

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left

Kick the
Tories
out!

VOTE LABOUR

and fight for

- Free trade unions • Poll tax amnesty
- Minimum wage • Rebuilding the NHS

Strikers against the anti-union laws

By Tony Dale

"When they came for the Jews I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew. When they came for the Communists, I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Communist. When they came for the trade unionists I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist. When they came for me there was no one left to speak out for me".

This famous quote was part of an emotional speech by one trade union leader at a meeting on Sunday to rally his members for national industrial action. Was this Arthur Scargill? No. Ron Todd? No, it was Gordon Taylor, leader of the Professional Footballers' Association! As Gordon Taylor received a standing ovation, it was clear there will be a big majority for strike action in the ballot of First Division footballers

First division footballers teach the TUC a lesson

due to close on Friday 3 April. The strike is likely to target televised matches.

The first game to be hit, if the strike goes ahead, will be the Rumbelows League Cup Final between Manchester United and Nottingham Forest.

The employers, the Football League, are threatening to go to court and use the Tory anti-union laws in an attempt to break any strike. The PFA have stated that, if necessary, they will defy the anti-union laws and strike regardless of court action. Gordon Taylor obviously has more guts than Norman Willis!

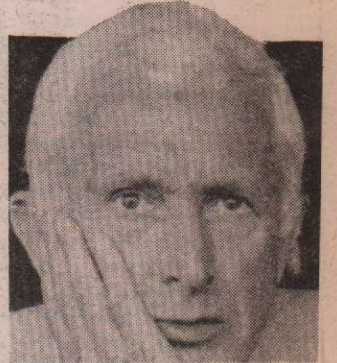
At the centre of this dispute is the issue of income. Next season, the Premier League is being launched. The main motivation for the Premier League came from First Division Club Chairmen who wanted to increase the income for the top clubs at the expense of Second, Third, and Fourth Division Clubs.

Only this week, Aldershot Football Club went bust with the result of players being laid off and

"Sheer greed on the part of the Chairman"

supporters left without a team. No rescue package was put forward by the Football League or the top clubs. Due to a similar financial crisis Carlisle United are going part-time and the players are having their hours and wages cut.

The dispute between the players and the Premier League is primarily over income from television. At present, the PFA get 10% from the proceeds from selling games to television. This money is used for pensions, training community schemes, benefits to the families of former players. At present the television contract amounts to £10 million. So, this is not an argument over small change.



Palace chair Ron Noades denounced PFA as "provocateurs"

The Premier League is only offering the PFA a 5% share of the television money! Again, the contracts being discussed amount to tens of millions.

The motivation for the Premier League's reduced offer is sheer greed on the part of the present First Division Chairmen.

As Gordon Taylor put it on Radio 5 "It is the players who generate the money, they provide the entertainment. People don't come to watch chairmen."

The players are threatening strike action to disrupt this season's First Division Football League programme to get a better deal. Quite rightly, this action is planned before the launch of next season's Premier League.

The Football League is talking about using the anti-union laws as they claim it would be secondary action as the players' dispute is with the Premier League and not with the Football League. This ignores the fact that the present First Division Club Chairmen dominate both organisations.

As reported earlier, the PFA have stated that, if necessary, they will defy the anti-union laws threat in order to organise the strike.

The PFA was launched in 1907 and has been involved in many bitter battles. It is now on the verge of the biggest strike English soccer has ever seen.

The lie machine



Most Australians, apparently, thought it was just eccentric for cricketers Ian Botham and Graham Gooch to walk out of an official dinner because a comic was satirising the Queen.

The British tabloids were even more baffling: the same papers which gleefully retail regular doses of Royal scandal suddenly went all loyal, denouncing Australia as "this Portalo in the Pacific" (*Daily Star*).

Maybe it was because the Australian comedian mocked not only the royals, who have become disposable for the tabloid bosses, but also their uncrowned leader and heroine Margaret Thatcher.

Canary Wharf goes bust A monument to debauched capitalism

London's Docklands, the showroom of Thatcherism, could become a ghost town of empty office buildings and abandoned shops.

Last week, Olympia and York, the world's biggest property company, who built Canary Wharf, effectively went bust. They had to go begging to their bankers for a deal over their debts, estimated to be at least \$20 billion.

Money which Olympia and York had promised to pay towards improving public transport for Docklands is now unlikely to come. Canary Wharf is 40 per cent empty, the tenants who are there have been tempted in only by long rent-free periods and any upturn must be a long way in the future, with 20 per cent of all office space vacant in the central area of the city.

At best Docklands will become "a gradually decaying backwater" (as the *Independent on Sunday* put it), kept alive by vast amounts of government money for transport links and by government agreements to take the empty office blocks for the civil service.

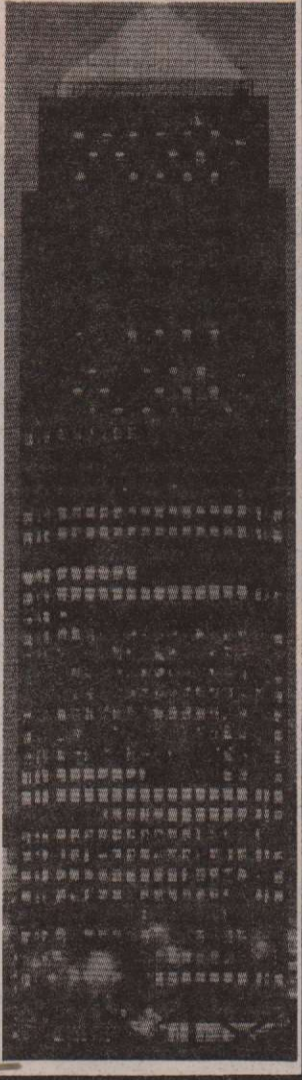
In the early 1980s, the Tory Government brushed aside

plans drawn up by local people for redevelopment of the docks area to include low-cost housing and small industrial units which would provide local jobs. They set up a Docklands Development Corporation, free of all democratic control, and promised big tax breaks and lush profits to property developers.

There were few jobs for local people, but, for the Tories, that was just too bad. People had to adapt to the 'enterprise culture', not vice versa.

It was more like enterprise barbarism. It was a typical capitalist debauch. Profiteers rushed in to grab a slice, without any planned relationship of what they built to social need. It was a sickening, sordid waste. Billions of pounds were spent on lavish marble-panelled offices while schools, hospitals and local authority housing were crumbling.

What a Labour government should do, to avoid a repetition, is nationalise all building land, nationalise the big property companies and building companies, and set up a publicly-owned construction corporation to carry out a democratically-decided national building programme.



Help Socialist Organiser grow

Socialist Organiser and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty are aiming to raise £8,000 by the beginning of July.

We need the extra money to expand.

- We want to:
- Employ another person to work on our paper.
 - Buy new equipment for our office.
 - Improve our international links.

If you help us raise £8,000 you will be helping to strengthen the struggle for socialist ideas; you will be aiding the building of a real socialist organisation capable of providing a working-class alternative to capitalism.

Why not send us a dona-

tion? Send to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA (cheques/POs to "Workers' Liberty").

Irish students get organised to fight sectarianism

Last Wednesday 25 March 1,000 Northern Irish students marched through the streets of Belfast.

The 'Student Campaign for Peace' organised by the National Union of Students and the Union of Students in Ireland was behind the march. The campaign aims to involve students across the region in debates and discussions on creating peace in the

region. Student union officers spoke at the rally about the recent escalation of violence, bigotry and hatred that has scarred their lives. None of the young people of the region can really remember what it is like to live in a country not ripped apart by killings and sectarianism.

Last weekend NUS/USI held its Annual Conference in Newry. Delegates discussed

how to develop the campaign over the coming months. The conference also debated Further Education Union Development, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights, the Women's Campaign and the fight against student poverty.

The NUS leadership would do well to learn from the enthusiasm, energy and political commitment to student unionism that the colleges in Northern Ireland possess.

Split vote in Coventry could help the Tories

Neil Kinnock and Peter Taaffe between them could hand Coventry South East to the Tories.

Until a few months ago Coventry South East was a safe Labour seat, with a well-known MP whose dedication, competence and talent was admitted on all sides.

Then Neil Kinnock decided that the MP, Dave Nellist, was too left-wing. Seizing on *Militant's* stupid decision to contest the Walton by-election, he expelled Dave Nellist, a sympathiser of *Mili-*

tant. *Militant*, claiming their miserable result in Walton as a great victory, decided to run candidates against Labour in the General Election, so there was pressure on Nellist to stand.

The latest opinion poll shows Labour at 32%, Nellist at 30% and the Tories at 28%. A Tory victory on 9 April would be well within the usual margin of error. But it can be avoided if those left-wing groups now campaigning for Nellist sober up and back Labour.



Dave Nellist

Doubting dons deliver poll disaster for Tories

A majority of Britain's academics will be backing Labour on April 9th, according to an opinion poll published last week. The ICM poll gave Labour 57% of the academic vote in Further and Higher education with the Liberal Democrats

beating the Tories into third place by 21% to 17%.

Support amongst lecturers has jumped from 1987 when it gained only 33% and is at its highest since 1964 when voting intentions were first recorded.

The poll also showed widespread opposition to recent changes made by the Tories to Further and Higher education.

Over three quarters of lecturers thought student loans should be scrapped, with nearly two thirds of Conservative supporter opposed to them.

"Top up Fees" where students pay a portion of their fees were criticised by one half of respondents, while 72% disapproved of the introduction of two year degrees.



Do the nationalists have the best tunes? Scottish workers from Caterpillar marching in London, 1987. Photo: Jez Coulson

Vote Labour in Scotland, too!

SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY NOW



53% voted for Scottish home rule in 1979, but parliamentary manoeuvres blocked it. Now there is a big and stable majority for home rule.

Many left-wingers - from socialist to Labour Briefing - say we should vote for the Scottish National Party against Labour in Scotland, or at least for the more left-wing SNP candidates.

In recent years the SNP has moved away from its old "Tartan Tory" image, and now pushes policies well to the left of Labour on the Poll Tax, Trident, and other issues.

Yet the SNP remains a nationalist, not a working-class party. SNP leader Alex Salmond says: "The SNP is not a hard-left or socialist party. [If Scotland became independent] the SNP would continue as a social-democratic party".

Stripped of the radical

rhetoric which it finds electorally useful just now, the SNP's programme is a reactionary nationalist pipe-dream of cross-class unity on the basis of oil revenues.

It is fundamentally a project for Scottish capitalism, trying to tie in the working class on the basis of hostility to the English. The first victims of an attempted SNP restructuring of Scottish capitalism would be the Scottish workers.

In Scotland as elsewhere in Britain, Labour is the party based on the bedrock working-class organisations, the trade unions. The SNP does not have that class basis. To encourage Scottish workers to hive off into nationalism is, for socialists, to give up on our central task, of developing, transforming, and revolutionising the labour movement. Whether Scotland separates from Britain or not, the economic and political integration of West European capitalism will continue. The labour movement will need to unite across the national frontiers, as the offshore oil rig workers' union OILC is now reaching out to Norwegian oil workers.

The last thing we need is for the trade unions and working-class political parties to be split by new frontiers. If Scotland separates, the labour movement should stay united across the border.

There are real issues behind the nationalist upsurge. In March 1979, 53 per cent voted in a referendum for Scottish home rule.

Since then, the majority for home rule has become bigger and more stable. It is now up to 80%. Yet home rule was denied

after the 1979 referendum, because of a wrecking amendment in the Westminster Parliament which said that no majority would count unless it was also at least 40% of the electorate; and the Tories will continue to deny it if they win

"If we fight for socialism 'from below', we must be consistent democrats."

on 9 April.

If we fight for socialism "from below", we must be consistent democrats. We must support the right of every nation to determine its own future. Even if Scottish socialists voted against home rule in the 1979 referendum, it is now an established, stable fact that the majority of Scots want home rule. They should have it.

Under pressure from Scottish opinion, the Labour Party has shifted to support a Scottish Parliament with tax-raising powers. Once this Parliament is set up, it will provide a means for the Scottish people to decide, through parliamentary elections, how far they want to separate from the rest of Britain.

Scottish workers who favour the SNP line of "Independence in Europe" should recognise that Labour's policy provides a road

to that end, if the majority of Scots want it.

And no socialist should be frightened off from supporting a Scottish parliament because it might lead to independence. We want to keep the English and the Scottish working-class movements united, but we have no brief for the unity of the British state. To put undemocratic obstacles in the way of Scottish independence, if the majority of the Scottish people want it, can only harm working-class unity.

There has been a basic shift in Scottish politics; and it is more than just the fact of Scotland with an anti-Tory majority being held under Tory rule for 13 years, a situation shared by Wales and parts of England.

In the coming weeks, *Socialist Organiser* will be opening a debate on this shift, its implications, and socialist policy on the proposed Scottish Parliament.

Historically, Scotland has not been an oppressed nation. It was integrated with England in a single state from 1707, and shared in the spoils of the British Empire.

There were some movements for Scottish home rule in the late 19th and early 20th century, in the period when the British Empire was being reorganised on the basis of home rule for Canada, Australia, South Africa, and so on, but Scotland was not disadvantaged: Scottish finance capital was, and is, a disproportionately large segment of British finance capital.

But there is no more British Empire. Britain is no longer a Great Power, association with which brings privileges. And

there is an emerging West European confederation, the EC. Independence within that EC would let Scotland be part of a capitalist Great Power yet have political autonomy.

The SNP's current slogan, "Independence in Europe", is likely to have more staying power than its old grab-as-grab-can formula, "It's Scotland's oil!"

In many parts of Europe - in Belgium, in Italy, and most markedly in Eastern Europe - the trend towards a "Europe of regions" has been damaging and disruptive for the working-class movement, boosting local petty-mindedness and narrowness. We should have no illusions; at the same time we have no reason to defend the existing state structures of capitalism.

Yes to self-determination! No to the SNP! Maintain the existing cross-border unity of the labour movement, and build unity across Europe! Vote Labour on 9 April!

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

Karl Marx
Socialist Organiser
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The 1977 firefighters strike

Playing the union card

At first, it looks as though the Tories are threatening an insurrectionary general strike in the event of a Labour victory: "Labour in, everybody out" reads the slogan on the latest Tory election poster. It is, of course, a desperate bid to make industrial relations and Labour's union connection an election issue.

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

All the evidence is that the Tories' union card simply doesn't carry the weight it did in 1987, let alone 1979. In one breath, the Tories claim credit for the lowest strike levels in 100 years, while in the next, they attempt to revive terrifying images of untrammelled union power: they can't have it both ways, can they?

Even the poster's background illustration of a sea of hands raised at a mass meeting lacks credibility: since 1984 unions have been prevented from calling strikes on a show of hands and Labour has stated that it will not change that aspect of the law (nor the abolition of closed shops, restrictions on picketing, and compulsory ballots for union elections).

So would the election of a Labour government make any measurable difference to what is usually referred to as "industrial relations"? Without wishing to give credence to the Tory propaganda effort, the short answer has to be yes. Labour commitments like the minimum wage and equal rights for part-time workers have been given so much prominence that it is difficult to see how even Kinnock could simply renege on them without an almighty row. Leaders of public sector unions (notably NUPE) have repeatedly stated that the implementation of the minimum wage is a precondition for any cooperation with a Kinnock government.

Other Labour commitments - like the pledge to reverse the government's Maastricht opt-out from EC employment law, the promise of improved maternity pay and a law banning age discrimination in employment - are less hard and fast, but they still provide unions with opportunities to exert pressure on a Labour government in a way that would never arise with the Tories.

A Tory victory, on the other hand, would give the green light to a whole new swathe of anti-union legislation: restrictions on the "check off" system of collecting union dues at source; a compulsory seven days "cooling off" period before any strike; the outlawing of workplace (as opposed to postal) ballots; and even the abolition of that employers' favourite, the Bridlington Agreement.

None of which means that a Labour victory will automatically usher in a new golden age of class struggle: in fact, a Kinnock government would present a whole new set of problems and dangers for rank and file trade unionists. In particular the "National Economic Assessment" (originally proposed by John Edmonds of the GMB and Alan Tuffin of the UCW) would almost certainly be the "quid pro quo" for the introduction of the national minimum wage. This would be a thinly-disguised form of incomes policy, policed by the union bureaucracy, just like the Social Contract of the '70s. After 13 years of crude union-bashing it is all too easy to forget about the dangers of beer-and-sandwiches corporatism.

But one thing is for sure: another Tory victory would be a devastating blow to the self-confidence and morale of rank and file trade unionists, confirming the already widely held myth of Tory invincibility. A Labour victory would at least open up the possibility of a revival in shopfloor militancy. The Tories are nearer the mark than the silly ultra-lefts who say the election will make no difference to the class struggle.

The Tories' manifesto

Piffle, lies and threats

New threat to the unions

The Tories are anxious and unnerved. An extraordinarily big proportion of their manifesto attacks Labour rather than saying positively what the Tories propose.

Their highlighted proposals are such piffling schemes as the "Citizen's Charter", the National Lottery, the "Millennium Fund", and a special minister for London Transport. And the manifesto is padded out with naively self-revealing attempts to boost John Major as a "world leader", on the lines of: "The Prime Minister was the first world leader to announce his intention to attend the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro this June".

We should have an excellent chance of getting rid of the Tories this time. But if we fail, they will recover their nerve, and they will make us pay the price.

"They plan another round of anti-union laws. All strikes will become illegal unless there has been a postal ballot followed by seven days' notice to the boss."

They plan another round of anti-union laws. All strikes will become illegal unless there has been a postal ballot followed by seven days' notice to the boss. If public service unions strike, they will be liable to be sued for dam-

ages by any user of the service. Check-off arrangements for union dues will become illegal without written authorisation from each individual.

They also plan another round of sell-offs: the pits, local authority bus companies, local authority airports, rail services. They will create increased scope for private couriers to compete with the Post Office on the easy and profitable parts of the postal service.

A new law will make squatting a criminal offence, and young people on probation for shop-lifting or suchlike will be given a "short, sharp shock" with a "brief experience" of prison.

Fibs and facts

The Tory manifesto includes a string of fibs.

LIE: "Since 1979, wealth has been spread more widely..."

FACT: Inequality of wealth has increased. According to the latest available figures (1987), the top 10% own 53% of all marketable wealth, and the bottom 50% only 6%. In 1979 the top 10% owned 50% of all wealth. Last year, despite new privatisations, the number of individual shareholders decreased.

LIE: "Great advance in the standard of living..."

FACT: Real incomes for the poorest 10% of families, after housing costs, fell 7% between 1979 and 1987. Real incomes for the top 1% (after housing costs) rose 72%.

LIE: "The competitiveness and performance of British manufacturing have been transformed... We have steadily dismantled barriers to its growth"

FACT: In the early 1980s one in four of all manufacturing jobs were destroyed. Whole sectors of manufacturing collapsed completely. Since 1983 Britain has regularly imported more manufactured goods than it imports - for the first time since the Industrial Revolution.

LIE: "Since 1979 the Government has vastly increased the resources available to the NHS".

FACT: The resources have lagged far behind the demands of an ageing population and more expensive medical technology. The evidence: closed wards, closed hospitals, cancelled operations, cuts everywhere.

LIE: "The Conservative Party is totally committed to the National Health Service... The most fundamental principle is that need, and not ability to pay, is and will remain the basis on which care is offered to all by the NHS".

FACT: Under the Tories' new "internal market" in the NHS, as in every market, it is precisely "ability to pay" that decides. For the present, your Health Authority's, or your fundholding GP's, "ability to pay" decides what care you get. The next logical step will be for the "ability to pay" of private health insurance schemes and of rich individuals to enter the "market". Many Tories are quite clear that they want a free-market health system based on ability to pay.

LIE: "Under the Conservatives, transport in Britain is being transformed... better services and more choice".

FACT: Even the ruling Corporation of the City of London, a solidly Tory body, is protesting about

the chaos likely to be caused by further privatisation and deregulation of public transport.

"The Tory government has systematically prevented Labour councils carrying out the policies they were elected on..."

LIE: "Since 1979 we have sought to create an accountable local government system".

FACT: The Tory Government has systematically prevented Labour councils carrying out the policies they were elected on - or abolished elected local government outright, as it did in London, after the Labour Greater London Council tried to bring in cheap bus and underground fares.

Utopia for shopkeepers

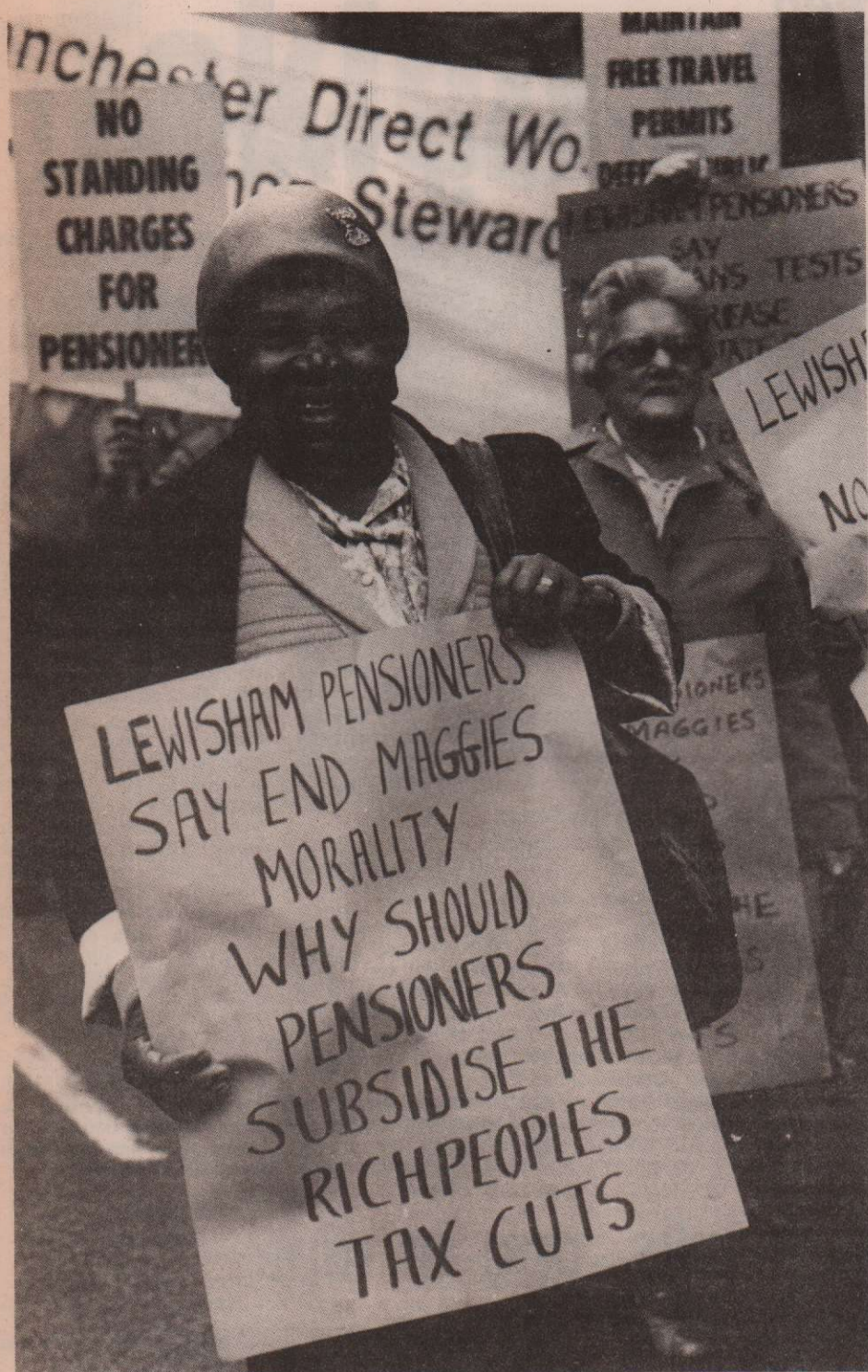
What is the most important human right?

Free speech? The right to adequate food, shelter, and clothing? The right to a decent job? Access to education and culture? The right to assemble, discuss, and organise with others to press for change?

For the Tories, all those are secondary. "One of the most important rights an individual has in a free society", according to their manifesto - and no other right merits consideration in this manifesto - is "the opportunity to own a home and pass it on".



Strangeways prison: inhuman conditions led to riots in 1990. The Tories want to lock more people up.



The Tories' morality is a sick one

The ideal which the Tories sell to their supporters is of a society mostly made up of shopkeepers and small business people, all contentedly regarding their spruced-up semis as

the ultimate achievement of human freedom.

Not everyone would reach the ultimate, since it depends on "personal achievement" in the free market: the unfortunate or

incompetent proletariat would remain, well controlled by severe anti-union laws and increased numbers of police and prisons.

It would be a sick ideal even if there were not 200

small businesses going bust, and 200 homes being repossessed, every day.

Today, as for many decades past, the petty bourgeois (small shopkeeper/business) class is marginal. The two main classes are the big business capitalist class, on the one hand, and the wage-workers on the other.

The capitalist class owns and controls the social means of production (facto-

"The Tories' entire policy since 1979 has been to batter and destroy the rights won by the working class in order to restore the power and the profits of the wealthy."

ries, machines, equipment, offices); the workers have to sell their labour-power in order to live. All new wealth is created by labour; the capitalists seize a slice of it through their ownership of the means of production.

The Tories' entire policy since 1979 has been to batter and destroy the rights won by the working class in order to restore the power and the profits of the wealthy.

Their petty bourgeois ideal has some grip because it appeals to petty bourgeois elements and aspirations in the lives of many workers. They have houses on mortgage, and think they are property-owners. They have some supervisory role at work, and think they are captains of enterprise. Or maybe they have none of this, but think they ought to have.

The Tories narrow down human rights to the chance of becoming a small property-owner - in a society where the rich, the big property-owners, systematically trample down the rights of the majority, the working class.

Labour promises reforms but ducks out on union rights

Labour's main definite manifesto promises are:

- To bring in a legal minimum wage of £3.40 an hour.
- To increase pensions by £5 a week for a single person, £8 for a married couple; to increase child benefit to £9.95 a week; to raise the threshold above which low-paid workers start paying income tax.
- To put £1 billion extra into the NHS, £0.6 billion into education, and £0.3 billion into training; to switch funds so as to create 25,000 new nursery places.
- To scrap student loans and restore grants; to restore housing benefit for under-18s. To scrap the Poll Tax and introduce a revised rates system.
- To make a number of democratic reforms: * a Freedom of Information Act; * a Scottish Parliament; * a new elected authority for Greater London; * to abolish the House of Lords and replace it with an elected second chamber; * to introduce fixed-term

parliaments; * to "encourage public debate" on electoral reform; * to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act; * to "reform" the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, and make convictions impossible on uncorroborated confession evidence alone. * to repeal Clause 28 and legislate against discrimination on grounds of sexuality.

The manifesto is very weak on the area where the Tories reckon they have achieved most: trade union rights.

It says: "There will be no return to the trade union legislation of the 1970s. Ballots before strikes and for union elections will stay. There will be no mass or flying pickets. But", it adds, cringingly and humbly, "our individual employees are entitled to be treated at least as fairly as their colleagues in Europe".

This promises nothing in the way of restoring trade union rights - not even what has been proposed in the very bland and minimal policy pushed by the right wing through successive Labour

Party Conferences.

The manifesto promises a "Defence Diversification Agency" to convert industry from military to civilian uses. But it refers only to "reductions in defence spending already planned by the Conservative government", and suggests no further reductions. Labour's leaders have ignored Party Conference policy to reduce military spending to the West European average proportion of national income.

The promised extra money for health, education, and

training, is welcome; but the amounts are miniscule in proportion to the whole economy. Compare them with the Tories' planned budget deficit of £28 billion!

The first item in the manifesto's plan for economic recovery is tax breaks for industry. No nationalisation or renationalisation is proposed, not even of water or the National Grid. Labour's leaders have ditched all aspirations to democratic public control over the economy.



Kinnock ducks on union rights

Will the rouble become worthless?

This survey of the economic prospects in the ex-USSR is translated and abridged from an interview with Jacques Sapir in the French Marxist monthly Critique Communiste.

Sapir is a prominent French academic writer on the USSR, author of a number of books analysing the Soviet economy from the viewpoint that it was a peculiar form of state-capitalist economy.

The USSR has got into a situation like Germany in 1923. This sort of crisis, with an accelerated destruction of the currency, applies considerable pressure to all the political, institutional,

"While an economic depression can give birth to collective forms of struggle, a monetary crisis leads unfailingly to the atomisation of society."

and ideological forms.

Since 1989-90 there has been a development moving from an economic crisis, with its own logic, to a monetary crisis, the logic of which is much more rapid and much more destructive. If the currency is not stabilised - doubtless it will not be the rouble, but a new currency, maybe serving as a reserve currency for 8, or maybe 16, republican currencies - we will move towards a collapse of the internal trade of the USSR. Then there will be the possibility of a situation of famine, not because production is insufficient, but because the products will not circulate.

Consequently a sort of total implosion of the country is taking shape. While an economic depression can give birth to collective forms of struggle, a monetary crisis leads unfailingly to the atomisation of society. And then the probability becomes very great of the emergence of charismatic political forms, of a political authority or an individual addressing themselves without mediation to the population in general. As we know, that generally means extremely authoritari-

an forms of government.

Such a situation also means the economy becoming comprador. The main form of wealth would be Western currencies, and so the great divide would be between those who have contact with the West and the others... That, of course, could not fail to provoke reactions, and the rise of a strong anti-Western nationalism... The political implications are clear!

The lack of [economic] competence [leading up to the monetary crisis] arises from a much more fundamental political problem. The [official] political economy of socialism has affirmed for decades that money was a passive instrument. It was not true! But the result was that Soviet economists were not trained to work on monetary questions. Besides, the monetary data had been secret since 1932.

Around 1987-88 the Soviet leaders realised that the currency was a real economic problem, and that the Soviet economy was a monetary economy - obviously not in the same way as the Western economies, but money played a role there which was economically and politically important. At the same time they realised that to deal with the problem they had neither personnel, nor organisms, nor monetary doctrine.

On top of that came the rise of the conflicts between the republics, and more precisely between Russia and the centre, which produced a blockage of the budgetary process. For example, in the first four months of this year, Russia did not pay its taxes, and so the budgetary deficit got worse.

There was no other solution than to print more money since, for lack of a financial market, they could not sell government bonds. The problem degenerated from inflation which had existed for a good ten years into hyperinflation, which took off very quickly. The stock of money in notes was estimated at 130 billion roubles on 1 January 1991. At the present rate, between 60 and 80 billion roubles extra, in total, will have been printed in the year 1991. But at the same time production has decreased.

With some prices remaining fixed, the hyperinflation manifests itself in a drastic worsening of shortages. And then people buy much more than they should buy, because they use their hoards as a means of exchange. The shortages worsen, and the currency is destroyed at extraordinary speed.



The ex-USSR: shortages, hunger, western aid?

Sky TV passes the "cricket test"

GRAFFITI

How very generous of Sky TV to give the BBC free of charge 30 minutes of highlights of cricket's World Cup final between England and Pakistan. Could there be a political motive here?

The bookies, Ladbrokes, were offering shorter odds on the Tories to win the election if England won the cricket. So what better to sit in front of the TV and bask in John Major's reflected glory? England, of course, lost.

A new left-wing journal is out - *Socialist Appeal*, the self-proclaimed "Marxist voice of the labour movement".

You would expect, this being a first issue, a "who we are" article. No, nothing.

But there are a couple of familiar names - Ted Grant, Alan Woods - and more than a couple of familiar arguments: stay in the Labour Party and the working class will automatically rally to you; the Soviet Union is a workers' state; Labour to power on a socialist programme.

Yes, this is the new publication of Ted Grant, the long-time leader recently expelled by *Militant*.

There is one word you will not find in the pages. "Militant". There is not one word about the expulsions, Grant's disagreements with the *Militant* majority, or the *Appeal's* attitude to Nelist, Fields or Sheridan standing against Labour.

Have-a-go heroes are a particularly annoying breed, but AA man Stephen Lawrence takes the biscuit.

Sitting in his car in a service station on the M4 he saw a number of "illegal immigrants" emerging from the back of a lorry. Having rung the police he proceeded to join two lorry drivers in "rounding up" the fleeing stowaways.

Left loses NHS debate", a commentator writes in the *Daily Express*.

Paddy Ashdown rose above the fray. Margaret Thatcher showed what a class act she still is. Labour has lost its momentum.

Nothing unusual for the *Express*, except this is written by Martin Jacques, ex-editor of *Marxism Today* and old Eurocommunist hack.

The *Express* calls him a "political expert".

The myth of the vampire is a folklore metaphor for the oppression of peasants by the



Jim Sillars: tartan socialist and anti-abortion bigot

feudal nobility - a blood-sucking count will terrorise the honest folk of local villages for their vital fluids, ensuring himself perpetual youth.

Modern capitalism has once again proved itself capable of realising the dreams of previous ages - the Institut Merieux of Lyons is reporting a booming trade in human placentas for the cosmetics industry, and is currently handling 19 tons a day.

Much of the placenta comes from the abortion clinics of the ex-USSR, where this is still the main form of contraception. One St Petersburg hospital alone, desperate for hard currency, sold placenta from 34,000 abortions last year.

The going price is £1.28 a kilo. By the time the final product hits the shelves of up-market salons of bourgeois vanity the price has increased a little - £17.35 for a 40 ml bottle of Roc Skin Energising Cream. Eternal youth is not guaranteed.

A recent study into the effects of raising minimum wage standards in fast-food restaurants in the US came up with surprising results.

A study into the results of an increase in the minimum wage from \$3.80 an hour to \$4.25 found that, contrary to the traditional theory, the restaurants with the largest pay increases also increased the number of people being employed.

Meanwhile, Kinnock has started backsliding on Labour's minimum wage promise in Britain. The £3.40 per hour minimum wage was calculated as half the average hourly rate of pay. New figures show the average hourly rate of pay has increased to £7.20. The minimum wage - £3.40.

There have always been sections on the left that have called for an SNP vote in Scotland. At a recent Socialist Movement conference some members of *Socialist Outlook* unfurled the Scots nationalist banner - now it seems that some members of the SWP in Scotland want to call for an SNP vote.

Everyone concerned should read these words spoken last week by SNP leader Jim Sillars at a conference of the anti-choice group, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child: "If the woman is prepared to exercise some responsibility towards that (unborn) child, then I think that society has to exercise that responsibility by setting out a legal framework of law that gives the child in the womb rights."

Now if that was a Labour MP you could put pressure on them through their constituency party and the Unions. But if SNP MPs are being considered "our" MPs what do we do? Appeal to the spirit of Bannockburn and pray to St Andrew?

GRAFFITI

Sex on screen

Cut to swirling waves!

WOMEN'S EYE



By Belinda Weaver

Will I sound like Mary Whitehouse if I say there's too much sex in movies? If so, too bad.

For me, there is too much of it; and there's ever more of it, as directors compete to get more risqué stuff past the censor.

I'm not against sex, just the ever-increasing, ever-longer and more revealing sex scenes we get in movies. They make me squirm, not because I'm a puritan, but because they expose women, the thrust women's nakedness in our faces. They make me feel like a voyeur.

Movie sex always exposes



Julia Roberts in *Sleeping with the Enemy*

more of women's bodies than of men's. We see women's bodies whole; we never see men like that. Penises appear rarely, erect penises never.

In *Sea of Love*, Ellen Barkin was nude, Al Pacino dressed. Over and over again, that's how it is. Women's bodies are displayed and exploited to sell movies.

The scenes are almost always shot from a male point of view too. They aim to turn men on. Often the manner of the seduction

reinforces male dominance, with men subjugating women, flinging them down and tearing off their clothes, grabbing them, overpowering them. Scenes where women seduce men are very rare, which is why *Something Wild* where Melanie Griffith ties up Jeff Daniels seemed so much more revolutionary than it was.

Filmmakers are lazy. They use sex when they can't think what else to serve up to audiences. Car chases, shoot

outs and sex are the staple ingredients of most films. It's dull.

On an aesthetic level, the really smoochy, open-mouthed, saliva kisses make me cringe. I can't help thinking: "What if the actress really hates this guy? What if his breath is bad?" I never lose myself in the stuff, even if the guy is really hunky. I know it's a put on, that it's only acting.

Of course, actresses consent to the nude stuff. No-one's forcing them to strip, and they get paid a fortune for doing it. But you can't help noticing that the minute a woman becomes a star, the minute she gets power, out go the nude scenes. She covers up. The same even happens with men more famous for their bodies than their acting skills. Arnold Schwarzenegger doesn't flash his pecs as much as he used to. Nobody wants to be a piece of meat.

I guess sex is private, and should be left private. I preferred those films where the hero and heroine kiss, and then the camera cuts to swirling waves. Corny, but it doesn't exploit anyone.

If people want to watch sex, they're already well catered for. There's a whole range of movies out there for people who want to watch sex. It's called porn.

Where cancer kills one in nine

By Greg Dropkin

Fresh controversy has erupted around the notorious Rössing Uranium mine, a key export industry in newly independent Namibia, after *The Namibian* newspaper published a summary of a new book containing detailed evidence of risks to workers and the environment.

Rössing's Manager of Corporate Affairs, Clive Algar, condemned the book as "a collection of distortions and half-truths cunningly woven together into a plausible text", while Cleophas Mutjavikua, Acting General Secretary of the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia, said, "from our experience we know that it is true."

Past Exposure was launched in London on 5 March with a press conference addressed by Tony Benn, who signed the original contracts in 1968 which led to British purchases from Rössing, controlled by the UK transnational RTZ. The book analyses a dossier of internal company documents dating back to 1982, which slipped out of the mine during the South African military colonial era. The confidential documents are full of data on radiation, dust, and water pollution as well as medical statistics.

The book stresses that early radiation exposure at Rössing presents a continuing cancer risk for workers despite more recent

improvements. The problem is most acute in the Final Product Recovery area, where yellowcake is roasted to produce uranium oxide for export.

Past Exposure proves that while the mine claimed to adhere to the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) standards, their uranium dust standard was six times weaker than the 1979 ICRP limit and 36 times weaker than the limit implied by the US National Academy of Sciences 1990 cancer risk estimates. Rössing were not correctly calculating the Whole Body Dose because they failed to measure the dose from inhaling uranium dust in the early years.

Past Exposure estimates the lifetime risk of death from radiation-induced cancer as ranging from 1 in 25 to 1 in 9 for Final Product Recovery workers. As to the environment, hundreds of millions of gallons of highly polluted liquid waste seeped out of the Tailings Dam at Rössing before the company noticed it in 1980.

The morning after the launch, *The Namibian* ran their story having handed Rössing the book two days earlier. Soon Mr Algar was in print denouncing *Past Exposures* whilst admitting he hadn't actually read it though he was familiar with the publishers, the Namibia Support Committee and Partizans. The NSC is unpopular because of the 1988 uranium blockade by Liverpool portworkers, and Partizans regularly disrupts the London shareholders' AGM of parent company RTZ.

Rössing were looking at

"all the options open to them", and *The Namibian* was attacked for going to print without a company response. Under threat of legal action, the newspaper then published an 1800 word company "rebuttal" of their original story.

Namibia achieved political independence on 21 March 1990, but most workers' hopes for improvements in wages, conditions, housing, etc. have not been met. At

"Namibia achieved political independence on 21 March 1990, but most workers' hopes for improvements in wages, conditions, housing, etc. have not been met. At Rössing 800 redundancies (one third of the workforce) were declared last September."

Rössing, 800 redundancies (one third of the workforce) were declared last September with the company blaming the world recession, the glut as Soviet and East European supplies entered the uranium market, and the aftermath of sanctions. Many other Namibian mines have either closed, cut back, or

threatened to do so over the last year.

In 1990 the Mineworkers' Union of Namibia (MUN) adopted a strong resolution on health and safety at their national congress. It resolved to fight for the right to negotiate and conclude health and safety agreements providing for union and independent audits, regular inspections, elected safety stewards, training, the right to stop work under dangerous conditions, an independent panel of doctors, the repeal of all existing colonial laws on Health and Safety, etc.

With Rössing's policy of benevolent paternalism, the company has cleaned up the mine since the early 1980s, but there is no health and safety agreement. Instead, the company is willing to "discuss and clarify" such issues with the union branch, which is recognised for wage bargaining.

An Environmental Health and Safety Agreement drawing on the achievements of Canadian miners at Rio Algom, another RTZ uranium mine, is the immediate industrial priority proposed in *Past Exposure*.

Those who oppose the nuclear industry and still believe that the working class is the power for real change - in Southern Africa as in Britain - might like to blow their Budget winnings on a copy of *Past Exposure*.

Past Exposure, by Greg Dropkin and David Clark, is available at £6.95 in bookshops or £6.95 plus £1.95 postage (UK and Europe) from the Namibian Support Committee, 37-39 Great Guildford St, London SE1 0ES.

Taking socialists for a ride

"The biggest mobilisation on our rights and the constitution since the suffragettes," is how Charter 88 bills its countrywide meetings with the General Election candidates on 2 April. Or are they an elaborate diversion? Gerry Bates reviews the issues.

Charter 88 is a call for a new, more democratic 'constitutional settlement' in Britain. The name is intended to associate it with the anti-Stalinist Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, and with the People's Charter proclaimed by the British working class in 1838; but Charter 88's signatories, when it appeared on 29 November 1988, were drawn more from the Establishment than from the people.

It was a broad range of the Establishment, though: from leaders of the Democrats (Roy Jenkins, Des Wilson,) through a wide range of showbiz people, writers, and academics, to figures of the literary Marxist left (Perry

"Either Charter 88 is a stalking horse for a Labour/SLD pact, or it is simply an overblown 'Disgusted of Hampstead' letter to the Establishment press."

Anderson, Robin Blackburn, Darcus Howe, Ralph Miliband, Sheila Rowbotham, A. Sivanandan) and two right wing trade union leaders (Gavin Laird of the AEU and John Ellis of the CPSA).

The call for a campaign to defend, extend and safeguard civil liberties is timely. But Charter '88 is the wrong platform for such a campaign, with the wrong people and the wrong methods.

The labour movement should launch a campaign for civil liberties; should have launched one long ago.

Nothing can be done hand-in-hand with the bigwigs of Liberalism. During the 1984-85 miners' strike, the Liberal-SDP Alliance criticised the Tories for not repressing the miners enough, for not using the law against them sufficiently! David Owen set the pace, but the future 'Liberal Democrats' did not dissent.

No wonder, then, that Charter '88 says nothing about workers' rights to organise, to strike and to picket. Its version of civil liberties is one divorced and abstracted from the class struggle. Hugo Young summed it up quite aptly in the *Guardian*: "The Charter 88 movement, founded to push for the Liberal Democrats' version of constitutional reform, is the stronger for having gathered significant back-

ing among Labour activists".

It is very much "the Liberal Democrats' version". It omits not only trade union rights, but also repression in Ireland, the increasing aggressiveness of the police, the poll tax, and much else. On most issues it does cover, Charter 88 is vague.

On one point, and one point only, Charter 88 is suddenly precise: "Create a fair electoral system of proportional representation".

Yes, proportional representation would be fairer than the first-past-the-post system. But when this one element of democratic reform appears in sharp relief, with all else shrouded in fog or completely off the scene, the socialist signatories of Charter 88 are being taken for a ride by the Liberal Democrats.

Charter 88 was initiated by the magazine *New Statesman and Society*. Its editor, Stuart Weir, was sacked as editor of the Labour Party journal *New Socialist* for advocating a Labour/Alliance pact. Charter 88 cannot but be a new attempt to float the same project.

Weir's editorial announced the Charter like this: "It will initiate, we hope, a new and historic reforming alliance of citizens of the libertarian left and the democratic centre in Britain, outside, between and within the political parties..."

Very high-flown; but not very different from the way that the disastrous "Popular Fronts against Fascism" were explained in the 1930s.

Either Charter 88 is a stalking horse for a Labour/SLD pact, or it is simply an overblown "Disgusted of Hampstead" letter to the Establishment press.



Trendy left: designer Katherine Hamnett backs the "Charter 88" message

Proportional representation? Yes, but!

Socialists should support Proportional Representation, but oppose the current campaigns to define PR as the big issue of the General Election.

Socialists must be consistent democrats. Without democracy, "socialism" can only be a lying label for one or another form of dictatorship by a new ruling-class elite. But socialists are not religious worshippers of constitutional forms. It would be false and stupid to let the pursuit of one small improvement of Britain's parliamentary democracy — a democracy greatly warped and limited by the overwhelming wealth and power of the bosses in industry, finance and the media — override the struggle for all-round democracy in society and industry.

Proportional representation is normally a far more sensitive measure of registering electors' opinion than the system we now have in Britain. It allows each vote to have roughly the same weight, while the first-past-the-post system gives many votes no weight at all. In a word, PR is more democratic.

On the level of principle, socialists cannot be opposed to improving and extending bourgeois democracy, however small the extension may be. Therefore, on principle we must declare ourselves for proportional

representation.

The arguments against this are weighty but short-term and narrowly empirical. Yes, proportional representation is being argued for by Labour's right wing. Yes, it is used by those who think it will ensure that there will never again be a majority Labour government. Yes, it is now linked to a campaign by many on the Labour right, and some on the left, too, who should know better, for a Lib-Lab government.

But to come out in principle against a bettering of the electoral system is not the best way to fight the right wing and the coalitionists. It is more likely to discredit the left.

In any case, how can PR be argued against outside the quite narrow circles of the left itself?

We are against bettering democracy because we think it will be bad for our party? Isn't that just another way of saying what the faint-hearts and coalitionists say: that Labour can't win? The left version is that we can win — but only with the rigged electoral system that the ruling class set up long ago...Yes, we can win! Yes, we can get an overall majority! We can win with socialist politics and a crusading labour movement.

That's what we say now to Kinnock and the other faint-hearts and trimmers. Or should we amend it to say: Yes, we can win — provided the ruling class doesn't marginally extend democracy? The idea is absurd. Yet

that is what we would have to say in honesty, and if we don't say that all we are left with is mumbblings and private intra-Labour arguments about which system is most advantageous to us — arguments we could not possibly use generally.

Socialists cannot in principle oppose PR; but there is nothing that compels us to make a religion of it — nothing that compels us to support the campaign for this small improvement in a grossly deficient system and say to hell with the consequences.

PR is now the cry of the coalitionists in the labour movement. The coalitionists must be opposed and defeated. They must be told: yes, PR is good, but there are more pressing things before the labour movement.

They must be told that their campaign for PR not only detracts from the main question of fighting for a working class alternative to Thatcherism, but gives immediate advantages to the ruling class and its parties. That — rather than untenable opposition to PR as such — is the way to answer the coalitionists.

On that basis the left should say to those who want to distract us now with a campaign for a little bit of democratic tinkering — no, not now, not this campaign. Right now, the labour movement must fight to get rid of the Tories and to put in a government based on the working class.

Vote Labour in every constituency!

Four arguments that do not hold up

Four arguments are used by socialists to justify supporting Charter 88.

• Democratic rights are important, so it is worth having a broad alliance for democratic rights even if it is silent on social issues.

But Charter 88 is a very selective version of democratic rights, and a very selective sort of alliance (Establishment-oriented, with no democratic or accountable organisation). Democratic rights are important, but they do not belong to a world separate from social issues. We cannot organise seriously for democratic rights in alliance with the fanatical opponents of trade unionism!

• PR is vital for the left, because it will allow us to elect MPs to the left of Labour.

It is "parliamentary cretinism" to give so much priority to getting a couple of MPs elected for a left-of-Labour party which anyway does not even exist yet. Such a project is compelling only for those socialists willing to face the rigours neither of fighting within the Labour Party nor of activity in an extra-parliamentary left organisation like the SWP, *Militant*, or the Alliance for Workers' Liberty; they hope that PR will somehow pull a left-wing parliamentary party into existence (with high positions for them), without them having to do too much work.

• "Citizens' movements" like Charter 88 are a new form of politics, more radical than discredited old party politics.

US politics has very weak political parties, but lots of citizens' movements, coalitions, alliances and pressure groups. The result: politics is an even more sordid business of horse-trading, corruption, and manipulation than in Western Europe, where parties are stronger. The working class cannot organise to change society through a patchwork of citizens' alliances, let alone elitist, Establishment-oriented ones like Charter 88, but only through trade unions and political parties. If the parties are bad, change them.

• Charter 88's "professional and hard-headed", "carefully-brokered" approach (as Michael Rustin puts it: *New Left Review* 191) has brought it a lot of money — from various foundations, and from the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Observer*, the *Economist*, *Time Out* magazine and the *Body Shop* chain, which have sponsored its initiatives.

No doubt "radical" politics with millionaire funding is easier than radical politics with the sort of continual penny-grubbing which *Socialist Organiser* and similar newspapers have to pursue. But the millionaires are not fools. They know that constructing a non-Labour alternative to Thatcherite strongarm politics benefits them, not socialism.



The lie machine in action

By Jim Denham and Matt Cooper

The war of Jennifer's ear which dominated the press last week, was a textbook example of the Tory lie machine in action, a deliberate and co-ordinated exercise in obfuscation.

What were the facts? The father of five-year old Jennifer Bennett had written to shadow Health Secretary Robin Cook, describing how his daughter had had to wait nearly a year for a simple ear operation. The consultant had written to the father, blaming lack of funds for the delay.

The Labour Party asked the father's permission to base an election broadcast on his daughter's case and he agreed on the understanding that she wouldn't be named; the Labour Party honoured their agreement with the father and the film took the form of 'faction'; an established TV technique using actors and a drama format to tell a real-life story.

The broadcast on 24 March, 'A Tale of Two Tiers', was so "inaccurate", "fanciful", "misleading" and generally unbelievable that within hours Tory Central Office and the Tory press were able to

Bonkers and the brute

The Tory tabloids have been full of complaints that Labour's campaign is too "stage-managed" and that Neil Kinnock is constantly surrounded by a praetorian guard of press aides and minders.

But who can honestly blame him? A number of journalists from the more rabidly anti-Labour papers have been put on the campaign trail with the specific task of harassing and baiting Kinnock into losing his temper and throwing a wobbly.

Two of the nastiest Kinnock-baiters are Peter "Bonkers" Hitchens and Bruce "The Brute"

THURSDAY APRIL 9

TORIES PLEDGE ACTION TO PROTECT OUR FRONTIERS

We'll stop the phoney migrants, says Baker

By JOHN DEANS, Political Correspondent

URGENT action to stop bogus refugees flooding into Britain was pledged by Home Secretary Kenneth Baker (left) today.

Getting tough: Mr Baker (left) pledges firm action to halt the flow of bogus refugees. But he and Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd say Labour is soft on immigration — as

We must plug this immigration

West from the poorer countries of Asia, Eastern Europe and the Third World would be one of the great political issues of the 1990s.

"We cannot provide a home for all these people who come here simply because they want to live in a richer country," the Home Secretary warned.

"We cannot accept people who are economic

The Tories are playing the racist card, too. Their Asylum Bill aimed to make Britain, already one of the most illiberal

countries in Western Europe for refugees, even more hostile to those fleeing misery in the Third World.

identify the little girl whose story formed the basis of the film!

Ironically, it was the Labour Party's very scrupulousness that provided the Tories with their opportunity to counter-attack: a researcher from the team who were making the film for Labour rang the Bennett's home to ask Mr Bennett if he would read out extracts from his letter for the sound-track. The call was answered by Mrs Bennett, a life-long Conservative, who immediately called her father, Peter Lee-Roberts, three-times Tory Mayor of Faversham.

Mr Lee-Roberts then sent Conservative Central Office a fax warning them of the forthcoming Labour film. Lee-Roberts and Central Office insist that the fax didn't name Jennifer, but it clearly wouldn't have taken Inspector Morse to work out the family relationships and come up with Jennifer's identity.

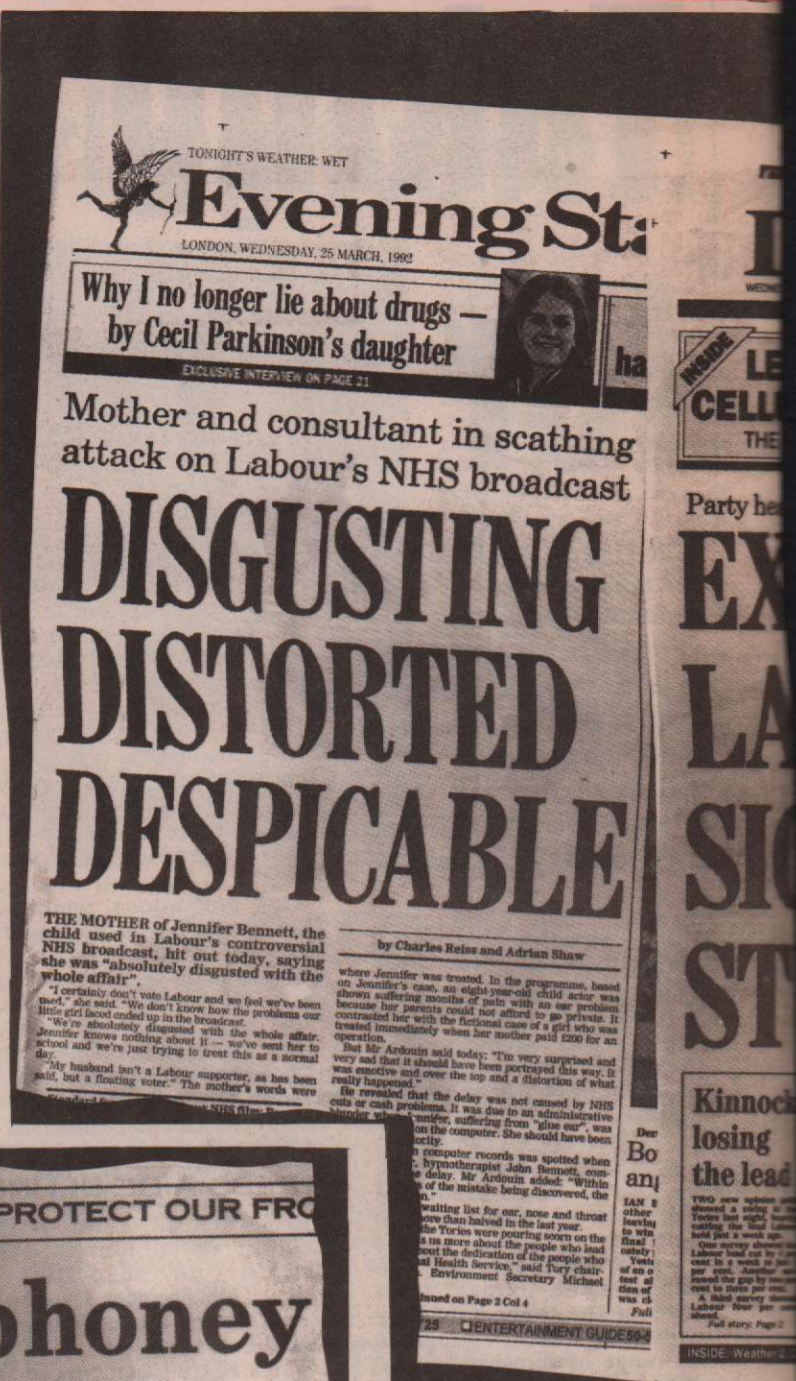
By the time the broadcast went out on Tuesday evening, at least two newspapers, the *Independent* and the *Daily Express*, had been able to establish Jennifer's identity, and both published her name the

next day. The publication of the girl's name gave the Tories and their friends in the press their chance to bury the central issue raised by the broadcast (why had the girl had to wait eleven months for a simple operation?) beneath a hysterical outcry about Labour's alleged 'callousness' and 'cynicism' and an orchestrated 'mole-hunt' for the source of the information about the girl's name.

The Tory press attempted to blame Julie Hall, Kinnock's Press Secretary, but by the end of the week it was clear that Jennifer's identity had been leaked not by Labour, but by Tory Central Office!

It was the Tories who had put the *Daily Express* in contact with Jennifer's consultant, Dr Alan Ardouin (who also just happens to be a member of the Canterbury Conservative dining club...). The full extent of the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the Tories and their tabloid hack-pack was at last coming out, but by now the story had already dropped off the front pages.

In Monday's *Guardian*, Jennifer's father gave his verdict on the whole business: "Do I regret writing to Robin Cook? No. I am pleased someone at Walworth Road picked up the message. Jennifer's suffering was real. Thousands of other children continue to wait and wait. Should an election broadcast portray children in pain? Yes, all the while parents are obliged to writing their hands in despair while their children go deaf?."



The truth be

All the following are headlines used in the Tory tabloids last week.

"Teachers, doctors, and middle managers will lose £1,579 a year". (*Express*, Wednesday 24 March)

The figure is for a single person earning £40,000 a year, whom the *Express* describes as a "modest" or "medium" earner. No teacher earns this amount, and only a tiny minority of head teachers. The case for doctors and middle managers is almost as unconvincing. If by "medium" earner, the *Express* means "average", the figure is around £14,000. Only 20% are above £27,000. Only a tiny proportion earn above £40,000.

"Neil Pay Clanger — he may blow tax rise on wage hikes" (*Sun*, Monday 30 March)

To read the *Sun* you would imagine that Kinnock had promised the world to public sector workers. In reality his only commitment was to increase public sector pay in line with pay in the private sector. John Major has made the same promise.

"Tories' five point poll lead" (*Express*, Thursday 25 March)

SLIE KENTON'S
LITE REVOLUTION
WAY TO A SLEEKER BODY

If Kinnock will

tell lies about a sick little girl, will he ever tell the truth about anything

MUM'S FURY AT TELLY AD

NEIL Kinnock's TV claim that the 1915 fat girl was a LIE, her family said last night.

Mrs Margaret Bennett, 61, said after Labour invited her daughter Jenny to appear on the telly last night, she was waiting for an explanation because of Tory spending cuts.

Mrs Bennett said she was shocked when she saw the TV ad for Kinnock's TV show last night. She said she was told to go to the hospital and see the girl who was said to be a victim of a "disease".

She said: "I don't want my daughter to be used as a prop for a TV show. I don't want her to be used as a prop for a TV show. I don't want her to be used as a prop for a TV show."

PROPOSED: LABOUR'S CK NHS CUTS

LABOUR'S TV political broadcast last night depicting the plight of a sick little girl has been exposed as a fraud.

The hospital consultant involved in the real-life case of Jennifer Bennett said afterwards: "It is a total distortion of the facts."

They check out on it as yet another Labour stunt using false claims to score votes over the NHS.

The Health Department has a dossier of the phoney stories.

Millions of viewers saw last night's broadcast. It was a classic Labour tactic of using a sick child to attract votes.

On a smart private school last night, Mrs Bennett was seen with her daughter Jenny. She was wearing a blue dress and had a white cardigan.

Behind the headlines

Everyone knows that if you take enough polls some of them will be wildly wrong. The *Express* just got lucky, with a sample with a few too many Tory voters. Their response — print the result in high letters on their front page.

Labour lead starts to fade in see-saw polls

Mail, Thursday 25 March

Again, it's in the nature of polls that they go up and down. That doesn't mean that people are changing their minds. There was evidence that Labour were on the decline.

Earlier editions of the paper were quickly replaced to ditch a front page allegation that Labour peer Lord Hollick took personal payment from his company MAI in gold bullion to avoid paying National Insurance. If the *Mail* changes its lead story after print, you can be pretty sure they knew they were lying. They continued to run a story suggesting that some senior MAI executives were paid in gold. You wonder how many Tories might be caught out if anyone cared to look. Lord Hollick is suing the *Mail* on Sunday for libel.

"Gas bills frozen and electricity prices cut"

(*Evening Standard*, Thursday 25 March)

Half lie, half distortion. Only people living in the London area will have their bills cut by 0.5%, and then only if they are paying by direct debit. Everyone else in London will face an increase, on top of last April's 10% price hike. All other electricity boards are increasing their prices.

True, gas prices are to be pegged at last year's levels. But what the article fails to mention is last year British Gas promised that this year's price rises would be 5% below the level of inflation. Inflation is at 4.1%, so surely that means a 0.9% cut? Maybe we know where British Gas's chair got his £1,252 a week pay increase, which the *Standard* fails to mention.



Dog days for the Tories...

I don't want one person to vote Labour — Mum, Margaret Bennett". (*Star*, Thursday 25 March).

A supposed quote from Jennifer Bennett's mother used as a headline. Not surprising, maybe, being that she is apparently a long Conservative voter. But if you read the article you will want to know she said something completely different. "I don't want one person to vote Labour as a result of my child being used as a political football."

Kinnock's adviser pays up staff in bullion to avoid tax" (*Mail on Sunday*, 29 March)

Knocked out by the Kinnock knock-on effect



A day of the tabloids

Take an average day in the life of a tabloid election campaign. Wednesday 25 March, was not exceptional.

THE SUN leads page 2 with "Kinnock 'trying to lie his way to power.'" The whole article is little more than a reproduction of a quote from Norman Tebbit. It is backed with an article linking racist Tory comic Jim Davidson to black Tory candidate John Taylor, each saying how much they admire each other.

Strangest of all was an article stating "John Smith was dubbed 'pooper scooper' last night after he tried to clear the mortgage row started by Neil Kinnock". All the dubbing was, of course, done by *Sun* hacks, not least because there was no "mortgage row".

The piece was a follow-up to the Tuesday *Sun* headline, "Home Groan — You'll queue for a mortgage under me, says Kinnock", the *Sun* avoiding libel by not using quotation marks.

The story? Kinnock saying that credit controls were unlikely, but if they were necessary then people would prefer waiting an extra month or two for a mortgage to paying 15% interest on it. John Smith said he thought credit control unlikely.

A row? This was all doubly warped because it happened at the same time as a very real attack by Thatcher on the borrowing requirement in Lamont's Budget.

The two-page feature "Kinnock in rift with his best man" was another attempt to make a scandal out of nothing.

There was a small piece on the Jennifer broadcast, and in the interests of balance there was a twelve line piece stating without comment that Labour are committed to free dental checks.

THE EXPRESS was first to break the Jennifer story, complete with the consultant's claim that it was an administrative error rather than NHS under-funding.

There was half a page on Neil Kinnock as "Labour's invisible man", because he missed a press conference, an "exposé" of his aides (it simply stated that they exist — so "honest John" Major has none?), and a rehash of a David Mellor speech.

The only article not an attack on Labour in the main body of the *Express*'s election coverage was a picture of John Major shaking hands with a King Charles Spaniel, with the headline "Major is top dog now".

Elsewhere the paper carries a glowing profile of Thatcher and an article detailing what will happen as mortgage rates rise under Labour, how much your shares will fall under Labour, and how Labour will tax "medium earners" on £40,000 a year.

THE DAILY STAR contains the mortgage material again, while the *DAILY MAIL* has its own invisible politician story — this time Gerald Kaufman who, unlike Kinnock, is being kept out of the media's gaze. No mention of the fact that we haven't seen John Gummer a lot, we are unlikely to see William Waldegrave again, and Thatcher has been shunted off Stateside.

Elsewhere the paper alerted readers to the effects of a 3% rise in National Insurance contributions on the spurious grounds that John Smith had said "I have no proposals to increase them. I don't think it's a possibility..."

This was followed up by an "Action plan to beat Labour" — advice to the rich on how to beat taxes.

Finally in its centre-page spread the *Mail* excelled itself with "Knocked out by Kinnock's knock-on effect". Taxes on the rich will mean they will no longer be able to afford gardeners, maids and nannies! So tug your forelock and do as your master says!

With the exception of one twelve line article in the *Sun*, every article was a clearly pro-Tory statement, often mere repetition of copy from Conservative Central Office (5 cases), petty personal sniping at Labour leaders (4 cases) or groundless scare stories about Labour policy (4 cases).

The only other articles were a hymn of praise to Thatcher and John Major shaking hands with a dog.

Lenin: the will

This tribute to Lenin was written in 1923 – when Lenin was ill, incapacitated by strokes – by Karl Radek, a Polish revolutionary active in the Bolshevik Party and at the time one of the leaders of the Trotskyist left opposition.

It is timely now, on the 122nd anniversary of Lenin's birth in April 1870; it replies powerfully to the picture of Lenin fashionable today, as a soulless ideologue, casually sacrificing the lives and happiness of real people to abstract utopias or ruthless power-politics.

"When Lenin has to decide on an important question, he does not think of abstract historical categories... he thinks of the effect of the measure on the peasant so-and-so and on the worker such-and-such..."

Like everything else in nature, Lenin was born, has developed, has grown. When Vladimir Ilyich once observed me glancing through a collection of his articles written in the year 1903, which had just been published, a sly smile crossed his face, and he remarked with a laugh: "It is very interesting to read what stupid fellows we were!"

But I do not here intend to compare the shape of Lenin's skull at the age of 10, 20 or 30, with the skull of that man who presided over the sessions of the Central Committee of the party or the Council of People's Commissars.

Here it is not a question of Lenin as leader, but as a living human being.

PB Axelrod, one of the fathers of Menshevism, who hates Lenin from the bottom of his soul, related, in one of the tirades with which he sought to convince me of the harmfulness of Bolshevism in general and of Lenin in particular, how Lenin went abroad for the first time, and how he went walking and bathing with him. "I felt at that time", said Axelrod, "that here was a man who would become the leader of the Russian Revolution. Not only was he an educated Marxist – there were many of these – but he knew what he wanted to do and how it was to be done. There was something of the smell of Russian earth about him."

Pavel Borisovich Axelrod is a bad politician; he does not smell



Lenin

of the earth. He is one who reasons at home in his own study, and the whole tragedy of his life consists of the fact that at a time when there was no labour movement in Russia, he thought out the lines upon which such a labour movement should develop, and when it developed on different lines he was frightfully offended, and today he continues to roar with rage at the disobedient child.

But people often observe in others that which is lacking in themselves, and Axelrod's words with regard to Lenin grasp with unsurpassable acuteness precisely those characteristics which make Lenin a leader.

It is impossible to be a leader of the working class without knowing the whole history of the class. The leaders of the labour movement must know the history of the labour movement – without this knowledge there can be no leader, just as nowadays there can be no great general who could be victorious with the least expenditure of force unless he knew the history of strategy.

The history of strategy is not a collection of recipes as to how to win a war, for a situation once described never repeats itself. But the mind of the general becomes practised in strategy by its express study; this study renders him elastic in war, permits him to observe the dangers and possibilities which the empirically trained general cannot see.

The history of the labour movement does not tell us what to do but it makes it possible to compare our position with situations which have already been experienced by our class, so that in various decisive moments we are enabled to see our path clearly, and to recognise approaching danger.

But we cannot get to know the history of the labour movement properly without being thoroughly acquainted with the history of capitalism, with its mechanism in all its economic and political phenomena.

Lenin knows the history of capitalism as do but few of Marx's pupils. It is no mere knowledge of the written word – here comrade Riazanov could

give him five points start – but he has thought out Marx's theory as no one else has done.

Let us for instance take the small pamphlet which he wrote at the time of our conflict with the trade union movement – in it he calls Bukharin a syndicalist, an eclectic and a great sinner in numerous other respects. This polemical pamphlet contains a few lines devoted to the differences between dialectics and eclectics, lines which are not cited in any collection of articles on historical materialism, but which say more about it than whole chapters from much longer books.

Lenin has independently grasped and thought out the theory of historical materialism as no one else has been able to do, for the reason that he has studied it with the same object in view by which Marx was actuated when creating the theory.

Lenin entered the movement as the embodiment of the Will to Revolution; and he studied Marxism, the evolution of capitalism, and the evolution of socialism, from the point of view of their revolutionary significance. Plekhanov was a revolutionist too, but he was not possessed by the Will to Revolution, and despite his great importance as a teacher of the Russian Revolution, he could only teach its algebra and not its arithmetic. Herein lies the point of transition from Lenin the theorist to Lenin the politician.

Lenin's way of knowing the Russian actuality is another point in which he differs from all others who have stretched out their hands toward the sceptre of leadership of the Russian proletariat. Not only does he know Russian reality, he sees and feels it as well.

At every turning point in the history of the party, and espe-

"...here was a man who would become the leader of the... revolution. Not only was he an educated Marxist... but he knew what he wanted to do and how it was to be done. There was something of the smell of the Russian earth about him..."

cially at the moment when we seized power and the fate of 150 million people hung on the decisions of the party, I have always been amazed at Lenin's store of what the English call "common sense". It may be remarked that when we are speaking of a human being of whom we are convinced that his like will not recur for a century, it is but a poor compliment to praise his common sense. But it is just in this that his greatness as a politician lies.



Lenin with Trotsky (left) and Kamenev in 1920.

When Lenin has to decide on an important question, he does not think of abstract historical categories, he does not think of ground rents, of surplus values, of absolutism or liberalism. He thinks of Sobakevitch, of Gessen, of Syfor from the Tver Province, of the Putilov worker, of the policeman on the street, and he thinks of the effect of the measure on the muzhik (peasant) Sydor and on the workman Onufria, as bearers of the revolution.

Marx, in the introduction to his *Critique of Political Economy*, states that history only sets itself such tasks as it can fulfill. This means, in other words, that only he who grasps what tasks are historically capable of fulfillment at a given moment, and who does not fight for the desired, but for the possible, can become the instrument of history. Lenin's greatness lies in the fact that he never permits himself to be blinded to a reality when it is in the process of transformation, by any preconceived formula, and that he has the courage to throw yesterday's formula overboard as soon as it disturbs his grasp of this reality.

Lenin's greatness lies in his aiming at goals arising out of realities. In this reality he sees a powerful steed which will carry him to his goal, and he trusts himself to it. But he never abandons himself to his dreams.

This is not all. His genius contains another trait: after he has set himself a certain goal, he

seeks for the means leading to this goal through reality; he is not content with having fixed his aim, he thinks out concretely and completely everything necessary for the attainment of that

"History offers no second example of such a transition from subterranean revolutionist to statesman... And that this leader should be the only one universally recognised as leader, the human touch was required..."

aim. He does not merely work out a plan of campaign, but the whole organisation of the campaign at the same time.

How all this happened to be combined in him, God only knows (Comrade Stefanov and the Commission for combating religion will kindly excuse.) History has her own apparatus for distilling brandy...

For fifteen years we looked on while this man was fighting over every comma in the resolutions, against every "ism" invented

to revolution



mistake has been committed under his leadership, he admitted openly: "We have made a mistake, and therefore we have been defeated here; this mistake must be made good in such and such a manner."

Many have asked him why he speaks so openly of mistakes made. I do not know why Lenin

"A great class, itself needing absolute truth, loves... a leader who is himself a truth-loving human being... who tells the truth about himself. From such a leader the worker can bear any truth, even the hardest."

does it but the results of this course of action may be plainly seen. The workman is much too enlightened to believe in redeeming saviours any longer. When Lenin speaks of his mistakes, he hides nothing, he leads the worker into his own laboratory of thought, he makes it possible for the worker to take part in forming the final decision, and the workers see in him the leader who represents their laboratory, the embodiment of their class struggle.

A great class, itself needing absolute truth, loves with its whole heart a leader who is himself a truth-loving human being, one who tells the truth about himself. From such a leader the worker can bear any truth, even the hardest.

Human beings have faith in themselves only when they conceal nothing, when they know everything about themselves,

even the most unfavourable possibilities, and yet feel that they can say: in spite of everything... Lenin helps the working class to a full knowledge of every decaying and decomposing element of its own existence and yet enables it to say in the end: I am His Majesty the Proletariat, the future ruler and creator of life.

On this day of the 25th anniversary of the party which not only bears responsibility for the destiny of the sixth part of the globe, but which is at the same time the main lever of proletarian victory, the Russian Communists, and every revolutionist among the proletariat of every country, are filled with the thought and the wish that this Moses, who has led the slaves from the land of bondage, may pass with us into the promised land.

Footnotes:

Axelrod, Plekhanov and Menshevism:

Axelrod was one of those who, with George Plekhanov, organised the pioneer group of Russian Marxists in exile in Switzerland in the 1880s. After 1903 the Russian Marxist movement divided into a left wing ("Bolsheviks") and right wing ("Mensheviks"); Axelrod and Plekhanov supported the right wing.

Riazanov:

David Riazanov, the Bolshevik's great expert on the writings of Marx and Engels.

"Our conflict with the trade union movement":

In 1921, when the Russian workers' state was sore-pressed and in economic chaos, at the end of the war against the counter-

revolutionaries and foreign armies, the Bolshevik party debated trade union policy.

Bukharin and Trotsky advocated the "militarisation of labour" to restore industry; Lenin successfully insisted that the trade unions must be able to represent workers' interests independently if necessary against the "workers' state with bureaucratic deformations".

Bukharin:

Nikolai Bukharin, a Bolshevik leader, an ally of Stalin in 1925-8 but later purged because of his opposition to Stalin's forced-march industrialisation and collectivisation.

Syndicalist:

One who sees socialism coming exclusively through trade-union struggle. Bukharin's policy in 1921 implied a merger of the trade unions with the state.

Dialectics and eclectics:

Dialectics is an approach which sees reality as in a process of development through contradictions.

Eclectics is "on the one hand this, on the other hand that". "Historical materialism" is a term sometimes used to describe Marxism.

Debate on nationalities:

Lenin advocated the right of nations to self-determination. Polish Marxists, under the leadership of Rosa Luxemburg, argued that this "right" was utopian nonsense in a world where capitalism was creating bigger and more integrated economic territories.

during the last twenty-five years... For Lenin every such "ism" has always been the embodiment of some real enemy, existing either in or outside classes or in the working class, but in any case in reality. These "isms" were the feelers of reality, and he absorbed the whole of this reality into himself, studied it, thought it out, until the finished miracle appeared, and the underground man proved himself the most earthly man of Russian reality.

History offers no second example of such a transition from subterranean revolutionist to statesman. This combination of the characteristics of a leading theorist, politician and organiser has made Lenin the leader of the Russian Revolution. And that this leader should be the only one universally recognised as leader, the human touch was required, the quality which has made Lenin the beloved hero of the Russian Revolution.

He himself tries to convince us that man requires absolute truth. For many people the truth is deadly, it is deadly even for many classes. If the bourgeoisie were to grasp the truth about itself, and were permeated with this truth, it would be defeated already, for who can go on fighting when the truth of history tells him that he is not only condemned to death, but that his corpse will be thrown into the sewer?

The bourgeoisie is blind and dumb to its fate. But a revolu-

tionary class needs the truth, for truth is the knowledge of reality And it is not possible to dominate this reality without knowing it. We form one part of this reality: the working class, the Communist Party. And it is only if we are able to judge of our power and our weakness that we can judge of the measures to be taken to ensure final victory.

Lenin tells the proletariat the truth, and the truth only, however depressing it may be. When workers hear him speaking, they know that there is not a single glib expression in all his speech. He helps us to inform ourselves on reality.

At one time I was living at Davos with a Bolshevik workman dying of consumption. At that time the right of self-determination of nationalities was being debated, and we Polish communists were opposed to Lenin's views. The comrade of whom I speak, after having read my theses against Lenin, said: "What you have written is perfectly convincing to me, but whenever I have been opposed to Ilyich, it has always turned out afterwards that I was wrong."

This is how the leading party functionaries think, and this is the reason of Lenin's authority in the party; but the workers do not think so. They do not feel bound to Lenin because he has been in the right a thousand times, but because, if he has once been in the wrong, if a

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"The positive bits outweigh the schmaltz"

Taking the censor off pain

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *The Prince of Tides*

The *Prince of Tides* is an old-style, juicy Hollywood entertainment. Suspend belief, go along with it, and you may be surprised to find how much fun it is.

Though it's corny and "uplifting", I didn't feel manipulated: the film is honest in what it's trying to say. And it's saying plenty.

Set in South Carolina and New York, it's the story of Tom Wingo, a football coach and ex-teacher, whose life is falling apart. He's jobless and smoking too much, and his wife and daughters no longer know if he cares for them or not. He's walled off from people, he pushes them away. He hates his mother, and his twin sister, Savannah, a poet, has just tried to commit suicide.

So Tom goes to New York to try to help Susan Lowenstein, Savannah's psychiatrist, find the key to Savannah's self-destructive urges.

From here on, it's part love story (between Lowenstein and Tom), and part detective story, as Susan challenges Tom about his memories, and finally unearths the buried trauma that almost wrecked his family.

That it all ends happily, with Tom restored to his family, Savannah restored to life, and even Lowenstein's troubled relationship with her teenage son, Bernard, sorted out, doesn't spoil things. The film is all about optimism, fresh starts, and "coming to terms". It's about resolution, it's about redemption, but it's mostly about forgiveness.

At the end, Tom says that "no crime within a family is beyond forgiveness", and we see him forgiving people wholesale — his adulterous wife, his violent father, himself — everybody.

If you're not vomiting by now, you'll be glad to know there are drawbacks. Lowenstein is played by Barbra Streisand with Fu Manchu fingernails, and she's pretty bad. It's her film, she directed it, so there

are vanity bits for her strewn all through. She shows off her French (which actually sounds rather stilted), Tom tells her (endlessly) that she's beautiful, and she's the presiding saint everyone is grateful to.

Drawback two is the soundtrack — aural syrup of the most hideous kind.

But for me, the positive bits outweighed the schmaltz.

The film contrasts Tom with his mother, Lila. She's tough. "When I put something behind me, I close the door", she says. And that's her problem. She denies things, she buries them, and she makes her

children bury them too, causing untold damage. The film condemns her denials, and it condemns her reinvention of herself, courtesy of a wealthy second marriage. American movies generally cheer on characters who escape their pasts; they're usually put up as role models. Not in this film.

The film can be taken metaphorically. The trauma that hits the Wingos can easily stand for traumas that come from within (such as incest, or child abuse). Apart from the "secret" trauma, the Wingo children's upbringing was screwed enough to drive them mad. Tom's father was physically

violent; his mother was dishonest and manipulative. Yet the forgiveness message still applies. Tom feels his pain, he faces things, and exorcises them. This frees him to change.

Tom works for us because Nick Nolte makes him work. Nolte's face is weathered, but he's posed as an ideal — a he-man, but sensitive to culture and literature; enough of a kid to enjoy being silly with his daughters, but smart enough to know that teenagers like Bernard need to test themselves, to grow away from mothers and fathers. And he's secure enough to stand up to Lowenstein's creepy, all-art-no-

heart violinist husband.

Streisand has had a lot of stick for *The Prince of Tides*. With her six or seven houses and her megabuck lifestyle, Streisand could be seen as a latter-day Marie Antoinette looking down on people in misery and saying "Let them eat Freud".

But that's not the whole story. In a country like the USA, whose politicians deny reality, who reinvent themselves ever more flatteringly, who censor anger and rage, who only license false images and sickly false sentiments, a film that scorns all that, that condemns it, is good news, whoever makes it.

A school without fear

Television

Martin Thomas reviews *Summerhill at 70*

Within the first few minutes we heard the head teacher saying, "This place is up shit creek".

Channel 4 TV's documentary on Summerhill school (Monday 30th) caught the school at a bad time: the children had just voted to abolish all school rules, as apparently they do every ten years or so.

The reviewers in the liberal press were horrified: "I did not get the impression that anyone learned anything except automatic obscenity, incessant violence, intermittent theft..." (the *Guardian*); "the pupils seem to spend their time swearing, bullying, make bows and arrows, decapitating rabbits, and 'pairing off'..." (the *Independent*). I guess that is a sign of how liberalism has shifted in recent years.

To me it did not look like that at all. I wish my daughter could go to Summerhill.

Summerhill is a school founded by the anarchist writer AS Neill in 1921, where all rules (apart from minimal ones for safety) are decided and enforced democratically by the children, currently aged between 10 and 16, and lessons are voluntary.

Given freedom, the children

express aggression and hatred. Neill never believed that children are angels. "Their community sense — their sense of social responsibility — does not develop until the age of 18 or more."

But, he wrote, "a school that makes active children sit at desks, studying mostly useless subjects, is a bad school. It is a good school only for those who want docile, uncreative children who will fit into a civilisation whose standard of success is money".

A conventional school where children are forced to behave like

"We will never learn to be free as adults unless we learn to be free as children. Even a small experiment in making that possible...is something to cherish."

obedient little workers between lesson bells, and tacitly allowed to behave like brutes outside them, breeds fear, frustration, boredom, alienation and bullying.

What do the liberal journalists of the *Guardian* and the *Independent* think real children are like in conventional schools? What was unusual about Summerhill, from what I saw in the TV programme, was the absence of fear and bullying, and the absence of tension between children and teachers.

One little boy complained of "harassment" — whether rightly or not the programme showed us no

evidence to decide — but we saw the other children trying to sort out the problem, and the boy, a bit later, saddened because his parents were moving back to America and taking him away from Summerhill.

The meetings at which the children decided and enforced their rules compared very favourably for reasonableness and coherence with many adult meetings I have attended.

Of course my daughter will not go to Summerhill, unless we make a socialist revolution within the next ten years or so: it has to charge fees, and so can only take children from well-off families (though in its early years it had mainly "problem" children).

Of course, as Neill himself wrote: "Summerhill is an island...Hating compromise as I do, I have to compromise here, realising that my primary job is not the reformation of society, but the bringing of happiness to some few children."

Of course it would not bring instant utopia if we suddenly transferred the Summerhill regime to the schools in New York where they have armed guards in the playground.

Yet we will never be free as adults unless we learn to be free as children. Even a small experiment in making that possible, however partially and even for a few children, is something to cherish.



Summerhill: the liberal press was horrified

The Tories and democratic rights

Free market, unfree citizens

By Chris Reynolds

Since 1979 the Tories have systematically rolled forward the State, crushing whole areas of civil liberty.

Two legal experts summarise the record:

- unprecedented extension of police powers;
- a far-reaching statute for the interception of communications by the state;
- wide-ranging restrictions on the freedom of assembly and public protest;
- major limitations on press freedom;
- extension of the powers of the security service;
- extraordinary powers to deal with the troubles in the north of Ireland.

(K D Ewing and C A Gearty, *Freedom under Thatcher*, Clarendon Press 1990).

Several new laws have strengthened the police and the state.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 extended the powers of the police to stop and search people and to search premises. It empowered the police to detain people for up to 96 hours without charge.

The Public Order Act 1986 made six days' notice to the police compulsory for all public marches, and widened the powers of the police to impose conditions on marches and protests, for example to decide where they can be held.

It created a new offence of "disorderly behaviour".

The Security Services Act 1989 gave MI5 very wide powers of surveillance; an amendment to outlaw MI5 surveillance of people involved in "lawful advocacy, protest or dissent" was specifically voted down. It also entitled MI5 to obtain warrants to burgle premises from the Home Secretary, without having to consult a judge.

The Official Secrets Act 1989 entrenched, and arguably extended, the major powers of the notorious old Official Secrets Act of 1911.

Mostly, however, these laws only gave official approval to what the police and MI5 were doing already. Meanwhile, the state power has strengthened its grip through a multitude of administrative measures, by the police or by the government, without any formal law-making or Parliamentary debate.

During the miners' strike of 1984-5, police operations were effectively centralised through the Association of Chief Police Officers. The police set up road-blocks, unilaterally banned miners from moving round the country, and imposed almost military rule in some Notts villages.

Margaret Thatcher declared during the strike that if the police needed new pow-



ers, then she would push whatever laws they needed through parliament.

Six new laws since 1980 have successively narrowed the right to strike, to picket, and to organise. Law-making has gone hand in hand with the action of employers, police, and judges to beat

"Crime figures are still increasing fast – and the Tories only answer is more police, more powers for the police and more prisons."

down trade unions in the workplaces and at the factory gates.

But the increased effective power of the police operates in a much wider sphere than just trade union struggles. The police campaign against people wanting

to celebrate the summer solstice at Stonehenge is an example.

In 1985 the police set up road blocks. They said that the legal precedents for this had been set in court cases during the miners' strike. They smashed into coaches in the "Battle of the Beanfield", arresting over 500. The next year, there was a similar operation: 400 adults and 100 children were forced into a disused airfield and evicted. 64 arrests were made, and 129 vehicles impounded.

In 1989, the police put a ban on the whole area within four miles of Stonehenge, and arrested 250 people who tried to break the ban.

Court procedures have been tightened up. The right of defendants to challenge the make-up of juries has been severely restricted, and juries have been more closely vetted by the state.

In 1988, the right to silence of defendants was effectively abolished in Northern Ireland.

The Tory Government prosecuted Sarah Tisdall, Clive Ponting, and then the publishers of *Spycatcher*, on grounds of "national security". It has tried to increase its control over the BBC, and banned radio and television from transmitting Sinn Fein speakers.

Since 1979 police numbers have been increased by 16,000, and government spending on the police by 74% (in real terms). Though numbers in prison have dropped a little in the last few years

– since the Tories got alarmed by a series of prison rebellions – they still stand at 45,000, much higher in relation to population than in most other West European countries.

In January 1983 cops shot Stephen Waldorf as he sat in his car, in London, and nearly killed him: "mistaken identity", they explained. Since then several more people have been killed, or nearly killed, by the police, as they become more trigger-happy.

Crime figures are still increasing fast – and the Tories' only answer is more police, more powers for the police, and more prisons.

In 1981 the Tories introduced the British Nationality Act, designed to stop further immigration by black people to Britain. The Act defined three different types of British citizenship, only one of which allows holders to settle here.

This year they have followed up with the Asylum Bill, telling scare stories about a "flood of foreigners". In fact last year only 45,000 people applied for asylum in Britain. Even before the Bill, Britain was one of the most illiberal countries in Western Europe for refugees. Tamils fleeing the slaughter in Sri Lanka found it easier to get into Germany than Britain, although many of them spoke English and there is an established Tamil community here.

The other area where the Tories have sharply cut into democracy and civil liberty is local government. The Greater London Council and other metropolitan authorities were abolished.

Local councils have been restricted in what they can spend and what taxes they can raise.

They have been forced to "contract out" services and to sell off a large part of their housing stock. The poll tax further tightened central control over the local authorities, drove up to a million people off the electoral register, and set the framework for a national system of monitoring who lives where, with whom, right across the country. It is not at all certain that the "Council Tax", which the Tories plan if re-elected, will ease these threats to civil liberty.

The Tories talk a lot about freedom, but as the legal experts say, what they mean is "the freedom to buy one's council house; to buy shares [and so on]. The traditional freedoms of the person, expression, assembly, and association come a poor second". (Ewing and Gearty, *Freedom under Thatcher*).

Lesbians and gays demand equal laws

Neil Kinnock has promised new legislation to outlaw discrimination against lesbians and gay men in a letter to the homosexual rights group, OutRage.

Last week, both Labour and the Liberal Democrats issued policy statements committing their parties to new laws to protect homosexuals from prejudice in the workplace.

In protest at the failure of existing legislation to tackle homophobic discrimination, the protest group OutRage will picket the Department of Employment on Thursday 2 April at 1pm.

The protesters will be wearing

the uniforms of their professions. Their aim is to highlight the lack of job security for homosexual employees.

The legality of discrimination has been established where lesbians and gay men have challenged their dismissal at industrial tribunals. For example, an Employment Appeal Tribunal ruled in 1980 that the dismissal of John Saunders solely because of his homosexuality was fair and reasonable.

A survey of 200 gay men, published by Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights in 1986, found that 6 per cent had been sacked because of their sexuality. A total of 25 per cent had

experienced difficulties at work arising from being gay, including dismissal, demotion, harassment and denial of promotion.

The following examples illustrate the consequences of the lack of job security for lesbians and gay men:

* In 1991, an application by a gay couple who had applied to manage a pub as a gay bar, was rejected by the brewery chain, Samuel Smith. According to the company: "Gay pubs do not fit in with the image of Samuel Smith's Brewery".

* In 1990, Lord Dervaird was forced to resign his position as a senior Scottish judge following

the mere allegation that he was a homosexual.

* In 1989, an auxiliary nurse, James Greenam, was refused a job with the Homecare nursing agency, after they discovered he was gay.

* In 1988, Lesleave Hotel in Cornwall sacked its head chef, Carol Harris, allegedly on the grounds that her lesbianism would be bad for business.

* In 1987, Andrew Hodges lost his appeal against his sacking from GCHQ after his employers claimed that his openness about his homosexuality would make him a security risk.

By Jill Mountford

Left Unity supporter Alice Sharp was elected Women's Officer of the National Union of Students (NUS) at the NUS National Women's Conference in Blackpool (30 March-1 April).

Alice's victory marks the third consecutive year that Left Unity has won the position.

Despite a campaign of lies and slanders by a coalition of Kinnockites, Liberals and "Independents", Alice won by 85 votes to 41 for the next candidate.

An unprincipled alliance pulled every dirty trick possible to defeat the main enemy as they saw it - *Socialist Organiser*.

The Labour Students (NOLS) leadership argued that factions [sic] shouldn't organise in the Women's Campaign. Instead, all women should unite. On what policies or campaigns wasn't made clear, although their candidate (posing as an independent) argued that rapists should be castrated and that racism and fascism weren't the business of the women's campaign!

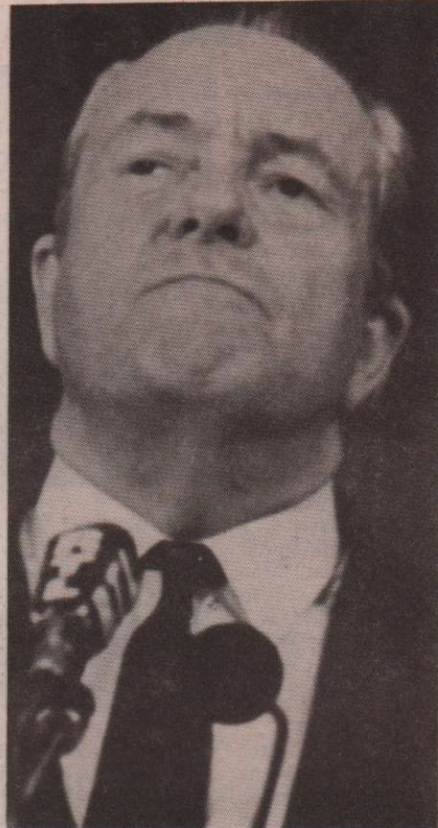
This temporary alliance crumbled after Left Unity women argued that it is a woman's politics that are decisive, not whether or not they are "independent". Left Unity supporters won left independent women over by pointing out that they had more in common with the organised left than with right wingers who make "independence" a virtual principle.

Left Unity supporters Heidi Emery, Tunde Osho and Ruth Woodhead were elected to NUS Women's Committee.

Left Unity is standing a full slate of candidates for the NUS National Executive Committee at its forthcoming National Conference (13-16 April). Janine Booth, who has been Women's Officer for the last two years is standing for President.

The major debates will be on Southern Africa, Racism and Fascism, Employment and Training and Abortion Rights. Left Unity will be arguing that NUS organises a mass lobby of parliament in the summer term demanding a new government reinstates benefits for students over the summer vacation.

Le Pen must be stopped!



A Hitler for the 'nineties

By Chris Reynolds

How is the French left facing up to the rise of the fascist National Front?

The NF's 14% in the regional elections on 22 March repeats its 14% score in the 1988 Presidential election. Since its first breakthrough, in the Euro-elections of June 1984, the NF has never dropped seriously below 10 or 11 per cent.

Electurally the NF is now only a few percentage points behind France's biggest parties, the ruling Socialists and the mainstream right-wing UDF and RPR. Press reports on the regional elections say that the NF has a more active and efficient party organisation than any of them: it has taken over from the demoralised Communist Party as France's activist opposition party.

NF street violence against left-wingers and immigrants is still sporadic and unorganised; but the party is visibly building up towards the point where it will be able to slip off its respectable mask and put its fascist and racist ideas more directly into action.

100,000 people joined an anti-racist demonstration in Paris on 25 January, thanks to unprecedented unity between dozens of organisations. It has been followed up by activity by local anti-racist committees against the NF throughout the regional elections, and another big national demonstration is planned for May 1st.

But the NF's rise owes a lot to the failures of the mainstream French left. The Socialist Party has been governing, or sharing in government, since 1981, and its record of cuts, unemployment, and broken promises has driven many people to seek radical right-wing alternatives.

It has agitated about the fascist



100,000 take to the streets in Paris against Le Pen

danger, in order to frighten people into voting Socialist. When such agitation is coupled with right-wing social policies, it must be in large part counter-productive, telling desperate and miserable people that the choice is between liberal and patient acceptance of the status quo and racist opposition.

Meanwhile the Socialist Party has closed France to Third World immigration, refused to give immigrants the vote and attempted to speed up the deportation of illegal immigrants.

The Communist Party supported the joint left election platform of 1981, promising an end to immigration. In the early 1980s, the CP mayor of a Paris suburb drove a bulldozer into an immigrant workers' hostel in his area, as a protest, so he said, against "too many" immigrants being placed in the area and too few in the richer right-wing districts.

Besides all that, the CP and the SP have been chronically unwilling to work together against the fascist threat. The major campaign to date has been SOS-Racisme, organised in the late '80s but limited by its closeness to the Socialist Party and damaged by a split over the Gulf War in 1991 (when its best-known leader, Harlem Desir, opposed the war, but other leaders backed it).

At the opposite pole to the Socialist Party, France's most effective far-left organisation, Lutte Ouvriere, has generally shunned all specifically anti-NF activity. The NF is not fully fascist, they say, and anyway the only way it will be defeated is through a revival of working-class confidence. Socialists should therefore concentrate on bread-and-butter agitation to raise that confidence.

In fact, surely, socialists can best help rebuild working-class confidence by energetic activity on all fronts, including special

anti-racist protests.

Another of the biggest French far-left groups, the PCI/PT suffers from the sectarian self-absorption typical of Militant or the old WRP in Britain. It has largely ignored the National Front: its newspaper did not even mention the 100,000 strong anti-racist demonstration on 25 January.

Despite all these problems, resistance is growing. Recent mobilisations over school conditions and against the Gulf War have shown great potential for radicalisation among school-age French youth. An anti-fascist strategy which combines unite labour movement mobilisation against the NF, consistent anti-racist argument, efforts to reach out to and work with immigrant communities, and working class answers to the social decay on which the fascists build, can still beat the NF and revitalise the whole of the French left.



Alice Sharp, NUS's new Women's Officer

Next issue

SO's schedule will be changed over the next couple of weeks because of the General Election.

The next issue, No.520, will come out later than normal in order to carry comment on the election result s. The copy date will be Friday 10th, and readers and sellers should receive it on Tuesday 14th or Wednesday 15th.

No.521 will appear on the usual schedule on Thursday 23rd.