## GRAFFITI

Standing amidst the debris of the Tories' tax campaign, it might be worthwhile sprinkling a few seeds of truth around — for example, where exactly are the Tories shifting the burden of taxation?

The latest figures for income and expenditure, from 1988, have just been published. These show the amount of people's income going on indirect taxation — mainly VAT.

Those 20% of people who are on the lowest incomes pay 24% of their income on these taxes, whereas the richest 20% pay only half this amount — 12% of their income.

These figures predate last year's VAT increase from 15 to 17%. Don't hold your breath for the "Poor pay double tax" headline in the *Daily Express*...

The race is on for the April 9 general election — easy to spot because the Tories are trying to massage every figure in sight.

Particular favourite at the moment is NHS waiting lists. The Patient's Charter says no-one should wait more than two years for an operation, so a crack team of government masseurs have moved in.

Their first task was to prioritise those who have waited longer than the statutory two years over more urgent operations that haven't served their time. Still the backlog wouldn't go.

Next, people were expected to run up and down the country to find a "vacancy" in a suitable hospital, often paying their own fares. Still, those embarrassingly long lists showed up in the figures.

Next, operations were contracted out to the cheap end of the private health market, but the NHS spent too much time cleaning up after the botched jobs.

Finally, military hospitals have been drafted into the effort to make the figures appear respectable before the deadline on April 1. That gives the electioneers a clear 8 days before the election to parade the results of their cosmetic surgery.

The new Russian "chief of privatisation" has run into a few problems. It seems that no-one trusts the bureaucracy to privatise itself. The privatisations are seen as just another opportunity for the apparatchiks to garner a crop of bribes.

Fitter enterprises are sold off cheap in closed auctions in return for backhanders. Or else, the bureaucracy are snapping up choice

slices of state property at knock-down prices themselves — so-called "nomenklatura privatisation".

But it seems that some amongst those with a few roubles stashed in the bank view investment as a popular option. One newly-fledged capitalist, a shareholder in the new "People's Oil Company", said last week:

"Here we are taking a risk of course. On the other hand, if we hold on to our money, we will certainly lose it".

Forget smuggling any extra duty-free vodka through customs in Bulgaria since customs officials have been trained in Extra-Sensory Perception.

Now "thought police" attempt to probe the minds of suspects for images of drugs, weapons and sundry other contraband.

Mad as all this might sound, it might be an option for the British police — the Guildford Four, the Tottenham Three and many others could have been speeded through the courts with the expert testimony of a telepathic cop:

"I looked into his mind and saw he was guilty, m'lud".

Much more convincing than a lot of the evidence the police usually come up with.

This week's award for modesty goes to Ken Livingstone for his comments at last weekend's Socialist Economic Bulletin conference. Ken claimed that he knows more about economics than any other MP.

Do you find *Socialist Organiser* sectarian? Factionally-minded? Inward-looking?

Maybe you would prefer *socialist*, the new fortnightly paper which prides itself on being non-sectarian and outward-looking?

But what's this? The latest front page of *socialist* is all about the infighting between the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist Alliance; the one before, about the infighting in *Militant*.

The "non-sectarians" seem to be much more absorbed in left infighting than the nasty Trotskyists are! What distinguishes *socialist* from *Workers' Power*, *Workers' Hammer* and suchlike is that its treatment of intra-left squabbles is as if from the viewpoint of the fascinated but inactive sidelines voyeur, rather than the participant; and that is hardly an advantage.

*socialist* claims to be selling well, but has told subscribers that it will fold unless it can raise an extra £12,000 in the next few weeks.

**socialist**

**Rival groups fight growing racism**

**socialist**

Fields and Nellist torn over standing against party

**Militant fights**

**Labour seats**

*socialist* — more absorbed in left infighting than the Trotskyists

# Tartan Tory tabloid

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

It was, on the face of it, one of the most dramatic conversions since St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Last Thursday, the *Sun* dumped the Tories and announced an entirely new political allegiance: Scottish nationalism.

Most of the *Sun's* three and a half million readers will be quite unaware of this development because they see only the sassenach edition that remains as firmly wedded to the Tories as ever. But, north of the border, the *Sun's* Scottish edition now advocates full independence (the first Scottish newspaper to do so) and carries headlines like "Here's Tae Us, Wha's Like Us".

The conversion was announced in characteristically extravagant style, the front-page headline "Rise now and be a nation again" emblazoned across a huge St. Andrews cross. Inside were seven pages devoted to the nationalist cause, including a list of "Famous folk who have done us proud" (William Wallace, Mary Queen of Scots, Sean Connery, Lulu) and even a reading list (Sir Walter Scott, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Ian Fleming).



On Saturday, the paper devoted an entire page to the poetry of Robert Burns. So what lies behind the *Sun's* tartan turn? If we dismiss the idea that the paper's editor, Robert Bird, an Englishman, has genuinely been won over by the nationalist argument, two possible explanations present themselves:

1. Boosting the SNP at the expense of Labour is probably the Tories' best chance of survival in Scotland.

Michael Forsyth has been attempting to polarise the constitutional debate between full independence and the *status quo* precisely in order to squeeze the Labour Party in the middle. The *Sun's* defection to the nationalist camp may, in the short term at least, actually aid the Tories.

2. The *Sun*, like the Murdoch empire as a whole, is essentially opportunist. Murdoch's Australian papers usually support Labor and *Today* jumped on the Green bandwagon a couple of years ago. The Scottish *Sun's* circulation is less than half that of the *Daily Record* (the *Mirror's* Scottish sister) and there was little chance of closing the gap while the paper was in the Tory camp. The *Sun* has never been averse to a spot of flag-waving — it's just a different flag now.

I tend to favour explanation no.2 but, no doubt, no.1 crossed the Digger's scheming mind when he agreed to Bird's plan at a News Corporation 'strategy meeting' in December. However, the *Sun's* latest stunt has not met with universal approval within the Murdoch camp: the Scottish edition of the *Sunday Times* sneered "Into the debate on Scotland's constitutional future intrudes the voice of the bar-room cretin".

# Sticking up for the Seventies



## WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

No socialist-feminist could disagree with Liz Millward's point (*SO* 511) that we want a women's movement which bases itself on the needs of the most oppressed women, and that aims for a total transformation of women's position in society, rather than just promoting a few women to the ruling class. I must, however, take issue with Liz's implicit assessment of "1970s feminism".

It is true, of course, sociologically, that the women's movement was predominantly middle class in composition, though I am tempted to point out that the same could be said for the revolutionary left. But the hallmark of early '70s feminism was an attempt to weld a socialist understanding of society as a whole with the experience of women's oppression — an experience which had been ignored or denied for decades by most of the revolutionary

left. Many of the 'figures' of '70s feminism had themselves been active in mixed revolutionary organisations.

Their aim was to enrich the Marxist movement, not to reject it. I think they succeeded in this aim — *Socialist Organiser's* politics on women, as I understand them, emphasize the specificity of women's oppression, whilst arguing that its historical roots are to be found in the development of class in society.

*Socialist Organiser* has consistently argued against reducing women's oppression to class oppression, and has acknowledged that women of all classes share aspects of oppression.

**"Socialist feminists should learn not only from the 'failures' of '70s feminism, but also from its strengths."**

*Socialist Organiser* did not suck this understanding out of its collective thumb, but partly, at least, through an active engagement with that very 1970s feminism which Liz is at best ambivalent about burying.

Towards the end of the '70s, and certainly in the 1980s, there is a strong case for saying that feminism "lost its way" and became preoccupied with individual rather than society-wide solutions.

But I think it is quite unfair to take this out of its historic context. The late '70s also saw defeats for the working class movement generally, demoralisation which led to

increased support for fascist organisations, a Labour government which moved consistently to the right and attacking the working class.

1979 saw the election of an ideologically-motivated Conservative government with a project of atomising and destroying any collective opposition. It would have been a miracle if the women's movement alone emerged untouched from these experiences.

We should not be uncritical of those feminists who seemed to fall lock, stock and barrel for individual solutions, nor should we ignore the reasons for this.

Socialist feminists should learn not only from the 'failures' of '70s feminism, but also from its strengths.

It is not possible to build a women's movement with impeccable Marxist credentials alone. Such a movement must engage with women's immediate experience of oppression. This can be workplace-based experience

of low pay and bad conditions, but it can also be the experience of being beaten, raped or simply not being taken seriously.

One reason, I think, why variants of radical feminism have become so powerful, even amongst avowed socialist feminists, is that radical feminism does engage with these issues, provides an explanation and, most importantly, expresses gut anger and outrage at women's oppression.

Socialist feminism will get nowhere if it simply relies on cold, pat, ideologically pure answers. It will attract no-one. Liz might assert that we "cannot pretend '70s feminism never happened". Well, I for one do not want to.

Formally, Liz and I probably have the same analysis of women's oppression. I cannot share her dismissive attitude to our sisters' struggle in the 1970s. Without them, we wouldn't have a women's column in a revolutionary paper.



To build a thriving women's movement you can't just focus on women's economic oppression; you have to relate to their oppression in all its forms. Picket of Millwall Fire Station, in support of sexually harassed woman firefighter



1990: miners in Ukraine demonstrate against food shortages

## New ex-USSR miners' union sets out its policy

# "In the relations between workers, there is no place for national discord"

The new independent trade union uniting mineworkers across the ex-USSR held a congress last month. It supported the "transition to a market economy"; no large body of workers in the ex-USSR is yet advocating workers' democratic planning. But it insisted that it would defend workers' interests, and strive to keep workers united despite the break-up of the USSR into 15 republics.

While our society seeks ways out from the crisis, a force has been born in the republics of the USSR equipped with enormous potential and capable of being the guarantor of progress in reform.

The emerging workers' movement, starting with the massive miners' strikes in 1989, has had an active influence on the course of events in the country, and has created new forms of workers' organisation — workers' committees and strike committees, workers' associations.

An independent trade union movement has come out of that workers' movement, as the result of an advance in the consciousness of the world of labour.

We, the mineworkers, representing one of the most difficult and dangerous trades, have come together in the independent miners' union (NPG) in order to defend ourselves in an organised fashion and to safeguard our rights and our economic and professional interests. We believe that for our labour we deserve decent conditions of work and living, material comfort, social welfare provision, and guarantees of rights and liberties.

We understand clearly that all that is only realisable if there is a

radical reconstruction of the whole system of social relations, a replacement of the totalitarian command economy by a democratic market economy.

While understanding the complexity of the transition to the market, the NPG is however against solutions which are carried through on the backs of the workers. The implementation of the economic reform programmes in all the republics of the ex-USSR should respond totally to the interests of the workers.

*"The NPG, as a workers' organisation, believes that the conflicts between nationalities have no solid basis as between workers, and consequently demands of social and political movements that they immediately stop taking part in these conflicts and of Governments that they should prevent them."*

During the implementation of the reforms we will have to defend ourselves, defend our families, and defend all workers. That is what determines the activity of the NPG.

The NPG is for the complete liquidation of relations of an imperial type, and for the strengthening of the links between the sovereign republics (states) on the basis of the free choice of the peoples.

In the relations between workers, there is no place for national discord. The NPG, as a workers' organisation, believes that the conflicts between nationalities have no solid basis as between workers, and consequently demands of social and political movements that they immediately stop taking part in these conflicts and of the governments that they should prevent them.

We demand that all territorial demands between states should be taken off the agenda. There is only one way to avoid confrontations between nationalities: everyone's rights and liberties should be

defended by a democratic state, without distinction of nationality.

The workers need a democratic state, capable of defending their interests; and independent trade unions which will fiercely oppose all attempts to erode democratic norms to the benefit of a future dictatorship.

The main demand of the NPG on questions of property is for the right of labour collectives to participate in the choice of the forms of property and of economics in their enterprise. No alteration of the forms of property should be carried out without the agreement of the labour collective.

The NPG recognises that one section of miners wish to become owners of their enterprises while others wish to remain wage workers and to see that their labour power is properly remunerated. Such diversity of positions should not be a reason for confrontations and divisions, nor prevent conciliation and united action by members of the NPG in concrete situations.

Whatever solutions are envisaged, the NPG will defend the economic interests of the workers. If labour collectives so decide, the NPG will defend the transfer of the economic management of enterprises from the state to the labour collective.

The NPG will do all it can to resolve the problems of social welfare. We believe it is essential, when agreements are concluded with the governments, to try to gain increases in the minimum standard of living of the population and a proper supply of basic necessities.

The NPG will strive at all levels to safeguard the social welfare of every worker.

Under the conditions of the transition to the market economy, with inevitable job cuts, special attention must be given to those who will find themselves temporarily without work and who should be compensated at least at minimum-wage level.

Only under such conditions can the governments have the trust of the people and count on the support of the workers for the implementation of the reforms.

The NPG is ready to collaborate with all social and political movements expressing the interests of the workers; to stimulate the activity of the social organisations generated by the workers' movement (labour confederation, workers' associations, independent trade unions); to strengthen and develop the activity of strike committees and workers' committees; and to carry out united activity for the creation in the workplaces of new strike committees reflecting the workers' interests.

On the other hand, we see the state social structures which remain, and especially the state trade unions, which have had time to give themselves a facelift, are fundamentally one of the last bastions of the totalitarian system. The NPG thus considers it its duty to fight fiercely against the influence of these structures on the workers, until they are completely and definitively exposed as the CPSU has been.

*"...we see the state social structure which remains, and especially the state trade unions... are fundamentally one of the last bastions of the totalitarian system. The NPG... considers it its duty to fight fiercely against the influence of these structures on the workers..."*

The NPG considers itself a part of the international workers' movement, and especially of the miners' and mineworkers' movement. We are ready to do all we can to extend and strengthen the links that already exist, and relations founded on the basis of reciprocal collaboration.

[Translated and abridged from the French socialist weekly *Information Ouvrières*.]

## One bad turn deserves another

### THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Pat Murphy

The British left is plagued with once-serious groupings who have degenerated into tragicomic caricatures of Marxist politics.

At the moment *SO* readers should try to engage some of the more serious *Militant* supporters in open discussion, for there are too many signs that both factions emerging from their recent split could travel that well-trodden path.

The most likely contenders for WRP-status are the majority (Taafe) group. They now have an international "perspective" which was arrived at by circumstance, by improvisation, at best by the crudest empiricism and never theoretically argued or worked through with the membership. The perspective is to exit everywhere from work in social democratic (Labour or Socialist) parties.

In internal discussion the Taafe group argued that special circumstances justified a Scottish turn involving candidates opposing Labour in the general election. Recently, as readers will know, they have decided to leave the Labour Party "as a temporary measure" to prepare the forces to re-enter when the party shifts back to the left.

But what will shift it that far to the left and open it up? Why, the forces of history, comrades!

Now the Taafe majority argue that this "exceptional", "temporary" measure holds true everywhere and they insist on all their international sections breaking from work within socialist parties. After decades of such work, that is a major decision and it should require the most thorough reassessment of the group's politics, ideas and strategy yet — but of that there has been none.

The point about these wild zig-zags is not just whether they are right or wrong, but that a leadership which can make such shifts with no theoretical reassessment, no political accounting, is a leadership which has a miseducated and apolitical membership. Such a membership could be steered in almost any direction.

That is the seedbed for WRP-style degeneration.

The Grant faction appear much more sane. As a result of their decision to organise a proper opposition at a conference recently (35 delegates) their leadership (Grant, Rob Sewell and Alan Woods) have been expelled and oppositionists everywhere are being expelled — "for belonging to an organised opposition", I was told by one of them. They will have serious problems, too, however.

For example, they oppose the Walton stunt and the "Scottish turn" but are ambivalent in their attitude to Dave Nellist standing in Coventry SE. If he does they seem likely to support him, despite their Labour Party line — because "there are special circumstances", etc. (Talk about failing to learn the lessons!)

Secondly, one of the centrepieces of their political identity will be the idea that the USSR and the old Eastern European states were post-capitalist and that the collapse of those "planned economies" were the biggest defeat for the working class this century. This means that what exists there now is some sort of historical regression with no obvious cause — plenty of room there for intellectual implosion!

So the Grant faction have a political identity which would make *Socialist Action* feel at home, the Taafe group argued in an internal document that "much could be learnt from the organisational methods of the SWP", and in all this the *raison d'être* of Marxist groups doesn't get a hearing.

Clarity of ideas, sharp discussion and political accounting — that is the currency we deal in, everything else is just sect-building.

See also "Eye on the Left" on page 11.

Display this in your workp

# Why you should

Mark Osborn spells out the case against racism and fascism

## Oppose the Asylum Bill!

**T**he Asylum Bill is the Tory party's attempt to play the "race card" in the run-up to the general election.

The Tories believe that stirring up racial intolerance will get them more votes. The Tories want white workers to blame refugees and black people for the economic crisis.

It would be very convenient for them if whites forgot that for 13 years the Tories have forced unemployment, the Poll Tax, and cuts in education and health spending on black and white alike.

In fact, the Tories are deliberately playing on the insecurity of white people. But racism will not solve the problems facing white workers. Black people are not responsible for bad housing or the recession. The blame for these lies with the money-

grabbing policies of the Tories and the capitalists.

We should reject racism and help the trade union movement and Labour Party to get rid of the Tory government.

The Asylum Bill is a Bill designed to scare. We are told to expect a "flood of foreigners".

In fact, last year only 45,000 people applied for asylum in Britain. These people generally come from countries with little democracy and regimes prepared to repress and perhaps torture anyone opposed to their rule.

British workers must support people fighting for trade union and democratic rights all over the world. If ordinary people put their necks on the line — in China, or Zaire, or Turkey — and have to leave their homes, their jobs, and their

families, why should they not find sanctuary in Britain?

Who will pay for refugees entering Britain? *Socialist Organiser* says that there is plenty of wealth in Britain — owned by a few people. 10% of the British people own 50% of the wealth.

The rich should foot the bill. We can and should improve wages and welfare for *all* the workers at the expense of the rich.

The Asylum Bill will mean:

- All asylum seekers will be fingerprinted;
- Appeals against refusal of asylum have to be lodged within 48 hours;
- In some circumstances, there are *no* appeal rights.

In other words, the Asylum Bill cuts basic civil liberties and gives the state more power.

## Scrap all immigration laws!

**I**t is not just the Asylum Bill which should be opposed. Why have any immigration laws at all?

The standard response is: we will get more unemployment; British jobs for British workers.

Socialists are against racism, nationalism, import and immigration controls. This is for one simple reason: in the long run no worker — anywhere — can win unless the working class is united, not just in Britain but internationally.

That means solidarity — black and white, East and West.

Capitalism is becoming more and more integrated internationally. Britain is now bound up with Europe. Multinationals operate everywhere.

How can British workers get decent pay rises, for instance, if the corporation they work for can simply transfer production to Spain? More and more, British workers need international links.

And, in other countries, workers will be less likely to support us if our movement is prepared to support import controls (ie. put foreign workers on the dole rather than British workers), or immigration controls (ie. stop foreign people working here).

If British workers do not get the support of workers abroad we will all be played off against each other by the international capitalists.

But will removal of immigration laws mean unemployment? Unemploy-

ment is a terrible, stupid waste created by capitalism. People need decent houses and yet there are a hundred thousand building workers on the dole. People work long hours and yet there are millions of unemployed.

A socialist answer would be to get *everyone* jobs doing work which needs to be done. We should cut the working day, without loss of pay. *All* workers, black and white, would benefit at the expense of the bosses who have ripped black *and* white workers off for too long.

British immigration laws explicitly target black people. In fact, the truth is that the majority of immigrants are white.

The 1962 and 1971 Immigration laws are aimed at black people from Africa, the Indian sub-continent, and the Caribbean. The actual implementation of these laws also discriminates against black people.

Many black people emigrated to Britain during the post-war boom. The British capitalists ran recruitment campaigns in the Caribbean and Africa for workers needed in British industry. When the boom slowed black labour was not needed, so immigration laws were introduced. The gutter press took the opportunity to stick the blame on black workers.

This is absurd! Blame the bosses for the recession — not black people!

Immigration laws are part of the ingrained racism in our society. They encourage the racism which leaves black people 30 times more likely to be attacked on the streets than white people.

Let's stop this violence!



## Plunder and murder: the roots of racism

**R**acism and nationalism are relatively new phenomena. Racism is not a part of human nature. It is not "natural" — we can get rid of it.

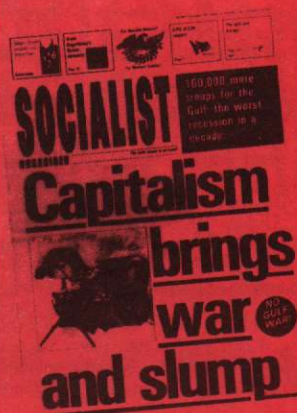
How did racism arise? In large part racism was one of the products of British and other Western countries' empire building and colonialism.

Britain, for example, devastated large parts of the world, plundering and murdering and exploiting, so "our"

bosses could get stinking rich. The British bosses practiced slavery against black Africans; smashed up native Indian industry; imposed their rule on other peoples.

How could they explain themselves? They said: these people are inferior, they need civilising. Pseudo-scientific justifications for racism were invented. These "theories" have been thoroughly discredited. But the legacy is a racism which has seeped deep into the pores of society.

## Arguing for socialism



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place, college or at school

# oppose racism



## How do we get workers' unity?

**W**hite workers need to face up to the plain truth — none of us will win without unity. But how do we get unity?

Black workers will not get involved in a union which does not fight for their rights or directly discriminates against them.

Black youth will not respect a labour movement which

refuses to fight for jobs and rights for all.

The labour movement must oppose and campaign against discrimination. The labour movement must prove itself able to defend the rights of black workers. More involvement in the labour movement by black workers will mean stronger organisations which we will all benefit from.

## Oppose anti-semitism!

**T**here is an alarming rise in prejudice against Jewish people. Hatred of Jews goes back many, many centuries.

Anti-semitism is absolutely irrational. For instance, in Poland, where traditionally anti-semitism was very strong, there is a growth of Jew-baiting. The Jews are blamed for both communism and capitalism!

How could they be responsible for both? Or for anything much in a country like Poland, where most Jews were killed or driven out in the 1940s.

So how can a resurgence of anti-semitism be explained? In Poland the introduction of market capitalism is leading to mass misery. Desperate people are looking for answers. Some have chosen anti-semitism.



Anti-semitism led to the Holocaust. Now it is reviving.

But anti-Jewish prejudice is no answer for a crisis that should be laid at the door of both capitalism and the old Stalinist rulers.

Anti-semitic British workers are letting the (largely non-Jewish) ruling class off the hook.

## Stop the rise of fascism!

**T**he far-right is growing in Europe. In France Le Pen's fascist Front National (FN) are getting one in five votes.

It is well known that Le Pen is anti-Jewish, describing the holocaust of six million Jews as a mere "detail" of the Second World War.

FN thugs regularly attack black and north African people living in France.

What is less well known is that the FN is hostile to the labour movement.

The FN has, for instance, been responsible for evicting workers who were occupying their factory in support of their trade union dispute.

British workers must remember that the first thing that Hitler did was smash the powerful German labour

movement. Mussolini did the same in Italy. Franco did the same in Spain.

White British workers who support fascism are tying the noose in the rope that will hang them. If our unions and the Labour Party are smashed, we will lose our ability to defend our wages, jobs and conditions.

If the fascists triumph they will destroy the democratic rights it has taken British workers centuries to win.

If white workers turn on black, then they actually, in the here and now, ruin everyone's chance of decent housing and jobs. In many British workplaces black workers form a significant proportion of the workforce — if we are divided the bosses

will beat us.

White workers who aim to protect their jobs through racism damage their own long-term job security. When the managers come for their jobs, are black people in the local communities or other local unions going to support people who have helped to deny them work in the past?

The racists and fascists simply have false answers to unemployment and poverty. The only answer is workers' unity and socialism.

- Take up the arguments at your work or college
- Challenge prejudice where you find it
- Get your union to campaign for decent wages, jobs and against racism

## What we are fighting for

**S**ocialist Organiser believes there are only two real options for the British working class.

Either our movement decides it will link up, on the basis of equality and solidarity, with other workers or the British labour movement will remain wrapped in a "little-England" nationalism which is hostile to foreign workers.

The problem is that British workers need, increasingly, unity with workers across national frontiers. Nationalism in the end leads British workers to line up with "our" bosses against other workers.

In British workplaces racism only helps the bosses to exploit us all. It is irrational and we should stamp it out.

We are now living in a

world dominated by capitalism, where 20% of the world's population are on the edge of starvation. Even in countries like Britain capitalism can not guarantee workers a life-long decent living standard.

But the world is run by the rich. Profits regulate their decisions.

Socialist Organiser says that the world should be run democratically by the workers for need and not for profit. If wealth were publicly owned and democratically controlled, then all workers would get an improved standard of living, more control over their lives and a stable, assured life.

This is socialism — and we will get it when workers of all countries unite to make the world a better place.

# We stand for workers' liberty!

**W**e live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour-power of those who own nothing but their labour-power, and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decreases the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship to productivity. From that came the savage exploitation of Bolivian tin miners, and Brazilian gold miners now, reducing their life expectancy to less than 40 years; the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

**F**rom that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with

"built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos, and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions. From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world

**"The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class."**

crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by its ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides: two times this century, capitalist gangs possessing world-wide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over

the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism, and fascism. The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich, who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own barbarous exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing within the hollowed-out forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-5 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will again.

**A**gainst this system we seek to convince the working class — the wage-slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage-slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common co-operative ownership, and the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

The economy will be run and

planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms would cease to be our master, and would be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialists organise to fight with the workers on the three main fronts of the permanent class struggle: the economic or trade-union front, the political, and the ideological. We work in

the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement and presently unorganised workers to class-struggle socialism. To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

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

We will, in every way we can, help workers in the ex-Stalinist states organise to defend themselves now, and fight for socialism when they have overcome the poisonous political legacy of Stalinism, which though it counterfeited socialism was never other than the opposite of socialism.

What are the alternatives now? We face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing. Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will all be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new, massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is still socialism or barbarism.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



## Olympic struggles

Les Hearn's

### SCIENCE COLUMN

**M**ale athletes tend to outperform female ones in athletic sports and so competitions are usually segregated. If a male were able to successfully masquerade as a female, he might have an unfair advantage. The answer is apparently simple — have a look!

This, however, has not been good enough for the International Olympic Committee.

Presumably mindful of the possibility of a determined cheat having a sex change operation and then using her male muscles to win female races, they introduced a chromosome test.

Since 1968, therefore, women athletes have had to undergo a buccal smear test. This is not as bad as it sounds, involving a mild scraping from the inside of the cheek.

This removes several cells which are stained and examined under a microscope.

Now, most women possess two X chromosomes, only one of which is necessary for normal functioning. The other is inactivated by being bound up firmly with a protein. It is visible in all the body cells of such women as a small densely stained roughly triangular mass on the edge of the nucleus.

Most males have only one X chromosome and so they do not have such inactivated spares in their cells.

Up until now, the IOC's test has simply been to look for such masses, called Barr bodies, in the cheek cells. Whether this has detected transsexual competitors and ruled them out has not generally been revealed. However, it is certain that it has ruled out people who are and who always have been indisputably female.

The problem is that there are at least three conditions in which a woman might not possess Barr bodies.

Firstly, there is Turner's syndrome: in this, the person only has one X chromosome (X0).

Secondly, there are women with an X and a Y chromosome. In some of these, the Y is damaged, missing the male-determining gene of the end. In its absence, they develop as women.

In the third, the Y functions as normal and normal levels of male hormones are produced. However, the target cells are incapable of responding to these hormones and development is once again as a woman.

There is no evidence that these women benefit from possessing a Y or from lacking a second X, and yet they have been ruled out of competition by the buccal smear test for the last 24 years.

After years of campaigning, the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) dropped the buccal smear in favour of a simple physical examination.

The IOC's position remains confused as it says it will rely on the buccal smear for the 1992 Olympic Games (with further investigation "if necessary"), but will accept "femininity certificates" issued by the IAAF.

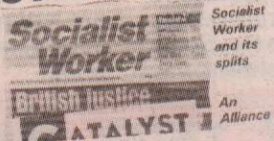
It has been pointed out that women entitled to run in Barcelona could nevertheless be ineligible for swimming events. And, on the basis of the buccal smear which the IOC still favours, XXY men could still pass as women (providing they had sex change surgery first), as they too possess Barr bodies.

### Pamphlets from AWL

Socialists and democracy



A tragedy of the left



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## Help your socialist paper!

**S**ocialist Organiser's fund drive continued this week with £560.04 in fundraising and donations.

Our total now stands at £6,852.62, or 68% of our £10,000 target.

We aim to raise £10,000 to help buy new equipment. The new machinery will enable us to produce a better socialist weekly. It is part of our drive to expand our influence and bring clear socialist politics to more working class people.

You can help us by sending a donation (cheques and postal orders payable to "Socialist Organiser") to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Thanks this week to supporters in Manchester for

raising £150, in South London for £85, in North London for £46.

**Join our 200 Club. Win £100!**

**S**ocialist Organiser needs more regular money to help us expand. We want to take our message to more workers.

We are running a "200 Club" draw with a monthly prize of £100.

Surplus money goes to the paper. You can enter the "200 Club" for as little as £1 per month.

Get details of the "200 Club" from your local SO seller.

### WHAT'S ON

**Saturday 1 February**  
"NATO militarism and the divided world" conference organised by the Campaign for Non-Alignment. 10.30-4.30, ULU, Euston, London

**Thursday 6 February**  
"We need a fighting NUS". Left Unity meeting. 7.00, UCL Student Union, Euston, London. Speaker: Janine Booth

**Wednesday 12 February**  
"Pornography and censorship" organised by Feminists Against Censorship. 7.30, Conway Hall, Holborn, London

### Fight back! Demonstrate!

**Saturday 22 February**  
"Close the BNP HQ". 12.00, St. Nicholas Church, London, SE18

**Saturday 29 February**  
March Against Unemployment. Assemble: 12.00, Clerkenwell Green, London. Rally: 3.00, Trafalgar Square

## Socialist Organiser — our meetings this week

**Thursday 30 January**

"The fight against racism and fascism", Kent University SO meeting. 6.00, Eliot College

"The roots of racism", Merseyside SO meeting. 12.30, Liverpool Institute, Room 58. Speaker: Gail Cameron

"The politics of fighting racism and fascism", London SO Forum meeting. 7.30, LSE, Room A142. Speakers include Ernie Roberts and John O'Mahony

"Trade unions in the '90s", Manchester SO meeting. 8.00, Bridge Street Tavern. Speakers: Jim Denham and a GEC striker

"Ireland: a socialist answer", Newcastle Poly SO meeting. 7.30, Rossetti Studio. Speaker: Tom Robin

**Tuesday 4 February**

"The fight against racism and fascism". 7.30, Edinburgh Trades Council. Speaker: Jon Pike

**Wednesday 5 February**

"The fight for lesbian and gay rights". 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall, London SW2

"An examination of the politics of witch-hunting". 6.00, Essex University

These meetings are sponsored by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. For details of Socialist Organiser in your area, phone Mark on 071-639 7965

## Looking ahead

**Wednesday 12 February**  
Students demonstrate against debt. National NUS have organised a demonstration to oppose student poverty. Assemble: 12.00, Battersea Park, South London

**Workers' Liberty 1992 will be held at Caxton House, North London from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 July...**

The killings in Northern Ireland

# Bombs versus politics

By Patrick Murphy

At 9.00 on the 27th December we crossed the Irish border between Dundalk and Newry on the way to spend New Year in Newry. Just a few hours earlier, the Provisional IRA chose the same area to announce the end of their Christmas ceasefire — they planted a bomb on the Belfast-Dublin railway line just north of Newry and it exploded on the 27th marking the start of another year of the troubles.

It is comparisons amongst ordinary 'non-political' people now and in the early 1970s, that bring home some of what these Troubles now mean.

In the early '70s, there was, as now, a variety of views on the justice and usefulness of the IRA campaign, the prospects for a united Ireland or some change in the political system. There was, however — and I have experience only of the Nationalist community — a very lively sense of politics being important. There was debate and a feeling that what we thought, said and did counted and would influence events.

Today, politics, for a lot of people, is a rotten business which infects everybody who comes into contact with it. Above all, it is inevitably connected to the worst aspect of life — the murderous Troubles which hang over normality like a huge, dark cloud; every so often it produces a raging storm, people run for cover, it stops, they return to work. But it is pointless to go back to attempts to explain it, that's been done, that's 'politics' and the safest option for most people is to avoid involvement with it.

This wily, cautious, distant attitude is becoming harder. The 'politics' of the Troubles were becoming more difficult to ignore by the end of last year because the sectarian tension, heightened dramatically by the actions of a handful of loyalist and republican activists, is now sharper than at any time since the mid-'70s.

In 1974-6, a horrific series of sectarian killings created an atmosphere of fear in both communities. It began to scale down after a bloody peak in 1976, when two separate incidents saw 7 Catholics killed by loyalist paramilitaries in one evening and then, 2 days later, a republican group murdered 10 Protestant workers by stopping their works van, sending the Catholics home and shooting the rest (the worst sectarian incident in years).

Those days are back and it means that everyone becomes more aware, more scared and perhaps more bitter. Figures in the end-of-year press in Ireland suggest that in 75% of all the killings last year, the victims were civilians.

It's a controversial word in any conflict, but the detailed breakdown of statistics made one thing clear: this is not, essentially, a war between Republican volunteers and



How many more funerals? Photo: Andrew Moore, Reflex.

the security forces; the vast majority of casualties (especially deaths) involve people killed because of their religion. An additional number are killed by the IRA because of connections with security which are completely non-military.

Beyond question, these are sectarian killings; in a society with so little work and such a huge state machine, in which a very high percentage of

**"This is not, essentially, a war between Republican volunteers and the security forces; the vast majority of casualties involve people killed because of their religion."**

Protestants in particular do work loosely associated with the security forces, to regard such people as collaborators is to launch war on the Protestant community. The bombing of the workers' bus a fortnight ago, near Cookstown, is just a concentrated example of the reckless policy carried on by the Provos throughout 1991.

So why is it happening? In the press, of course, but even on the streets and in pubs, despite 20 years of conflict, this is being discussed again. There is no single agreed answer, nothing that hard information supports, but there are definite causes.

For much of the press, the upturn in violence is cyclical, the bombing campaign in the North and in Britain reflects the IRA's desire to push the issue of Ireland higher up the political agenda. Ten years after the hunger strikes and 6 years after the Hillsborough Agreement, only dramatic acts of violence seem to make the North headline news. The idea that the violence is driven by the political agenda makes even more sense in a general election year.

For the paramilitary side of violence, there are other factors. There has been a simmering internal conflict in the Republican movement for some years roughly between 'politicos' and 'militarists' — just now, the militarists, frustrated with the lack of progress after a full decade of

political work, and the exclusion of Sinn Fein from any talks on the future, want to re-establish their credentials and their effectiveness.

Similar developments appear to be taking place amongst the loyalist paramilitaries; some of the loyalists killed last year seem to have been victims of a younger, more aggressive leadership of their own organisations. They are feeding off disillusion with the established Unionist politicians for making no dent in the Anglo-Irish agreement, and frustration at the ineffectiveness of the army and police response to the IRA.

Loyalist gangs have ruthlessly stoked up the sectarian fires with a series of savage killings of Catholics. Their killing of workers from the Hyster tractor factory last year and of 2 Catholics at a mobile shop in January were simply warnings that there are thousands of Catholics who are easy targets and that, if they feel like it, they will kill them too.

It's part of a lingering threat to launch bloody civil war if necessary.

There is one final theory with currency amongst the more cynical Nationalists. The Provisionals are in desperate need of a boost and they have tuned in to the current debate over internment. The theory is that some of their leadership want to provoke internment in the hope that it will have the transforming effect on the Nationalist community which it did in 1971 (or which the hunger strikes did in 1981).

Irish republicanism is a creed that feeds off martyrs and there are plenty of Unionists and Tories only too keen to provide them. If this is Provo thinking, it's highly dangerous and desperate. Internment this time will be very different — it will be selective, based on Army intelligence, not the rabidly anti-Catholic RUC intelligence of 1971.

It will come when the freshest events in Nationalist minds are not the popular and heroic civil rights marches, but over 20 years of fairly futile and random killing and, after the last few months, the risk of an escalated sectarian war. It will also come at a time when

co-operation at every level between the British and Irish governments is higher than ever.

If internment is introduced, it will be done simultaneously with a crack-down in Dublin. My assessment certainly is that the re-introduction of internment would be a disaster for the Republican movement, and that conditions for campaigning against it in Ireland and in Britain are much tougher than in the '70s.

Whatever the reason for the latest wave of killings, it widens still further the huge gap between the republican tradition — with all its democratic and just aspirations — and the only force which can unite Ireland, the Irish working class.

Against all the odds, there have been some signs of hope there. When loyalist thugs murdered those Catholic workers from the Hyster factory in Lurgan last year, their fellow workers called an all-out strike the next day to protest. It is a mixed workplace, mainly Protestant, in a loyalist area, but Catholic and Protestant workers struck together over the biggest health and safety issue possible, the defence of their lives against sectarian killers.

Their action struck a chord with other workers and the

**"Irish republicanism is a creed that feeds off martyrs and there are plenty of Unionists and Tories only too keen to provide them."**

supine Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions even announced that they were considering a general strike to demand an end to the killings.

Of course, the demands and targets of such action are always real problems: the Catholics and Protestants of Hyster demanded "tougher security". But a general strike demanding a paramilitary ceasefire, a withdrawal of the army to barracks and the disbanding of the UDR would be something to fight for. Above all, it would bring ordinary workers onto a political scene dominated by militarist élites.

## "Militant" expels Ted Grant

### EYE ON THE LEFT

By Anne Field

**"A** Parting of the Ways" read the headline over the Editorial Statement in last week's *Militant* which announced that Ted Grant had "split" from the organisation.

But Grant's "split" has all the signs of being an expulsion rather than a voluntary departure. The Editorial Statement accuses him of "effectively claiming a right of political veto over the Editorial Board" and of "abandoning any idea of acting as a loyal opposition (within *Militant*)".

Grant and his backers are now preparing to launch a monthly publication, going — they promise — over to a fortnightly, and then weekly,

**"The collapse of Stalinism has left *Militant* in a theoretical vacuum (the Stalinist states were manifestly not 'post-capitalist'), whilst the ferocity of the Labour Party witch-hunt (which *Militant* never effectively opposed) has pushed the organisation in the direction of SWP-style street politics."**

schedule as soon as possible. He has already secured premises and full-time staff.

The "parting of the ways" between Grant and *Militant* has been brought about by the recent decision of *Militant* to stand candidates against Labour and effectively to pull out of the Labour Party.

*Militant* supporter, Lesley Mahmood, stood in last year's Walton by-election in Liverpool, and a number of *Militant* supporters will be standing in the forthcoming General Election.

Grant opposed such a turn, but found himself in a small

minority. A special *Militant* conference last October voted by 93% to 7% in favour of the new line.

*Militant* accuses their former guru of "clinging to old formulas and increasingly turning them into ossified dogmas". Grant accuses his former organisation of "relegating theory and moving towards activism". Within limits, both such accusations are accurate.

Grant's political philosophy is one of "vulgar evolutionism": the Labour Party will inevitably evolve into a socialist party in which *Militant* would provide the leadership, whilst society as a whole will inevitably evolve into socialism (albeit, in a number of cases, via Stalinism).

Such "old formulas", however, have not been transformed into "ossified dogmas". They always were "ossified dogmas", shared by many of the leading figures in *Militant* who have now seen off Grant.

Grant's accusations of relegating theory and plunging into activism have a basis in reality. But both are the product of his own politics.

The collapse of Stalinism has left *Militant* in a theoretical vacuum (the Stalinist states were manifestly not "post-capitalist"), whilst the ferocity of the Labour Party witch-hunt (which *Militant* never effectively opposed) has pushed the organisation in the direction of SWP-style street politics.

Splits in left-wing organisations can sometimes help bring about political clarification. This is unlikely to be the case, however, in this "parting of the ways".

Grant will continue to cling to his "old formulas", whilst the Grant-free *Militant* will probably come to resemble the SWP, with more workers and fewer students, maybe.

Paradoxically, the biggest losers from the split might be the SWP themselves.

The SWP has generally had an open field in recruiting politically raw youth alienated from the Labour Party because of Kinnock's betrayals. But now *Militant* will be competing for the same audience, and no longer arguing the case as to why socialists should be in the Labour Party.

It seems highly unlikely that a *Militant* minus Ted Grant will have anything more to offer the working class than a Ted Grant minus *Militant*. The last thing the left needs now is a second, more right-wing, Stalinism-tainted version of the SWP.

• More on the *Militant* split: see page 7.

Socialists and the Labour Party  
The case of the Walton by-election



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**WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT WE MUST BECOME**

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# Not bridging the Gulf

**Fight racism... and denounce the Israeli state!**

**LETTERS**

At my union meeting last week, the SWP proposed affiliation to the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). Now, it's a fairly left-wing branch so no problem there. But the motion just said "We agree to affiliate to the ANL", so I thought it would be a good idea to flesh it out a bit with an addendum. After all, even left-wing branch members shouldn't be taken for granted.

I proposed that the branch look forward to participating in an open and democratic movement, maybe sending delegates to influence ANL policy, and inviting speakers to the branch. We wanted the ANL to campaign around issues such as bad housing and unemployment which make people vulnerable to fascist ideas.

Finally, we wanted the ANL to take on institutionalised racism and anti-semitism as part of their brief.

Debate went well. The addendum was passed and in the process we agreed to discuss affiliating to the Anti-Racist Alliance as well.

The fly in the ointment was the knee-jerk response from the usually perfectly reasonable SWP proposer who, in the context of anti-fascist debate, faced with the demand for a linked struggle against anti-black racism and anti-semitism, could not free himself from a ritual denunciation of the expansionist Israeli state.

Such responses only serve to muddy the waters. A debate on Palestine, which the SWP then called for at a future meeting, is a separate issue.

Ian Hollingworth

**ANL: approach with care!**

Socialist Organiser is right to call for unity against the racists and fascists. But in the North East, the behaviour of the SWP has been worrying for all serious anti-fascist activists.

The ANL has appeared locally with no structures and no meetings, entirely controlled by the SWP. Yet, despite the existence locally of a healthy, democratic anti-fascist campaign, the ANL decided to call a demonstration in Sunderland on 22 February where there are (as far as we know) no ANL members, without any consultation, or even the decency to let us know.

This was simply a sectarian move by the SWP to try and claim the credit for the successful campaign by Sunderland Anti-Fascist Network and Tyne and Wear Anti-Fascist Association.

The local SWP is sectarian even by the SWP's own standards, and counter-productive (at the moment a demo would give BNP more publicity than they deserve) and clearly aimed at by-passing the existing campaign.

Fortunately they have been forced to back down — but activists everywhere should be warned: ANL — approach with care!

Yours for unity,  
John Clifton  
Middlesbrough

**Theatre**

Jo Hill reviews 'The Gulf between Us' by Trevor Griffiths

With "The Gulf Between Us" Trevor Griffiths takes on the task of dramatising the issues raised by the Gulf War, a tall order for the playwright to set himself indeed, and in this case perhaps too tall.

The play, though emotive and disturbing, fails to meet the issues head on and tends to skirt around the realities of the politics behind the war, the playwright finally settles on a frustratingly liberal condemnation of inhumanity (on both sides).

The action takes place in a war-torn (unnamed) country with a bombed out shrine drawing the audience's focal attention. Two British workers are under orders to rebuild the outer wall before sundown.

One is a stereotypically bigoted small business man who represents the part British chauvinism played in supporting war, on a "man in the street" level. He is there purely to look out for himself and therefore he will build the wall to satisfy his own needs.

The other is a gilder who represents the universal media, metaphorically putting the thin gold veneer on anything distasteful. He is a mystical character who knows events before they happen, (making up the narrative to suit his purpose). Wearing a 'crown' of the craftsman optic, he is the unseen king of the war.

As the play progresses, the truth

that the shrine was used both as a military installation and as a creche and now contains the charred remains of infants' bodies, slowly emerges.

As it does, the desperation of the two workers and their Arab minder to complete the wall (hence hiding the sickening truth) increases.

The wall represents the solidity of the propaganda created by both sides' hiding the harsh facts of war from the people.

The shouts and cries of women with missing children protesting because the authorities won't give them satisfying answers to the whereabouts of the children are heard almost throughout the play.

They are the public who have to be protected from the bitter truths of war, to quell their possible rebellion.

As a statement about the part the media lie machine played in the

war, the play is uncompromisingly honest.

The only person to actually penetrate the wall is a nursery worker who demands to know the truth after this. She makes a powerful speech; distraught, holding out her hands, she asks the pertinent questions about the war. In this speech, being particularly reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's 'Out damned spot', she is asking who else has blood on their hands and why. Her anger with God is disappointingly typical of the play.

The theme of blame and guilt for the atrocities is cleverly reiterated through the constant reference to hands. This metaphor is drawn together at the end of the play when the Gilder's writing above the shrine of "God is good" with a golden handprint becomes visible to the audience through the darkness.

Perhaps this was a popularist allusion to Maradona's hand of God, ie. the blame can always be shifted.

The play climaxes with an air-raid which kills the minder; but the Gilder (the media) lives on to move on to the next truths which have to be concealed.

At the end of the play, the audience is subjected to complete darkness with the horrifying and loud sound of bombs landing all around, a sobering experience which gives the audience a taste of a reality which most of us are luckily denied.

With this, the playwright is placing with the audience, the need for us all to look past the war propaganda to find our own answers.

Lacking in dialectical analysis, or hard political criticism, the play works as a thought-provoking denunciation of the media and of the nature of humanity but, unfortunately, not of capitalism.

These ultimate conclusions as to the reasons behind the war were left to the audience to work out for themselves.



US troops watch over surrendered Iraqi soldiers. This war was about capitalist imperialism, not the 'weakness of humanity'

## Russia's crooked new capitalists

**Book**

Colin Foster reviews *Bear Hunting with the Politburo: A Gritty First-Hand Account of Russia's Young Entrepreneurs — and Why Soviet-Style Capitalism Can't Work*, by A Craig Copetas (Simon & Schuster £15.99)

Copetas was working for one of the biggest and most successful of Russia's new "co-operatives" (private companies). One day the boss returns to the office in a panic.

Can anyone find a supply of nylon stockings? Almost all work at the office — an information service and newsletter publisher — stops for 24 hours until someone finds some Western nylons.

The business's chief protector in the top ranks of the bureaucracy has been taken ill. He needs the nylons in order to bribe the nurses at the hospital to treat him properly.

Copetas's whole book is an enlarged version of this story. His former boss, Vladimir Yakovlev, swindles his Western partners shamelessly, repeatedly, even mindlessly: the only thing that matters for him each day is to cut some deal which brings a profit

that day. When he is not pulling a swindle or fixing a bureaucrat, he spends his time playing computer games on the IBM machines he has got from his Western partners on false pretences.

The private round Yakovlev, and the other private business people, are much the same. Yakovlev's sidekick Roman Kudriavtsev explains: "I want to do two things with my life. Make a lot of dollars and go to America to fuck as many girls as possible."

The Western capitalists who rush their money into the ex-USSR are foolish, whether they deal with people like Yakovlev or with officials. An American businessman with long experience in the USSR tells Copetas that he preferred the Brezhnevite old regime.

"Before [Gorbachev] they were happy to deal, and they always paid on time. They were extremely loyal...and they never expected anything more from you [in bribes] than what you could pick up at the duty-free store at Heathrow Airport..."

"The bottom line was that [they] actually knew what was going on and [they] paid. Gorbachev's crowd doesn't seem to have a clue about what's going on and...they never pay on time."

Copetas finds one honest businessman — a farmer in Azerbaijan — but he is being crushed by the local mafia-like bureaucrats.

For a lot of reasons this book seems utterly unreliable. The text reads as if it was drafted just before the August 1991 coup, and then rushed into print with a botched update. Copetas's odd references to history are garbled: he has Stalin "grabbing control" in 1925, having previously "made a living by armed robbery, extortion, and giving information to the tsar's secret police", and then soon bringing it

about that "children who died of starvation were taken not to the cemetery but to the cook".

Copetas recounts many conversations where he tries to turn Yakovlev to righteous dealing, but hardly explains why he stayed with the swindler for so long. Crassly, he seems to see US capitalism ("the democratic free market") as a paradise of sober hard work and straight dealing.

And he is not even sure of his conclusions. His basic drift is that of a section of the American Right: Gorbachev's reforms were all a sham; nothing essential has changed in the Evil Empire. And then he has given the text a quick whiz through on the word processor to accommodate the August 1991 coup showing that a lot obviously had changed.

He gives his argument a chauvinistic twist: Russians are irretrievably warped by "communism" (or maybe older traditions). They never tell the truth, they grab as grab can, they are sluggish, they don't want to work, they can think only of finding some scam which will enable them to live through another day. Then Copetas talks about a "revolution" being necessary in Russia. Who will make it, if all the Russians are hopeless cases?

One thing, however, is clear. Copetas likes capitalists. If he could say good things about Russia's new private profiteers, he would. But he finds them as corrupt and as bungling as the old bureaucrats. Indeed, many of them are the old bureaucrats or (like Yakovlev and his pals) the children of bureaucrats.

### More from Socialist Organiser



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Kevin Costner as DA Jim Garrison and Donald Sutherland as 'X' in "JFK"

# Mourning the Good King

## Cinema

### Belinda Weaver reviews "JFK"

In "JFK", Americans are a nation of Hamlets who mourn their murdered father-king (President Kennedy) but cannot dislodge his usurpers from the bloodstained throne. Director Oliver Stone calls the assassination a coup d'état; he hints at fascism.

There probably was a conspiracy to murder Kennedy. You can take your pick of suspects — Lyndon Johnson, the Vice-President who wanted his job; the CIA, from whose control Kennedy was threatening to wrest paramilitary operations; the military establishment who might have thought Kennedy was soft on communism; the Mafia; right wing Cubans... a cast of thousands. Lee Harvey Oswald was another suspect, but the film exonerates him.

**"JFK" is a mourning film for that vanished and wholly imaginary Golden Age. There's a lot of Kennedy-worship in this movie, a lot of myth."**

"JFK" implicates everyone but Oswald, though the military-industrial complex probably gets the biggest nod. They had the most to lose, and thus the most to gain if he died. Or so says Oliver Stone.

As an anonymous source tells New Orleans District Attorney, Jim Garrison, who's trying to find the

real killers, military spending before the Vietnam War was \$10 billion. With Vietnam in full swing, spending rose to \$100 billion, so the military (and the arms dealers who supply them) had a real stake in getting rid of Kennedy, who was considering pulling out of Vietnam.

Or so the film alleges; in fact, there is no evidence — not one single shred — to show that Kennedy was going to do any such thing. The idea that he was is pure myth: Kennedy started "Vietnam"!

There's a lot of Kennedy-worship in this movie, a lot of myth. It's as if the last ten or twenty years had never happened. Oliver Stone sees Kennedy as a *Life* magazine cover, as a golden boy. There's no tarnish on Camelot.

For Stone — and never mind the facts — Kennedy is the man who could have ended the Cold War, and the Vietnam war too. He is anti-nuclear, the champion of black-Americans (er... wasn't that Martin Luther King?), a New Man, no less, years before his time.

"JFK" is a mourning film for that vanished and wholly imaginary Golden Age, though Stone is probably right to say that America would have been different without Vietnam. That war wrecked the American economy and ended the long post-World War II boom, ushering in the imperial decline and loss of prestige abroad that an adventure like the Gulf War was meant to reverse.

But Stone is mourning all the wrong things. Murdering Kennedy (if they did it) is not the worst the military and the arms manufacturers can do. Their greedy pursuit of their own selfish ends tramples over all humanity.

The film is structured like those populist dramas of the 1940s — *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* or *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* — where a small-town guy with the right values wins out over the faceless and corrupt authorities. Jim Garrison (a real person) is Stone's Mr Deeds,

and with Kevin "Clean-cut" Costner in the role, we're primed for a battle between good and evil.

But the drama hasn't been updated for audiences who have lived through Watergate, and Iran-Contra, not to mention the seamy revelations about Kennedy himself. We're too knowing and cynical to swallow Stone's view of Kennedy, or to watch patiently while Costner's Garrison has his eyes opened. The film would only work if Garrison were presented as a naive, bumbling fool who nonetheless stumbled on truths that other people were desperate to

hide. But he's not. He's the guy in the white hat, a knight in shining armour, Sir Galahad no less.

Garrison, in prosecuting a businessman who he alleges was involved in the murder plot, claims (with tears in his eyes and quotes from Tennyson) that Americans have been denied the truth about Kennedy's death, and that the people covering it up are doing it to enslave and control them. Only when they know the truth can the American people wrench government away from the corrupt and the self-serving and reclaim their freedom.

Stone makes much of this big courtroom speech (though Costner is so lacklustre as Garrison that it's not the firework it ought to be) but he doesn't make much of his own freedom; he doesn't name names or tell it like it is. The right to call things by their real names is an important freedom. In films like *Salvador*, *Wall Street*, *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, Stone has shown that he knows who the real enemy is — American capitalism, American imperialism — but, like the characters in "JFK", he's not game to put anything on the record.

## The lost boys

### Television

#### Amy Gilbert reviews '40 minutes'

The four men profiled in *Wild Men* (BBC's 40 minutes) weren't so much wild as lost. The programme lifted the lid on the growing men's movement in the USA, where men pay hundreds of dollars to attend wild men weekends at which they play drums, mourn their childhoods and undergo a kind of initiation ceremony.

It's a bit of a hoot, but the men are in deadly earnest. The group resembled nothing so much as women's consciousness-raising groups of the '60s and '70s where women tried to come to grips with their own experience of oppression.

The men's movement, started off by men like Robert Bly, whose book *Iron John* has been on the US bestseller list for a year or

more, is trying to define a role for men. Men in the programme felt constricted by society's view of men's roles (be tough, don't cry) and damaged by the lack of positive role models (or mentors) when they were growing up. Most wanted to get in touch with their feelings.

All were adamant that they wanted to do this in a "masculine" way; some had tried to be like women (caring, nurturing) but still weren't satisfied. Most were grieving over the lack of a father's love; most had distant or authoritarian fathers.

The group was an amazing cross-section. Men you'd expect to see slumped over bars slurping beer were there, as well as suburban types more at home in a shopping mall than in a tent. There were funny bits.

One tough construction boss was explaining the weekend to his sidekick — that he was going off to get in touch with his feelings, to get rid of his anger instead of taking it out on his work team. You could see the sidekick nodding uneasily, not wanting to alienate the boss, but edging away, edging away.

There were sad bits too, as the men tried to talk about their feel-

ings, their immense sadness and grief, about how lost they felt.

Though the movement claims to respect women, there was more than a hint of a backlash against women: "they want us to be intimate, but the whole time, as we're growing up, they shut us down". The men placed at least some of the blame for their psychic damage on women, without acknowledging the enormous pressure women face to raise boys according to society's stereotypes.

There was also smugness. One man said the women's movement should go down on its knees every night to thank God for the men's movement. Every night? I agree that men should look at themselves; it's healthy that they question their roles, their upbringings. But they should do it for its own sake, not to win points from women for their sensitivity.

The hokey, semi-mystical nature of the men's movement stuff is also a turn-off. The drumming, initiation stuff just seemed weird, like something left over from Baden-Powell and Boys' Own Adventures. Still, it's healthier than wife-beating, boozing to oblivion or laying into the kids with a belt.

# Capitalism it wasn't!

Paul Hampton contributes to the debate on Stalinism

In SO 512, Martin Thomas argued the case for understanding the Stalinist systems in terms of "state capitalism", and it would have been a persuasive presentation, except that the existence of capitalism there was assumed throughout — whereas this was precisely what had to be proven.

Martin was absolutely right to argue that the truth about the class nature of Stalinism will be found in the concrete reality of those systems over the past 60 years, but it is certainly not the Marxist method to graft onto these societies the categories of capitalism (eg. wages, profits etc.) in the uncritical way that he does. In this sense, he commits the error which Engels warned against: namely of treating the materialist method as a finished stencil into which one accurately cuts the facts.

In our debate about Stalinism, we are at a prior stage in establishing a sociological definition, namely enquiring into hitherto unknown phenomena using general philosophical concepts of essence, law, form and contradiction which Marx called dialectics. In this area (alone), Chris Arthur (also SO 512) has the advantage over Martin in citing the control over the surplus product as the decisive theoretical tool in our understanding of class societies in history, including capitalism.

(Of course, this method does not preclude the possibility that some form of capitalism existed in the ex-USSR, rather it starts without prejudging any particular outcome.) Yet Martin offers no clue to establishing the *essence* of capitalism, which we can then test empirically, but instead gives just forms (money, profit, commodities etc.) which have existed in many pre-capitalist societies. I therefore, offer a definition which retains its full force for 'western' capitalism today, and by which the reality of the USSR can be assessed.

*"It is otherwise with Capital. The historical conditions for its existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. It arises only when the owner of the means of production and subsistence finds the free worker available on the market, as the seller of his own labour power. And this one historical precondition comprises a world's history."* Karl Marx, *Capital* vol.1 (Penguin 1990), p274.

The footnote to this passage is equally pertinent:

*"The capitalist epoch is therefore characterised by the fact that labour power, in the eyes of the worker himself, takes on the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently takes on the form of wage labour. On the other hand, it is only from this moment that the commodity form of the products of labour becomes universal."* Ibid p274.

So if we follow this method of enquiry (ie. the way in which the surplus is produced and appropriated), and the definition of capitalism that flows from it (labour power is a commodity, surplus takes the form of value, etc.), we are in a position to assess the reality of the USSR and whether capitalism has existed there for the last 60 years.

But already the proponents of 'bureaucratic collectivism' and of 'state capitalism' can agree on certain points when they follow this method. Our 1988 bridging document pointed to 3 important conclusions:

- The 'central political



Stalin-regimented demonstration demands "liquidation of the kulaks [more successful peasants]"

bureaucracy' (as Kuron and Modzelewski call it) are a ruling class because of their control over the surplus product.

- The property form (nationalisation) is not necessarily the best guide to the prevailing production relations in these societies.

- The class which generates this surplus product, but which does not dispose of it in its own interests, ie. the exploited working class, must make a social revolution against the bureaucracy.

[I offer no further arguments in this respect].

However, when we look in more detail at the reality of the USSR and the experience of the last 2 years, the existence of capitalist relations of production looks pretty doubtful.

For example, the ruling class there was totally bound up with the state machine, to the extent that the people who really control the surplus product were the military and the KGB, resting on the party-state of the CPSU. Hence, the smashing of the CPSU after the 1991 August coup really did mean the smashing of the central mechanism through which the system reproduced itself.

Moreover, on the face of it, this ruling class looks like no other capitalist ruling class in history, not simply because of its property forms, but also because it lacks the internal competitive tensions associated with competition between capitals (though this ruling class is not without its contradictions.)

This is because the mode of exploitation under Stalinism is best described as *direct and collective*; direct because it proceeds largely on the basis of force/coercion, and collective because the power of the ruling class depends on their position in the bureaucracy, not on their holding of capital/wealth. Capitalism proceeds in a different form, through mechanisms such as commodity fetishism, though ultimately backed by force. Yet Martin offers no explanation of these anomalies.

A further point which flows from this description of exploitation is the way in which the working class in the USSR received its subsistence. That the worker receives some money (a wage) is no great guide, particularly when many consumer durables were only available in the special shops, access to which depended on your contacts or membership of the ruling class.

In reality, the workers received much of their means of subsistence — job, flat, transport, education — as a matter of administrative diktat, and in fact food and clothing depended upon non-monetary factors eg. queues, geographical loca-

tion, contacts etc.

All of this, added to the very real constraints on labour mobility that existed, suggests that labour power did not take the commodity form under Stalinism.

The ex-East German working class today is finding out the way in which labour power becomes a commodity, through *unemployment* which was not previously a feature of these systems.

A final point about money needs to be made, since Marxists understand that under capitalism, abstract labour takes the concrete form of money, or to put it another way, the existence of money as a universal equivalent is the means by which the values of various commodities are equated, and hence we can speak of generalised commodity production. Yet surely what the

***"The mode of exploitation under Stalinism is best described as direct and collective: it proceeds largely on the basis of force/coercion, and the power of the ruling class depends on their position in the bureaucracy..."***

current controversy over price "rises", and their perceived necessity by the Yeltsin leadership [if such perverse barbarism can be called necessity], shows that what has passed for money in these systems bears no relation to 'values' at all, and to constitute a capitalist system requires such a relationship.

My point is that certain things about the USSR need to be explained, and the claim that capitalism has existed there for 60 years raises more problems than it resolves. But what does 'bureaucratic collectivism' have to offer as an alternative?

On the face of it — not much, since, as the 1988 bridging document pointed out, socialists who have either used it as a label (like Shachtman) or adopted it as a theory by default (the post-Trotsky workers' statist) have hopelessly misconceived Stalinism's place in history, either as barbarism or as post-capitalism.

However, it is quite wrong for Martin Thomas to assert, in his critique of Tom Rigby (SO 509) that a 'bureaucratic collectivist' theory which claims that Stalinism is *parallel* with capitalism is ruled out in principle, just as he claims it is wrong to rule out state capitalism, a

*priori*.

Any serious 'bureaucratic collectivist' would accept, on the basis of the current collapse of Stalinism, and by assessing how it developed the productive forces and production relations, that it cannot be regarded as post-capitalist in any way. (In fact, a better line would have been to argue that bureaucratic collectivism implies Stalinism as *worse* than capitalism, though the criteria above would have been adduced to reject this claim too.)

In fact, 'bureaucratic collectivism' starts from the reality of the struggle in the USSR in the 1920s, wherein the bureaucracy led by Stalin wrested control away firstly from the working class socialists in the Left Opposition and then proceeded to smash the incipient bourgeois elements (ie. kulaks) and therefore, in Trotsky's own words, to gain control over the surplus product after 1928.

That history took this course was by no means inevitable, but neither is it a variant that historical materialism must deny in principle, unless a crude stages theory has been swallowed.

It is not my intention to provide a full-blown, positive theory of (parallel) bureaucratic collectivism at this point, but instead to clear certain obstacles from the path of developing one.

The first of these 'bogeys' concerns the laws governing the origin, development and decline of Stalinism. Given that Stalinism has arisen, and indeed died entirely within the epoch of capitalism, it is inevitable that its specific laws will be shaped and even determined by capitalism, as Tom Rigby (SO 509) suggests. But this relationship does not exhaust the issue nor does it necessarily imply state capitalism, or even suggest analogous types of economic laws (like the law of value, tendency of the rate of profit to fall, etc.) which are unique to capitalism.

Indeed, it is a rigid and mechanistic conception of historical materialism to expect a theory of Stalinism to elaborate such laws, given our knowledge of other class societies in history. As a society based heavily on political forms of surplus extraction, and where the state and civil society were completely merged, such a request is both unreasonable and unnecessary. (There is, however, room for some debate on the specific command-planning mechanisms.)

A second red herring concerns the nature of the direct producers under Stalinism, and whether they are workers with the revolutionary potential of the working class under

capitalism.

In the absence of a genuine wage form, are they really closer to state slaves? Whatever the subtle differences, the point that really concerns us is whether workers under Stalinism have the properties of a universal class capable of making socialism. They shared the features of being direct producers, 'free' of means of production, working with modern machinery in a collective production process. They were exploited differently, but in the way suggested earlier. Therefore they had both the objective *power* and the *interest* to emancipate themselves. The concrete proof was Hungary in 1956 and Poland 1980-1, albeit negatively.

A third objection concerns where the bureaucratic ruling class comes from, where it grows organically in other societies. Yet this is to reduce the question of class formation to a question of *personnel*, rather than to explain the mechanisms through which the new class constitutes itself. As I have already stressed the role of the state and the CPSU, and would add that all the organic Stalinist revolutions took place in countries with weak or decimated indigenous bourgeoisies, no more needs to be said. However, even a cursory look at the origins of the bourgeoisie proper between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, confirms its own diverse origins (merchant, yeoman, artisan, aristocrat etc.) to lay this one to rest.

A final objection concerns the current crisis, and whether its apparently 'peaceful' nature indicates no qualitative change in the relations of production. In fact, we know that the USSR has been in crisis since the late '50s and that this has centred around the problematic application of advanced technology to the labour process — or what might be called the generation of relative surplus.

This precipitated the piecemeal market reforms from the early 1960s to Gorbachev's perestroika, all of which proved an unsuccessful mechanism to reintroduce full-blown capitalism, though it has certainly paved the way.

My point though is that the violence of a revolution usually comes from the outgoing ruling class and yet in the USSR, it is precisely this ruling class which is trying to introduce capitalism as we speak.

This state-sponsored or 'Prussian road' to capitalism has occurred precisely because the Stalinist relations, based as they were on naked terror, did not have the same feedback mechanism that exists under capitalism for organic relative surplus extraction. (This is what makes the crisis of Stalinism *terminal*, and different from a capitalist crisis of overproduction.)

However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the process of creating capitalism in the USSR will be peaceful or uncontested in any definitive sense, since its effects (unemployment, starvation, shortages) will be meted out on a developing working class movement, which has already shown its capacity to resist.

Here the point about Stalinism and capitalism being parallel — and capitalism *not* being a lesser evil retains its full force. The development of capitalist relations of production will be a matter of struggle, politically, ideologically as well as economically, and it is in this respect that clarity over the transition affords Marxists the opportunity to intervene.

To reduce the next period in the ex-USSR to a change in the form of capitalism would be a serious mistake. An accurate description of the actual relations of Stalinism is the basis for our analysis and action in the period ahead.

# All out 31 January!

By a London civil servant

Members of the two main civil service unions — the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS) — in London have voted to take strike action on 31 January over the Treasury's failure to increase London Weighting for the last three years.

The decision to strike is a demonstration of anger, not only at the Treasury's failure to raise London Weighting, but also at Tory plans for civil service pay. Both CPSA and NUCPS Ex-

ecutives have sat back and watched while the Treasury froze London Weighting. Pressure from members of both unions eventually forced NUCPS to ballot. This in turn meant the right-wing CPSA NEC had no choice but to do likewise.

For the Executives the strike is a token gesture. They are well aware that one day is not enough to force the Tories to raise London Weighting. The Executives must be forced to take a clear lead from the top and further escalate the action.

The Tories have no justification not to raise London Weighting. Inflation in London has at times reached 18% over the last three years. Workers in the insurance and banking sectors receive £3,500 plus per year (compared to £1,700 Inner London Weighting for civil servants). The 31 January strike should be seen as more than a fight for a London Weighting increase. It should be the launch of a pay campaign to throw out the Tories' pay proposals, secure a decent pay rise, defend national pay bargaining, and defend our unions.

The threats we face from the Tories mean we have no choice but to see 31 January as the springboard for a campaign to build to all-out industrial action. It is vital that CPSA and NUCPS are united in this campaign.

## Form local pay action committees

The vote for strike action in London amongst NUCPS and CPSA members and the hard job that the IRSF leadership had in selling this year's pay deal point to the anger that exists among civil servants over low pay and the abolition of national

pay bargaining. Activists need to focus that anger. In Sheffield and Nottingham local pay action committees have been formed to campaign amongst the rank and file of the civil service unions. Set one up in your area.

A weekend school organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

## Socialists and the trade unions

Saturday and Sunday, February 8th and 9th  
Manchester Town Hall, Albert Square, Manchester

SATURDAY, 11.30am-12.45pm

The state of the movement and the coming general election

John O'Mahony, *Socialist Organiser* editor and founding member of the National Ports Shop Stewards' Committee, will look back at the defeats the movement has suffered over the last decade and draw out the lessons for the battles to come.

Gail Cameron, CPSA, will focus on the tasks facing socialists in the coming general election.

You can hear the views of the rank and file engineers campaigning to stop the merger between the AEU and EETPU, and the GEC Openshaw strikers will explain why they are fighting to save jobs.

Lunch, 12.45-1.45

Workshops 1, 1.45-3.00

Europe and workers' unity

What will 1992 mean for workers? How should workers respond to the internationalisation of capitalism?

Speakers will include Rick Hesketh, GEC Openshaw striker, arguing the case for a united multinational labour movement response to multinational capitalism.

Public sector strikes and emergency cover

Should healthworkers provide cover on the wards during strikes? What lessons can we learn from the ambulance dispute? Should DHSS workers close down their offices or should they occupy and continue providing emergency cover?

These and many other questions will be discussed by workers drawing on their own experience.

Marx and the trade unions

Why was Karl Marx the first socialist thinker to support the trade union struggle? Why are struggles over wages and the working day so vital to the creation of rudimentary class organisation?

A civil service trade unionist spells out Marx's relevance for today.

3.15-4.30

Arguing for socialism in the workplace

How do you get the socialist message over without lecturing people or appearing to talk down to them? How can we use the election to get a discussion going over politics more generally? How do we link the fight for a Labour government with the immediate defence of workers' interests? What do you do about active racists and fascists in the workplace?

These are some of the questions up for discussion. The session will be introduced by a longstanding activist in the railworkers' union (RMT).

4.45-5.45

This time has been set aside for caucuses of people active in particular unions or industries.

SUNDAY, Workshops 2, 10.00-11.45

Problems of workplace and branch organisation

If you've a problem about your branch, stewards committee, local official or whatever, this is the session to go to. Experienced activists will help you find the probably simple solution to your problem.

OILC — the offshore workers' story (provisional)

Hear the story of how the rig workers built the organisation which shut down the North Sea for two summers in a row, and the developments that led to the decision to form a new offshore workers' union.

The Minority Movement — lessons for today

In the mid-'20s, the then revolutionary Communist Party organised a mass fighting organisation inside the trade union movement that won the affiliation of a million trade unionists out of a movement that totalled 4 million.

How can we start to build such an organisation today? And what lessons can we learn from the '20s? Karen Waddington, Barnsley AEU leads the discussion.

Workshops 3, 11.30-12.45

Fighting sexual harassment in the workplace

Jean Lane, author of 'Woman in a Man's Job', leads a discussion on the battle against sexism at work. Topics for discussion include: what to do about pin-ups and posters, and what male trade unionists should do about sexism.

Strike strategy

This workshop will go through the basics of how to fight and how to win. We will focus on covering the essentials like communication, membership involvement and accountability, knowing your enemy's weak spots and organising solidarity.

Our panel of speakers will include activists with experience of the steel industry, cars and the public sector.

How to deal with 'Japanese' working methods

What's life like at Nissan Sunderland? How do you fight back against Japanisation? And where will it strike next?

Lunch, 12.45-1.00

1.45-3.00

Where now for the left in the unions?

A roundtable discussion involving Sheila Cohen (Editor, *Trade Union News*), Andy Dixon (NUT Executive), Trudy Saunders (Socialist Organiser) and Alan Thornett (Socialist Outlook — invited).

Closing Plenary, 3.15

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No national answers to crisis

## The left and the rentiers

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

A conference last Saturday (25) on "Labour and the Economy" drew about 100 socialists and activists to hear speakers including Ken Livingstone MP and Ben Fine. Peter Kenway comments on the Programme of Action produced by the conference organizers.

The Labour Left's new Economic Programme of Action is very poor.

Although it complains about the behaviour of the City of London and finance in general, the programme has neither an analysis of the reasons for this behaviour nor any grasp of the connections between these institutions and society at large.

To me it seems this behaviour is consistent with a strategy to turn Britain into something like a larger version of Jersey, or maybe the Isle of Man: a rentier economy in which a substantial leisured class lives a comfortable existence on unearned income, often from abroad.

There will be little industry and few industrial workers. What work there is, is principally in low-pay jobs providing services to the middle classes; both income taxes and the social wage must of necessity be low.

"On what grounds do we prefer 'our' capital to 'theirs', and why on earth should holders of such capital receive tax breaks for repatriating the stuff?"

The point about this picture of Britain 1992 is that it is not just a few fat capitalists, in top hats and tails, but rather a substantial proportion of the middle class, particularly those in receipt of occupational pensions, who benefit from this arrangement and for whom the behaviour of the City (dominated by the pension funds) is quite logical.

To move against the City is to provoke a fight not just with the City but with a wider section of society. The programme gives no indication of this fight, hiding all the time behind "Britain's interest".

Indeed, in as much as it hits this evolving rentier economy

where it hurts most, in its pocket, I think that Labour's proposals on the abolition of the National Insurance upper earnings limit and an increase in the higher rate of tax are far more radical and to the point than a lot of what is in this programme (such as the proposals to nationalise the top 50 many companies).

The proposals on interest rates and the exchange rate are pure fantasy. The evidence of at least twenty years is that whether inside or outside a zone of currency stability, it is impossible for the UK permanently to lower its interest rate below that of its principal trading partner, formerly the US and now Germany.

The idea that devaluation can be combined with protecting real wages is just nonsense.

because devaluation achieves its purpose, of making the UK more competitive internationally, if and only if workers are not fully compensated for the rise in domestic prices caused by the rise in import prices.

As for the gung-ho attitude towards the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System, it shows no understanding of why capital in this country thought it right to join the mechanism (so important, in fact, that it was both prepared and able to sacrifice Mrs Thatcher to maintain it). And I would have thought that as internationalists, we would find the principle of currency stability preferable to the anarchy of the market.

Of course we are not dealing with internationalists here, as the talk about the over-riding importance of the repatriation of capital shows. A great deal of capital did indeed go abroad during the years of the oil surpluses in the early 1980s (given a current account surplus, a net outflow of capital is inevitable). But in the last few years (since 1988, I think), "we" have benefitted from considerable inflows of capital some of which has been directed (by the Japanese) into industrial investment.

On what grounds do we prefer "our" capital to "theirs", and why on earth should holders of such capital receive tax breaks for repatriating the stuff?

Worst of all, this programme shows no understanding of the present global crisis and Britain's place in it. It is true that the depth of the recession here is to do with particular British factors, but there is no way that any government can fashion a recovery until and unless the principal capitalist economies revive.

The programme shuns "Fortress Europe", but if there is one arena in which immediate struggle is possible then it is inside this particular fortress. As Western European capital moves to impose a system based on the old West German model of an independent central bank, so that system is facing its most serious challenge from the German workers themselves.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

# GEC strikers need your support!

# Defend trade union rights!

By Alex Glasgow

Two new attacks on trade union rights have just been announced by the Tories.

2,400 military installation guards are to be denied the right to be represented by the TGWU and GMB. The Tories claim that it is not "appropriate" for the guards to belong to a union affiliated to the Labour Party.

John Major has also promised that his revamped "Citizens Charter" will give individuals the "right" to sue unofficial strikers.

Major's promises to extend "individual rights" in pursuit of a "classless society" are just so much hypocritical cant.

What right do the bosses' friends in the Tory party have to tell workers which union they can join? What right do the Tories have to encourage the courts to be used against strikers fighting for their decent pay and working conditions?

The Tories' latest attacks on trade union rights are an expression of their commitment to a class society in which workers are denied the most basic rights, whilst the



bosses are allowed to chase after the maximum profits without any constraints.

Many of the democratic and individual rights existing in society today, such as the right to vote, were not handed down from on high by the predecessors of John Major but were won by working-class struggle.

The labour movement must refuse to have any truck with the latest Tory attacks on the trade unions. It must campaign for workers to have the right to join whatever union they want, and for the next Labour government to implement a Charter of Workers' Rights.

By Dave Barter

Support is growing for the strike at GEC Alsthom as more groups of workers rally to the strikers' stand against job losses.

In their fourth week of striking against what is now more than 200 redundancies, workers at the Openshaw plant in Manchester have received donations from Long & Crawfords, Tameside NALGO, North West Region MSF, and numerous workplaces locally and nationally.

Support is coming from elsewhere too: 58 Labour MPs have signed a Commons motion backing the strikers; a second message of support has been sent from unions in France, where GEC Alsthom is based.

This strike is vital to the stand against job losses in GEC as a whole. One striker told *Socialist Organiser*: "We're strongly unionised here. If they beat us they will move on to other plants." The determination of workers across GEC not to let Openshaw be beaten needs organising — the GEC Combine Committee must be revived as a matter of urgency.

Despite an estimated £346 million profit this year, Lord Weinstock's GEC is determined to make wide-scale restructuring at the expense of the workforce who make GEC's profit.

GEC Turbines plants have been closed recently in Trafford Park, Manchester and Lorne, Northern Ireland. Mining switchgear contracts have been relocated from Openshaw to be made under licence in China.

A revived Combine Committee could coordinate a workers'

response to this restructuring across GEC as a whole — including plants in France and other parts of Europe. Unions in other parts of GEC should commit themselves to taking the same action as Openshaw in the event of any redundancies being announced in their own workplaces.

Locally, a rally or demonstration is needed to help build support from Labour Parties and workplaces in the area.

In the longer term, what is to be

**"This strike is vital to the stand against job losses in GEC as a whole"**

done about job losses in Weinstock's profiteering GEC? As GEC striker John Byrne has pointed out, GEC is a prime case for nationalisation by a future Labour government: much of GEC's profit is from work for the military, the NHS, electricity generation — government contracts.

The long-term fight against GEC management means a fight for nationalisation and for workers' management in GEC as a whole — across Britain and abroad. Winning this strike and reviving a strengthened Combine Committee is the best possible start for that fight.

Support the GEC jobs fight — resolutions, messages of support and donations to Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Manchester M34 1AS. (Cheques payable to "AEI Shop Stewards Committee Fund".)

**"Multinational capital can be effectively addressed only by multinational labour."**

By Rick Hesketh, Chair of the Manchester South MSF branch

We are challenging the oft-invoked legitimising concepts of managerial control, liberalism, prerogative and profit and we are spelling out our own strategy inspired by our conceptions of justice, democracy and freedom.

Our initiative essentially seeks to take advantage of European and French labour law.

We are seeking a meeting with the company's Supervisory Board in Paris. We also intend to secure detailed documentation relating to the rationalisation. Only then can the assumptions on which it rests be challenged, and workers at Openshaw and elsewhere realise the hidden agenda.

Further, we aim to establish representation on the French works council, believing that this will be a seed for a future European Joint Union Council, charged with positive rights to information and consultation and having enhanced bargaining power in common areas.

The dispute has given our relations with the French CGT an immediacy and intensity which might otherwise have taken years to cement. These links acknowledge a recognition on both sides of the Channel that multinational capital can only be effectively addressed by multinational labour.

Openshaw is now in the vanguard of the fight back against the company and, with the continued support of the labour movement, we can inspire groups of workers in other European multinationals to take on the employer in the battles which are sure to lie ahead as they prepare for the single market.

**French workers send support**

From CGT trade unionists in GEC-Alsthom France to the Manchester GEC-Alsthom workers:

"From our congress, the CGT trade union of GEC-Alsthom, Rateau site, sends its support to the Manchester employees and their MSF trade union in their struggle to save jobs.

We have learned just today that

new threats are hanging over the Manchester factory.

We will not fail to make your struggles known to the employees of GEC-Alsthom in France, and we will send you all the information we have to allow you to defeat the evil plans of our managements".

17 January 1992.