

VOTE LABOUR **MAY 5th**

SOCIALIST

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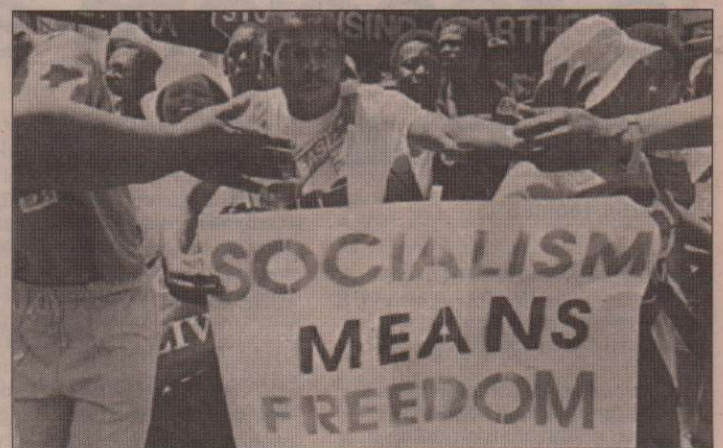
ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

WHITE MINORITY RULE ENDS

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Vote Labour on 5 May!

Alliance for Workers' Liberty activists are working hard for a Labour victory in the local-government elections on 5th May.

A big defeat for John Major will be a step towards rebuilding working-class confidence.

The AWL is also targeting the areas where fascists are standing. We are helping to canvass and work for Labour.

We urge all our readers to help in this work.

If you want to help Labour and need information phone the AWL on 071-639 7965.

Fascists driven out of Kingstanding

BIRMINGHAM

LAST Saturday (23 April) supporters of the AWL and Labour Party members were leafleting with AFA in Kingstanding. We were giving out leaflets calling for a Labour vote and taking on the fascist lies.

On the whole the leaflets went down very well but a reluctance from many people to take a leaflet and a confrontation with a man who openly said he supported the BNP candidate revealed a simmering racism in the area.

Where we were leafleting, Kingstanding shopping centre, is on the edge of two constituencies where the Nazis are standing. On one side, in Kingstanding, the NF candidate is Robert Jones, and on the other in Oscott the BNP are standing Keith Axon.

After we finished leafleting, the BNP tried to reclaim their land and about 20-25 boneheads tried to leaflet and march. About 40-50 people, mainly from the ANL, pulled their leaflets out of doors and the Master Race turned their tails and pissed off. Would-be Führer Keith Axon asked the police if they'd help him run away from the assembled 'mob' of mainly students and kids.

To see the fascists so wound up by our leafleting and to see them role up their Union Jack and scarper was great, but some serious questions must be asked. The glib celebration of the ANL avoids the fact that the relatively small, last minute mobilisation could in other circumstances have taken a beating. A fixed meeting place, away from where the bootboys were was not arranged; anti-fascists were arriving right near the fascists in dribs and drabs.

Next Saturday we'll be there again, and regularly in the evenings. We'll be better organised and there'll be more of us. We're also trying to get a string of meetings off the ground in colleges around Birmingham and are getting members of Young Labour coming out with us. A van will be out most nights and Saturday to win three seats for Labour and take the fascists on.

We're also building for the YUAR conference and organising a string of socials under the banner of Birmingham United Against Racism and Fascism, to take place after 5 May and mobilise for the Euro elections in June.

Labour's fight in Rochdale

MANCHESTER

LABOUR Party Socialists and AWL members are travelling to Rochdale three times a week to canvass in the three wards where the fascists are standing. The BNP are particularly targeting the ward held by Cllr Abdul Chowdry, who has been active in the community as a councillor 22 years.

This previously safe ward was lost to the Liberals for the first time two years ago and this time the Liberal candidate is a previous Labour Party member who was expelled for racism! The BNP have no chance of winning in Rochdale but are targeting this ward in an effort to replace an Asian councillor with a racist! This makes the SWP/ANL slogan 'Don't vote Nazi' seen even more stupid as, to many in Rochdale, not voting Nazi will mean voting Liberal i.e. for a racist!

The response from the Labour left and left students in Manchester to the task of canvassing in Rochdale has been excellent

and even more are expected to turn out this week!

Sheffield says no to racism! Demonstration 30 April

SHEFFIELD

By Leonie Kapadia

SHEFFIELD Against Racism and Fascism (SARF) has been set up to address the rise of racism and fascism both locally in and around Sheffield, and nationally.

Recent attacks on the Manor housing estate in Darnall, and cases of police harassment in Burngreave, have highlighted the rise of racism in Sheffield. Several families have been victimised with graffiti, violent physical attack and excrement pushed through letter boxes. These are particular cases in the wider problem of increased tension.

Fascist groups are also trying to get a foothold. They must be confronted to prevent this. When BNP Chesterfield organiser Simon Chadwick was found to be working in a Sheffield job centre, other workers and the CPSA successfully campaigned to get rid of him from their workplace. This type of campaign must be repeated all over the country where neo-nazis are amidst us and especially where they have access to confidential information about the rest of us.

In Sheffield, through SARF, black communities, all anti-racists and the labour movement are uniting to challenge racism, confront the fascists and uproot deep-seated racism. This must be tied together with the fight for jobs, housing and services for all. Racist policies in these and other areas, such as limited entry of black individuals to one nightclub, must be exposed! We must unite workers against the government's cutbacks and disallow the scapegoating which results!

In Sheffield SARF has organised a series of local meetings entitled "Fighting Racism in Sheffield" in order to mobilise



Tower Hamlets is a crucial area

for the demonstration to be held on Saturday 30 April.

At one of the FE colleges over 25 students attended a meeting where many issues about the roots of racism and present-day racism were raised and discussed. On 28 March over seventy people attended another public meeting called by SARF in Sharrow to hear Steve Cohen of the Rahman Family Defence Campaign, Mr Mohammed Nazir, an individual well-known in the local community, and myself from SARF.

We have future meetings planned for the next week in the final run-up to the demonstration. On 27 April Youth Connections are coming to speak at a meeting to be held at Earl Marshall School and daytime workshops with the pupils are planned. The head teacher, Chris Searle, is sending a letter to every parent about the meeting. Other meetings are planned for the Broomspring Centre, at the University, and with school and FE students.

The demonstration, Sheffield Says No to Racism!, leaves Devonshire Green at 11am on 30 April. The march goes through the city centre and terminates on the City Hall steps. Speakers at the rally are from the Michael Golding Defence Campaign and the Asian Taxi Drivers' Association. The Mayor of Sheffield, Cllr Qurban Hussain, will open the rally, whilst national speakers will be from the Tower Hamlets 9 and the South Asia Solidarity Group.

Immediately after the demonstration we will be holding a public meeting about canvassing for Labour against the neo-nazis. This march coincides with other anti-racist demonstrations all over the country on 30 April and shows that the labour movement can and will unite to beat the racists.

Third Way standing

SOUTHWARK

By Garry Meyer

"THIRD Way" Nazi Fred Gerrens is standing in Abbey Ward in Bermondsey, South East London.

The "Third Way" are a particularly potty outfit headed by ex-National Front leader Patrick Harrington. "Third Way" stickers have appeared encouraging whites to "destroy the cities." The graphic shows a white man with a sledgehammer in front of a pile of rubble which used to be London: Pol Pot meets Adolf Hitler — not really what the workers of Bermondsey need.

Southwark Anti-Racist Alliance have organised a protest meeting.

"Defeat the Fascists" 7.30 Tuesday 3 May, Walmer Castle pub, Peckham Road, London SE5.

Is fascism a conspiracy?

POLITICAL FRONT

By Martin Thomas

WHAT IS fascism? Does it represent "the most reactionary and aggressive sections of capital," as the official Communist Parties used to say?

At a London AWL forum discussing Italy on 20 April, the invited speaker, Steve Myers from the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe, went into details about the role of the infamous "P2" Masonic Lodge in linking the fascist MSI with Silvio Berlusconi and other key figures in the right-wing alliance which won the recent elections. The section of the Italian capitalist class linked with "P2" had won out against the rest, and now Italy had a "Bonapartist" government which could switch to bourgeois democracy or to fascism without great complications.

This sort of preoccupation with the conspiracies and secret links behind fascist activities is very common among anti-fascist activists, including those, like Myers, who are anti-Stalinists. But AWL members at the forum argued that it was off-beam.

It misses what is special about fascism. Fascism is not just the extreme right wing of capitalist politics. Fascism is a movement of the ruined middle classes and of the unemployed, which deals with the problems of capitalism in crisis by mobilising masses of desperate people to smash

up the labour movement.

Fascism is not a policy which the bourgeoisie can switch to at will, like a person choosing a different haircut or a different style of clothing. It is a movement which grows up largely outside routine bourgeois politics. It is a risky and troublesome option for the ruling class. The capitalists accept a fascist government when they have exhausted other means of governing but see the labour movement as weak enough to be smashed head-on.

Conspiracies on the right wing of the capitalist class do exist. They always exist. To see them as the essence of fascism is to miss the point.

Firstly, it encourages defeatism. As long as the capitalist class exists, it will have sinister right-wing conspiracies. There is nothing we can do to stop that. If such conspiracies are enough to introduce fascism, then there is no way we can stop fascism.

Secondly, it blurs over the qualitative difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy. It can lead us to see almost any marked shift to the right in bourgeois politics as the victory of fascism; thus, it can lead us to think we are defeated far too soon.

Thirdly, when the "conspiracy theory" of fascism becomes combined with a forced awareness of the qualitative difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy — as it was in the official Communist Parties after Hitler's victory in Germany — it leads to "popular front" policies. It leads to a search for alliance with the less reactionary and aggressive sections of the capitalist class, who pre-

sumably represent bourgeois democracy as against those more reactionary and aggressive sections who represent fascism.

In fact, the way to beat fascism is to break the momentum of its mass mobilisations by a determined workers' united front, and to undercut its mass support by

rallying people round a militant labour movement and a socialist policy.

That can still be done in Italy. The Italian labour movement is still very far from being smashed. The election result is a terrible warning, but the decisive battles are still to come.

Defend Sunday Ogunwobi!

SUNDAY OGUNWOB, a 41 year old man from Nigeria, has spent the last month living in sanctuary in Hackney Downs Baptist Church, east London.

Sunday faces deportation, although he has been living in Britain for 13 years and has three children who were born in Britain.

Two of his children need medical care not available in Nigeria.

You can help by writing a letter of protest to the Home Office demanding that Sunday Ogunwobi is allowed to stay in Britain. Contact the Ogunwobi Family Campaign on 081-985 2958.

Close down Campsfield!

AFTER THE recent mass hunger strike of asylum seekers, which began at Campsfield detention centre near Oxford, a Close Down Campsfield Campaign has been launched.

The Campsfield prison is run by the private security firm, Group 4. The prisoners are mainly black asylum seekers — people who have fled persecution. These people are not violent criminals — just ordinary people who are scared of prison, torture or death, which they would face in

their native countries.

A national demonstration is being organised at Campsfield on Saturday 4 June.

A picket is being held outside Winston Green prison against the imprisonment of asylum seekers in the Birmingham jail. The picket will take place every Friday from 5.30 - 6.30pm.

• Close Down Campsfield Campaign c/o 101 Villa Road Birmingham B19 1NH

Sell the paper!

ALLIANCE FOR Workers' Liberty activists have been organising stalls, petitioning and street meetings as part of our campaigning against the fascists standing in the May local elections.

London AWL members have collected hundreds of names on a petition calling for a Labour vote on 5 May and for Labour to pledge itself to provide jobs and homes for all workers and to fully restore the NHS.

15 papers were sold at Clapham on Saturday, 19 at Lewisham, 14 on Tottenham Court Road and 14 in Camberwell, South London.

Why not sell *Socialist Organiser* and help fight racism with socialist ideas? For details write to Jill Mountford, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

AWL Socialist Weekend in the Derbyshire Peak District

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 May
£22 (waged)/£12 unwaged
Includes food and two nights accommodation

Details: Ivan 0502 024827

Why we support the Workers' List in South Africa, and not the ANC

For the political independence of the working class

"No saviour from on high deliver,
No faith have we in prince or peer;
Our own right hand the chains must
shiver;

Chains of hatred, greed and fear."
(The Internationale)

ONE AND the same principle lies behind a number of arguments among socialists today. Should we back the ANC or the Workers' List in South Africa? Should we vote tactically for Liberal Democrats to beat the Tories in Britain? Should we side with the Democrats in the USA? Or back a "progressive alliance" with anti-fascist bosses and bankers against the right wing in Italy?

It is the most basic principle of Marxist politics: *the political independence of the working class.*

Socialism is something more than just a dream, or a good idea, only because the *class struggle* built in to capitalist society separates out the working class, counterposes it to the

"The socialist logic of class struggle is stifled unless we can make the working class organise independently in politics."

capitalist class, and gives its everyday struggle a socialist logic. Their economic position, and not what any preacher or prophet has told them, pushes workers to fight for social provision, social regulation, and democratic control over the social means of production. That is socialism.

However, this socialist logic does not work in a vacuum. From day to day, capitalist market economics seem natural and inevitable. Workers are hammered daily with pro-capi-

talist propaganda from the media, and systematically starved of the leisure and education necessary to form an independent view.

No amount of pressure and propaganda can stop the development of the most basic independent working-class organisations - trade unions. But independent *politics* are more difficult. To organise workers on a national or international scale, across trades, industries, and communities, is a more complex business than organising workers in the immediate economic struggle over wages and conditions.

Politics are dominated by those with money, leisure and education — that is, by the different factions of the wealthy classes. Those factions can and do annex trade unions with catchwords of reform or cries for national, communal, or religious interest.

The socialist logic of class struggle is stifled unless we can make the working class organise independently in politics, *independent* of the different political parties of the wealthy classes.

For the workers to organise their own political party is only the first stage of independent working-class politics. The workers' party must have independent *ideas* as well as independent organisation — that is, it must free itself of all deference to the ruling class and its ideas, and base itself exclusively on the interests of the working class.

Gaining that independence of ideas is not automatic, nor even easy. It involves a continual struggle. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty exists to organise those — as yet, only a small minority — who are ready and willing to undertake that battle of ideas, basing ourselves on our commitment, energy, and mutual support to offset the great advantages that wealth, leisure and education give to the ruling class in shaping how people think.

But the first step — formal, organisational, independence of the working class in politics — counts for a lot.



Workers' freedom can only be won by independent working-class organisation

Without that first step, the workers can never be more than the stage army of this or that more "progressive" or "democratic" faction of the ruling class.

In an independent workers' party, however much it is saturated with pro-capitalist prejudices picked up from the society around it, there is the possibility of the workers developing, learning, collectively moving towards socialist politics. In working-class support for bourgeois parties, however enlightened and reformist they are, there is no such possibility of socialist progress.

Least of all is there any possibility of socialist progress in working class support for individual leaders not connected with or accountable to workers' organisations.

Even if the leader stands apart from

the great bulk of the wealthy classes and promises all sorts of good things, even if he or she is personally admirable in some ways — as Nelson Mandela is — reliance on a leader to sort things out for the working class is the opposite of socialism.

His or her agenda will be set by individual ambitions and by the pressures of capitalist power — pressures which an individual leader can never break through — and the workers supporting him or her become prisoners of that agenda. Instead of working out their own liberation they can be led by the nose into the most hopeless blind alleys.

Marxists support independent working-class political movements even when their ideas are vague, unclear, or downright backward. Socialism can only be won by the working class, and therefore socialism can be won only by the working class being organised politically and becoming — through the lessons of its own experience — ready, willing, able and convinced to fight for socialism. There can be no substitute, no way of winning socialism over the heads of the working class or through pressure on well-meaning sections of the wealthy classes.

We support the Labour Party even if a Liberal Democrat has a better chance of beating the Tories, and even if the Liberal Democrat has "better" politics than Labour on various issues. In Australia, where the "Australian Democrats" (a split from the Liberals, the main capitalist party) are more left-wing on *most* issues than

Labor, we still support Labor. In the USA, we oppose trade-union support for the Democratic Party, and argue instead for the trade unions to form their own independent party — even though that independent party would probably at first have right-wing politics.

Marx and Engels took the same approach. They supported any real independent workers' political movement, even if its ideas were very limited — as was the case, for example, with the First International at the start, or the Independent Labour Party in Britain in the 1890s. Yet when right-wingers in the German socialist party argued that the party's socialist policies were fine, but it should stop being so "one-sidedly" a workers' party, they rightly declared: "For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving power of history and in particular the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is, therefore, impossible for us to cooperate with people who wish to expunge the class struggle from the movement."

"When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle cry: The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself. We cannot, therefore, cooperate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic big bourgeois and petty bourgeois".

South Africa: half a revolution

THE AFRICAN National Congress is almost certain to win this week's elections in South Africa.

This victory, and the very fact of the one-person one-vote election, mark a great step forward. A huge structure of discriminatory laws, built up over decades and enforced with great brutality, which made black people live not as people but as racial categories, has been smashed.

Courageous, determined, and often costly struggles by the great majority of South Africa's people — the black working class — have won this step forward. But it is only half a revolution. The

ANC has tied itself to governing jointly with the National Party, the party of the white capitalist class. The ANC is, as it has always been, committed to reform only within the framework of capitalism.

The state machine which imposed apartheid remains intact, only partly modified by the incorporation of ANC politicians, officials, and military people. The factional and communal violence which is widespread in South Africa and will continue after the elections will give that state machine many opportunities and pretexts to strengthen its authority. Apartheid has been ended, and that is

a great victory. But it is being replaced not by freedom, but by, at best, half-freedom. South Africa will remain a brutal, racist, capitalist society. The great majority will continue to live in poverty, with limited education opportunities and mass illiteracy, while a minority live in luxury.

South Africa's workers must and will continue their battle against poverty and exploitation, for *workers' liberty*. The Workers' List Party in this election, however small the vote for its candidates in this election, has put down an essential marker for the future of that battle. It deserves our support.

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser,
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk 071-639 7965 (Latest reports Monday)
Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

Editor: John O'Mahony
Deputy editor: Cathy Nugent
Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford
Published by: WL Publications Limited

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office



WE SAY

Unite the left! For unity in action and honest dialogue about our differences.

Why Winnie is no alternative

NELSON MANDELA will this week be elected President of South Africa. He has already promised that he will protect the privileges of the white capitalists and that he will not even raise taxes on them to pay for desperately needed house building health, education and literacy programmes. The ANC will run South African capitalism for the capitalists.

Many people see Winnie Mandela as the person most likely to act as the focus for radical opposition to the ANC/National Party coalition government which is certain to emerge from this week's elections in South Africa. Unfortunately they may well be right.

Winnie Mandela is not a fit person for the job. There is no rational reason why anyone who wants to further the cause of elementary human equality — not to mention working class self emancipation — should support Winnie Mandela.

She is a reactionary politician who stands for capitalist exploitation, political intolerance, African chauvinism and brutal thuggery.

Mrs. Mandela bases herself not on the struggle of the super-exploited black workers for their own freedom, but on the incoherent revolt of apartheid's worst victims — the uneducated, unemployed and sometimes half-dehumanised youth of the townships, the same youth who were used by the ANC to turn the townships into no-go areas for their opponents on the left.

The "Mother of the Nation" does not see her "leadership" role as that of someone who would point out the line of march for a disciplined class-conscious mass working-class movement. Her chosen role is rather that of someone who would point the finger at those to be sacrificed in order to satisfy a rampaging mob.

Winnie Mandela is not in any sense a socialist. She has grown rich while others have died in the struggle against apartheid.

Her immense personal fortune and flamboyant lifestyle, her expense account trips to Europe and America, her sickening eulogies to the "patriotic businessman of good faith" who own the countries' industries and mines and super-exploit black labour — all this guarantees that few class-conscious black workers have illusions in Winnie Mandela.

It is already well documented that she was involved in the kidnapping, torture and murder of the tiny schoolboy Stompie. (She was convicted of this crime by the apartheid courts; but both Mandela and her husband accepted the legitimacy of the trial by declaring that she would clear her name in court)

People now seem to want to forget this small matter of child murder. Mrs Mandela has been rehabilitated. Otherwise principled people are prepared to see the activities of the notorious Mandela United Football Club — the euphemistic name for her own private KGB — as a "mistake" or an "excess" produced by her reaction to the horrors of apartheid.

Of course, it is true that Mrs Mandela is very much a victim of apartheid.

But Mrs Mandela is an active agent, not just a victim. She has been and is a vociferous promoter of the politics of racial intolerance and bigotry inside the liberation movement.

For instance, after her supporters launched a murderous township war to drive the rival black consciousness group AZAPO out of Bekkersdal, near Johannesburg, she gave the following warning to whites: "Any white person who comes here to interfere with us or who comes to preach peace — that person must not leave Bekkersdal alive. Their wives and mothers will have to fetch them as corpses."

It is usually the white liberals in and around the ANC who attempt to curb the violent activities of Mrs Mandela's young comrades. Black ANCers — who have to live in the townships — are usually more likely to keep silent for their own safety.

To be fair to Mrs Mandela, it is not true that she hates all white people. She likes some. For instance, she is known to think very highly of Sol Kerzner, the multi-millionaire boss of Sun City, the gambling and vice capital of Southern Africa. Nice Mr Kerzner even paid for Winnie's daughter to have a six month long honeymoon in a luxury hotel in the Seychelles.

It is not white people as such, but black people, brown people and white people who stand in her way that Mrs Mandela hates.

Playing with the anti-white sentiments of the youth has nothing radical or genuinely left-wing about it. Nelson Mandela — who really does believe in the ideal of racial tolerance and conciliation — has been prepared to make himself unpopular with them by refusing to blame all whites for the crimes of apartheid. He is a genuine bourgeois democrat. Mrs Mandela is neither genuine nor a democrat, but a racist bourgeois demagogue. She is prepared to employ any method whatsoever to ensure that her clique of lumpen would-be nouveau riches can get their hands on power.

If she does emerge as the leader of the black opposition, then it will be on the basis of mobilising the rage of the desperate township youth — over half of whom are illiterate, and 80% unemployed. These youth will be mobilised not against the capitalist system but against anyone who appears to have more than they have. The result will be a reign of terror in the townships and a low-intensity racial civil war outside. No-one on the left should accept such activity as progressive or left wing.

"Winnie's boys" may love to sing "Kill the Boer! Shoot the farmer!" The first lady herself may like to tell "coloured" workers that they are victims of race-mixing because Boers raped their grandmothers. The organised black workers, however, have higher standards. And higher aspirations too.

Their vision is of a democratic Workers' Republic. They have built a movement which proudly proclaims that it "knows no colour" and organises all exploited workers, regardless of their ethnicity.

They need their own working class party. They do not need "Mothers", or saviours with private armies of hired thugs. They do not need Winnie Mandela!

MEXICO



After the peasant revolt in Chiapas, the workers could be on the move

A world turned upside down

LETTER FROM MEXICO

This is the first in a series of letters from Mexico by Pablo Velasco. Since the beginning of the year, Mexico has been the focus of international attention, with the Zapatista rebellion in the southern state of Chiapas in January, the kidnapping of a billionaire industrialist and, finally, the assassination of the ruling party candidate for the Presidency, Luis Donaldo Colosio, in March. With the election looming in August, Mexico is simmering with discontent, and might well explode, after years of pent-up frustration.

"The working class is the vanguard of our process of change," Salinas de Gortari, President, April 1994.

Velasquez: "Does everyone agree with the motion for 15% pay rises?"

Delegates: "Yes, Yes!"

Velasquez: "And what will we do with those that settle for less?"

Delegates: "Out with them! Out!"

Velasquez: "Well, that problem's settled"

CTM General Assembly April 1994

WHEN the IMF's model pupil starts talking about the vital role of the working class and the leader of the biggest trade union federation rattles the sabre over a wages struggle, you know that Mexico's famed political stability is under threat. And at this stage, even though it appears to be internal government matters that are disturbing the peace, the signs are that bigger social forces are moving.

If the ruling PRI candidate Ernesto Zedillo wins (or is fraudulently given) the Presidency in August, the PRI — already the longest serving political party still in power — will reach the dubious honour of being the longest running one-party regime this century (overtaking the CPSU). One reason for this is undoubtedly the person of Don Fidel Velasquez, leader of the CTM, who at 94, has been there at the top for virtually the whole period. He will undoubtedly go down as the greatest Latin American class traitor in working-class history, when he finally dies.

The explanation of the sta-

"IMF-dictated economic reforms have undercut the 'social pact' between unions and the state."

bility of the Mexican state since the revolution of 1910-20, but also for its growing crisis at present, lies with the role of successive trade union federations, which have been the central prop of a peculiar structure. Right from 1915, when, at the zenith of peasant revolution, the semi-anarchist "House of the World Worker" voted to fight with the bourgeoisie against the revolutionaries led by Zapata and Villa, in return for a building, some government money and some political space to work in, the future was mapped out. During the 1920s the CROM played the same role, and ever since 1936 the CTM has been the "labour sector" of the ruling party, tied organisationally, politically and ideologically to it.

Velasquez has been there at every turn, dancing the tango

with Lombardo Toledano and the "Friends of the Soviet Union" in the 1930s, with the anti-communist "Charros" in the post-war period, with the co-opted 1968 generation during the '70s and finally, in the last decade, with the Salinas technocrats.

What has he presided over? When Lazaro Cardenas set up the import substitution-industrialisation strategy, he presided over the low-wage super-exploitation of the working class that this required, including the terrible sell-out of the railworkers' strike of 1959. And when the bourgeois strategy changed in the wake of the debt crisis in the '80s, and foreign investment/export-led growth took over, he had already ensured that real wages had halved from their 1976 level.

The only importance of the workers to Velasquez and Salinas is that the workers, who have paid for the crisis before, must be made to pay again, if the bourgeois class in Mexico is to continue to make profits. As the food subsidies are wiped away, welfare provision slashed and industries privatised, Velasquez says "1.5 million CTM votes for the PRI, as long as I can still have a piece of the cake," with the working class his battering ram on the door of his paymasters.

How has the CTM managed to retain control over the militant and combative working class? State support has been decisive, both in terms of fraud, direct intervention and law; and the "revolutionary nationalist" ideology has proven to be an excellent rationale for class collaboration. But real "organising" does also go on.

Many workers find themselves in jobs with "protected contacts," arranged by unions they never see, let alone voted for, and who have pre-arranged their exploitation with the bosses and the local PRI. Some don't even know they are in a union, until they

start to struggle, either by forming democratic works committees or even independent unions — and then they only find out when the local CTM goons turn up to terrorise the activists.

In December 1993, teachers' leaders in Monterey were kidnapped by thugs who told them to call off their strike, or else. In January 1990, at Ford Cuautitlan, where the company had shut and then reopened the plant to break the union contract, 3,500 workers who protested had armed goons inside their factory coercing them back to work, and when they defended themselves, one worker, Cleto Nigno, was shot dead.

Some of the gangsters later confessed to having been hired by the CTM, and that they had collaborated with the judicial police. During the Modelo Brewery strike around the same time, Velasquez ensured that the strike was declared "illegal," its leaders victimised and other workers coerced into a deal — worked out incidentally by Chiapas "peace negotiator" Camacho Solis.

But the times are changing. The PRI's IMF-dictated economic reforms have undercut the "social pact" between CTM and the state and some prominent CTM leaders have been framed up and imprisoned by Salinas. Also, some sections of the bourgeoisie, in the wake of US competition, want to tear up existing agreements and drive down wages even further. But more importantly campesinos are becoming more belligerent and well-organised, some workers, e.g. at the universities, are in dispute, and there are some useful link-ups between US and Mexican workers.

This year's May Day demonstrations (which also celebrate Fidel Castro's birthday) may be an even bigger sign of workers' power. And right now there couldn't be a better time to take on a weak and uncertain bourgeoisie.

Shopworkers' union conference

USDAW leadership face a challenge

THE conference of the low-paid shopworkers' union USDAW — taking place over the bank holiday and early next week — looks set to be a controversial four days. Top of the agenda is a resolution condemning the union's executive for their disgraceful role in last year's debate over the trade union/Labour Party link. Many ordinary members are angry that after a full debate at last year's conference, and a clear majority against John Smith's proposal for disenfranchising affiliated trade unionists in parliamentary selections, the executive nev-

ertheless went ahead and supported the leadership's proposals. Not only was this a travesty of union democracy. It also provided the Labour Party right wing with enough votes to win conference and push through their proposals. As one dissident member of the union's Labour Party delegation put it at the time: "Our leadership don't care what the members think — their job is to defend John Smith and they are determined to do it." The executive also face criticism over their change of position on the Sunday trading laws. It looks like the issue of the sovereignty of conference is

going to run through the week's proceedings and will provide a central theme around which the Broad Left can organise. Industrial issues up for discussion include: casualisation — with a clear call for full time rights for all; junior pay rates — with a clear call for its abolition and replacement with the full adult rate; and a proposal for a workplace crèche campaign at Tesco. The Labour Party is also the subject for motions calling for full employment, positive legal rights for trade unionists and the repeal of all anti-union laws. A motion from Newcastle shows that despite the USDAW executive support

for attempts to weaken Labour/union links, the rank and file of the union still look to the party as the mass, working-class alternative to the Tories. It calls for: "USDAW representatives at all levels of the party to fight on clear socialist policies with the interests of working-class people their prime consideration." All in all, conference is likely to be very lively. Delegates will be very interested to hear what John Smith has to say when he addresses them on Monday afternoon. Whatever he says, it cannot justify the executive giving him the union's votes at last September's conference.

National minimum wage

£4.05 for every worker!

MOVE THIS motion in your trade union or Labour Party branch meeting. "This... welcomes the recent statements by the shadow employment spokesperson John Prescott emphasising Labour's commitment to a statutory minimum wage. We endorse the clarification made by the TGWU and other trade unions that this wage must be set at no less than £4.05 per hour — which would update Labour's existing commitment in line with inflation. We also reaffirm our support for conference and NEC policy on the need for the next Labour government to enact a

set of positive legal rights for workers. As last year's conference overwhelmingly decided, this framework of individual and collective rights should include the following:

1. The right for an individual to belong to a trade union;
2. The right to recruit fellow workers into a trade union;
3. The right of trade unions to be recognised by employers for collective bargaining purposes;
4. The right to be active within a trade union and to take industrial action without fear of persecution;
5. The right to strike, to picket effectively and to take industrial action in

support of others without fear of sequestration or prosecution in accordance with a fair and positive legal framework;

6. The right not to be dismissed while taking part in industrial action, including strike action;
7. The right of all trade union members to determine their own rule books.

Given the way the Tory government have attempted to make it extremely difficult to hold legally watertight ballots, we believe that Labour must support the unconditional right to strike, with the question of balloting provisions to be determined by the unions themselves.

This... calls on the NEC in conjunction with our affiliated unions to draw up an active campaign on the issue. This campaign should include:

1. The production of a campaign activists' briefing on the issue which will allow party activists and trade unionists to raise these questions more effectively at work and in their union;
2. A national rally and dayschool on the issue designed to boost the confidence of individual activists and show the commitment of the national party leadership on this key issue;
3. A national lobby of parliament."

Tories put profits before lives

MICHAEL Heseltine is pushing ahead with the Tories' plans to "de-regulate" the Fire

Service. They plan to take control of fire safety out of the hands of the Fire Service as

a means of reducing the pressures on cut-throat capitalist who want to cut corners.

As the firefighters' union FBU says: "The FBU is very concerned that the Government's strategy is to take the responsibility for fire safety — implementing and enforcing fire prevention legislation — out of the hands of the Fire Service, leaving it ready for privatisation. "We believe that if members of the Fire Service are considered good enough to rescue people from fires, and in doing so put their lives at risk, then they are eminently good enough to have a say in fire safety legislation and its enforcement within the UK." If you want to help the FBU campaign then contact: FBU, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AB.



Just good friends

THE MUCH heralded TGWU/GMB nuptials have been called off. The Central Executive Council of the GMB rejected the recommendations of the five joint working groups set up to facilitate amalgamation, and proposed instead that the two unions "concentrate on developing close and friendly co-operation."

In other words, Bill Morris and the T&G leadership have been unceremoniously jilted. As for "close and friendly co-operation" — well you know what they say about staying "good friends..."

This has come as a complete surprise and a terrible blow to Bill and his chums on the T&G Executive, whose entire strategy for the future of the union is based upon a series of amalgamations, of which the GMB merger was the jewel in the crown.

The GMB's rebuff leaves the T&G with just UCATT and the NUM to play footsie with — and neither of them are particularly alluring prospects (debt-ridden, more officers than members, Scargill's ego, etc.)

If Bill and the Executive are taking it hard, how do you think the regional and district full-timers feel?

Almost to a man (I use the term advisedly) they were bursting with enthusiasm for the merger — if only because of the expected big pay rises and/or golden handshakes (GMB officers are considerably better paid than the T&G's). Stand by for a stampede of T&G officers of a certain age going for early retirement over the next few months.

So what has brought about this sudden change of heart on the part of the GMB leadership?

John Edmonds claims to have become increasingly convinced that what Morris & Co. wanted was not the creation of a new union (the officially agreed objective) but a *de facto* take over.

Given the fact that the T&G's membership is in continuing decline, whereas the GMB's is relatively stable, Edmonds may well reckon on renewing the courtship in a couple of years — by which time the two unions might be much more equally matched in terms of membership. And as Bill Morris will by then have retired, Edmonds will be the senior General Secretary and virtually a dead cert for the top job in the new union.

The sharp-suited young men who run the GMB's PR department also point to the chaotic state of the UNISON amalgamation and the less public but almost as serious problems within the AEEU — in other words, amalgamations are no longer flavour of the month at Worple Road.

In addition, it is said that the GMB members of the joint working parties were none too impressed by what they saw of the state of the T&G's finances — not to mention the state of certain of its leading officers.

Finally, there seems to have been a fundamental culture-clash between the GMB's officer-dominated "service" orientation and the T&G's emphasis on branches and lay-member control.

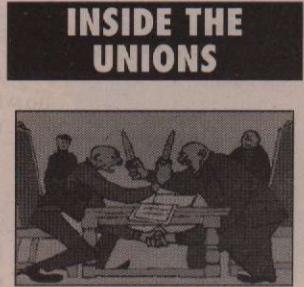
The GMB people were not impressed by the ramshackle state of the T&G "services" and the GMB regional barons didn't like the amount of power apparently wielded by T&G branches and lay committees (which was precisely why the T&G's own regional barons were the keenest people of all on the merger).

GMB officials in the North-West are said to have been particularly hostile to the idea of an amalgamation with their deadly rivals in Region 6 of the TGWU.

The tragedy of all this is that a TGWU/GMB merger makes perfect sense from an industrial point of view. Both unions organised exactly the same range of workers in the same industries.

Of course, the bureaucrats on both sides had their own motives, but amalgamation would have given the rank and file of both unions the opportunity to push for a democratic structure and to take the best aspects of both traditions — the T&G's lay member orientation and the GMB's strength in services.

Some T&G lefties were privately opposed to the amalgamation and will now be breathing sighs of relief: they're wrong. The serious left in both unions should now fight to renew the amalgamation process.



By Sleeper

Digging their own grave

THE Tories hired Saatchi and Saatchi to make a party political broadcast focusing on spendthrift Labour councils, particularly Birmingham. The result has been to create a film virtually guaranteeing that the Conservatives will not win the council.

Mobile phones are handed out to grave-diggers in Labour-controlled Birmingham, the broadcast claimed. In fact, one gravedigger has a mobile phone to carry out emergency work.

In Waltham Forest the Tories claimed that the Labour council "...wanted a yellow line painting and the quote was forty pounds. By the time the line was painted ... it cost £1,600. Just imagine how much council tax was used for this."

In fact, the line cost £10 to paint. The parking space was for Walthamstow's first ever diplomatic residence, and needed a post and sign to identify it. That only came to another £100. Where did the other £1,490 go? According to law, diplomatic parking spaces on public roads require a by-law. And new by-laws need to be advertised in the local press. Cost, including admin, £1,494.

Perhaps the Tories should consider a letter from Zinoviev, or consider carefully before once again hiring the advertising agency they already owe millions of pounds in unpaid bills.

AS everyone now recognises, fun days in Hyde Park are not really the right way of commemorating bloody battles. But next year we can celebrate the driving of a bloody and tyrannical regime out of another people's country and the end of a genocidal campaign that left millions dead. 1995 is the twentieth anniversary of the States' withdrawal from Vietnam.

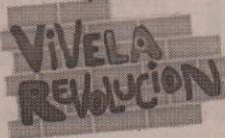
The icing on the cake is Nixon's impeccable timing — now it will be possible to dance on the grave of the man who ordered the blanket bombing of Cambodia.

CANING with a rattan cane is something that only a deeply barbarous and uncivilised country could allow. The victims are starved for days before the caning since the pain of having flesh cut into by the cane can cause powerful involuntary bowel movements. The beating can leave permanent physical scarring to say nothing of the psychological effects. But pressure from the UN Human Rights Committee and others has caused some countries to drop this cruel practice in recent years.

Like Hong Kong. Yes, the Hong Kong which is administered by a British-appointed Governor.

Was this an antiquated punishment left on the statute books from some bygone

GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

era? No. It was introduced after violent demonstrations in the 'sixties against the Cultural Revolution in China. It was used 42 times between 1985 and its abolition in 1990, for crimes such as carrying an offensive weapon. Its final use was on a 16-year old illegal immigrant boy.

ANYONE caring to look at *Socialist Outlook's* subscriptions box will find a very interesting piece of information: "*Socialist Outlook* is the world's best selling marxist fortnightly." This, presumably, follows the same logic as "the radish is the world's favourite small red root vegetable that makes you fart."

Outlook is one of very few Marxist fortnightlies, midway between organisations dynamic enough to produce a weekly paper (modesty prevents us from mentioning any names) and the sectarian fringes who produce heavy theoretical journals of tightly typed drivelt every month or so.

The real mystery is, if *Outlook* is so popular, why do you hardly ever see any of their members selling it? Come to think of it, there is an even bigger mystery: why is the sight of an *Outlook* member — of whom there are quite a few — visibly doing anything at all such a rare event these days?

WHOEVER said that the capitalist class were running out of ideas?

Take the car manufacturer, Volkswagen. They have just unveiled their plans for the new small car that will take the North American market by storm. It's called the Beetle. This car is, of course, a thoroughly updated and modernised version of the car first manufactured in 1938. Capitalism might not be able to offer a brighter tomorrow, but at least there is the prospect of an updated yesterday.

ORDER of the Brown-nose: Paul Foot introduced Tony Benn at a Media Workers Against the Nazis meeting last week as "unique in his uniqueness." Benn is surely one of the good guys, but for G-AW-D's sake, Paul! What should one say about Footsie himself? He is obsequious in his obsequiousness? Ultra-brown in his brown-nosedness? A slobberer amongst slobberers? An emetic amongst emetics? Or that he is just plain sickening?

He's got to go (don't know where, don't know when)

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

NEVER MIND Portillo, Heseltine and Clarke. Major now has a far more dangerous opponent — Dame Vera Lynn. Crossing her (and the massed forces of the Royal British Legion, the Normandy Veterans' Association, etc.) has been his single biggest mistake so far. There is, as yet, no sign that cancelling the Grand Spam Fritter Fry-up in Hyde Park will retrieve the situation.

Now, call me unpatriotic if you will, but I must confess to not exactly subscribing to the proper British enthusiasm for the Forces' Sweetheart. Like the hated Yanks, I always rather preferred the Swingin' Andrews Sisters and the exotic Marlene Dietrich.

For most of the British press over the past couple of weeks, any such thoughts would amount to virtual treason. Dame Vera's not had so much free publicity since *The White Cliffs of Dover* topped the Burma hit-parade of 1941.

The *Daily Mail* has been particularly enthusiastic in promoting the Queen Mother of

song, even giving her a column in which to denounce Major's insult to "her boys." All the "quality" Sundays ran lengthy profiles of her, the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Telegraph* in particular using theirs to attack Major for his insensitivity and bungling over D-Day.

It cannot have been a coincidence that the same issue of the *Sunday Telegraph* contained a scathing anti-Major tirade from columnist Frank Johnson and a front-page story claiming that: "More than 100 Tory MPs are now prepared to back Michael Portillo in a contest to succeed John Major."

Only the *Daily Express* and the *Sun* remained Vera-free zones, and offered some crumbs of comfort to the beleaguered Prime Minister.

The *Express* is, maybe, not a surprise: under Major's chum Sir Nick Lloyd, it is now the PM's only reliable supporter on Fleet Street. But the *Sun*? Surely this was an ideal opportunity to fly the flag for Our Boys, dress up some page 3 girl in tin hats and put the boot into Major all at the same time?

But the *Sun* — and its new editor, Stuart "Human Sponge" Higgson — have a problem: they've denounced Major with such ferocity for so long, that they cannot very well call for his re-election next time round. But they still hate Labour more.

This dilemma manifested itself in the course of the Great Spam Fritter/D-Day/Vera Lynn row. The *Sun* had, early on, backed the plans for a jolly knees-up to celebrate D-Day (a fact that Major himself drew to the attention of the House last week).

For perhaps the first time in its existence, the *Sun* found itself occupying the middle ground of reason and compromise: it wanted proper solemnity but also some fun as well. It denounced the "kill-joy" Labour MPs who were trying to stop the jollifications and found a little girl to say: "Why can't we have both?" The *Sun* commented: "It sounds the British way to us. And isn't that what men died for?" Phew — a narrow escape there.

But it hasn't stopped the *Sun's* political editor Patrick Kavanagh enthusing over Michael Portillo and his "quiet majority" speech.

Meanwhile, Dame Vera no doubt has gigs lined up well into the next century. Which is more than you can say for poor Mr Major.

YOU MUST have seen the ads for *Loaded*, the new magazine "for men who ought to

know better."

The name itself is evocative — but what of?

A weapon ready for action? Being very rich? Being very drunk? All three probably, but the last definition seems most apposite. As the *Sunday Times* said: "*Loaded* looks like it could be a big hit, if only because it is honest about what most twenty-something men want out of life. A piss-up."

IPC, the publishers of *Loaded*, apparently reckon there's a gap in the "men's magazine" market somewhere between the straightforward sleaze/porn end and *GQ*, *Esquire*, etc. (which make too many concessions to the effete 'New Man' philosophy briefly fashionable in the early '90s).

Loaded, I understand, will be full of articles about first gropes, first shags, getting pissed, etc., etc. None of your 'New Man' hypocrisy.

I hope and believe that it will fail, just as surely as the horrible "style mag" fad of the '80s (*The Face* and its clones) failed. *Viz* and *Beavis and Butt-Head* at least satirise adolescent fantasies and macho posturing. *Loaded* appears to take it all very seriously.

It's no surprise, of course, that the *Sunday Times* is enthusiastic: their target reader profile (and, indeed their editor himself) is exactly the same sort of person.

But without the excuse of youth.

I wonder how he does it



By Jean Lane

THE NATIONAL press's photographic crutch-shot league rose to new heights last week as 36-year old Mr Bryant emerged from the Marie Stopes clinic. Half the country's population crossed their legs and felt their eyes water as he related his experience of undergoing a vasectomy without the help of an anaesthetic, using, instead, self-hypnosis.

He said that though he could feel the sensation of the knife cutting and of the clamps, he was able to use the power of thought to cut off the pain.

There was one tense moment when it was realised that he had not prepared his mind to deal with the pain in the nerve supply from the scrotal area to his stomach. Despite more leg-crossing and eye-watering on the part of the camera crews covering the operation, Mr Bryant coolly applied a minor mind adjustment and told the doctor to carry on.

Emerging, not one hour later, smiling and with a toned-down version of John Cleese's ministry of silly walks, he was greeted by an admiring, if trouser-creased, crowd of photographers wanting to know how soon he would be putting his modified equipment into action. New film was being put into cameras in eager antic-

ipation.

While this sensational, headline-grabbing story was going on, an unnamed, unattended woman lay on her hospital bed in another city having just gone through several hours of natural childbirth which had entailed the use of an episiotomy to make way for the baby's crown. Gazing wondrously at the new born nestling in her arms, shutting out the discomfort of the stitches, she reflected on what an earth-shattering thing she had just done. Not a camera in sight.

A woman in the next ward, at this time, was tapping her fingers on the mattress and counting in her head in time to the drumbeat of pain that was the aftermath of her hysterectomy. Her mind was rapidly learning to adjust and to deal with the terrible throbbing that she was having to endure.

The awful rending pains and constant bleeding she had suffered when she had the coil fitted was not a patch on this, and that didn't even stop her getting pregnant.

She remembered talking to her friends in the showers at the local baths, all the same age group as her, who were showing off their scars. "That one's my hysterectomy." "That's my caesarean." Their nickname for the misogynistic gynaecologist under whose attentions they had all fallen at some time or other was Mac the Knife.

In a nearby suburb a younger woman prepared for bed. As she wondered how her Mum was getting on at the hospital she heard the back door slam and recognised the drunken gait of

her husband just back from the pub. With dismay she heard his now-habitual, alcohol-induced instructions: "Get 'em off, Darling. Guess what's coming."

Feigning sleep, she knew, would not deter him. Nor would telling him that she just didn't want to. Her options were limited: give him "his dues," as he called them, or face the consequences.

As he rolled on top of her she used her — by now perfected — method of enduring the unpleasant and often painful experience; she shut off her mind until it was over. It was similar to the method she used when the kids, young and curious, drove her to distraction. Their noise and questions, demands and mess, dirty nappies and tears which mingled with her own when the bailiffs banged on the door often proved too much.

Her only chance of survival was to create a little island of peace deep inside which could only be achieved by shutting off the outside world. Some of her neighbours, she knew, took tranquqs. But she didn't want to get on that treadmill.

After her husband had finished, she rose and switched on the telly, another mind-numbing technique. A Mr Bryant was standing on the steps of the Marie Stopes clinic surrounded by a platoon of camera men, explaining his method of self-hypnotic mind-control. The two women in the hospital were watching the same programme. They all reflected on what a remarkable chap he was. "I wonder how he does it," they thought.

Meanwhile, in another house,

in another street, a teenage couple were arguing above the noise of the telly which was always on the go in the corner of the room.

They had met at their local tech the year before, and he had managed to get himself a place at university in a town that was hundreds of miles away. They were rowing about the ins and outs of keeping a long-distance relationship going.

"I don't mind if you decide to sleep around a bit," she said. "Well, I do really, but I know you will anyway, so I want you to know that you have my sanction. But I don't want to hear about it, OK? 'Cause it would hurt."

"Fine," he replied. "But you can't, you know. I mean, I wouldn't stand for it. It's different for men. Once he gets it up, you know, he just has to do something with it. It doesn't just go away. But, well, women are built differently, aren't they?"

As she reflected on his worldly wisdom, the telly sounds penetrated further into the room. It was the news. A doctor was saying that what struck him as really interesting about the operation he had just carried out was that there was much less bleeding than was usual with this sort of operation.

"Listen, Matey," she said, turning on her boyfriend, "If he can control the flow of blood through his veins, I'm bloody well sure you can have a little bit of a say over some of your less perpetual bodily fluids. If you're going to do it, do it. But don't make excuses for it, or pretend it's nothing to do with you, right."

Justice for the Tower Hamlets Nine!

DAYS AFTER Quaddus Ali was beaten nearly to death by a racist gang while police refused requests for help, a picket outside the London Hospital in Whitechapel, where Ali lay grievously ill, was attacked by police.

Nine youth were arrested and charged with the very serious offence of riot simply for defending themselves. In response the Tower Hamlets Nine campaign was launched.

The Tower Hamlets Nine campaign has held five pickets and worked with the local community in opposition to the victimisation of the nine. This has forced the prosecution to drop the riot charge against all nine and free three of them.

The case of the Tower Hamlets Nine is clear evidence that the police will not protect black people from the racists, but attack and victimise those who defend themselves. The labour



The Tower Hamlets Nine: victimised by racist police

movement must be clear in saying that people have the right and need for organised self-defence against the racists and the police. Support the Tower Hamlets Nine Campaign! **The Youth for Justice Campaign**

- demands:**
- The right of the labour movement and black communities to organised self-defence
 - An end to prosecutions based solely on confessions

- An independent and elected police complaints body
- Elected bodies to control the police with power over operational policy and budgets
- Abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act
- Disband the Special Branch and Special Immigration police.

More information from: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

JOIN THE PICKET!

Thames Magistrates Court, Bow Road, London E3

3 May, 9.30am



Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Debate

Ban boxing now!

By Mark Sandell

IN HIS letter in *SO595*, Garry Meyer states: "Boxing inflicts death and injury on those who box, but boxing is a competitive sport."

This is part of an argument against banning boxing! I believe *all* professional boxing for money should be banned and I think *all* boxing in schools should be stopped.

Professional boxing with the hype, the TV, the newspapers etc. is the draw that pulls many working-class youth into the ring.

It's a common argument, used by both Garry Meyer and Gary Scott in *SO595*, that boxing is a possible escape from poverty for working-class men.

Yes, for a very few it can be, but so is joining a drug gang that guns down its opponents.

Socialists may understand the causes of such actions but we don't support them or want to legalise them. The fewer working-class youth who try to get out of poverty by battering other working people the better.

Both Gary Scott and Garry Meyer say that banning professional boxing will drive it underground. To some

extent it will. As both point out, bare-knuckle fighting is already underground, but surely they don't want that legalised.

The point is that the draw of boxing is all to do with the massive coverage boxing gets in the media and the money it attracts. That would be stopped by banning professional fights.

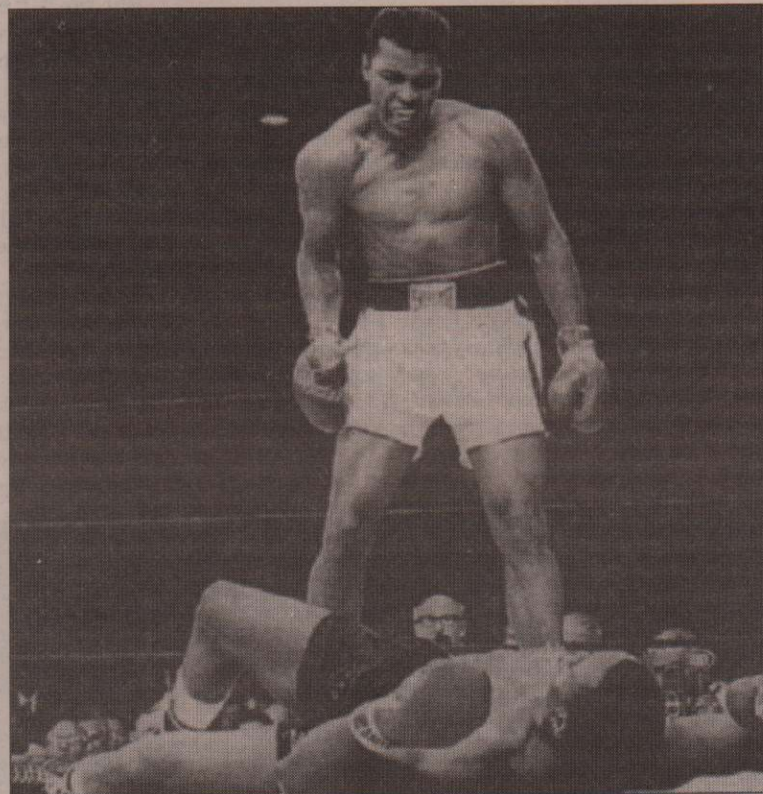
Banning professional boxing is not counterposed to boxers organising in unions, but the issue is the same as with *any* job that kills and injures workers. We are in favour of the law being used to stop people from doing both dangerous and unnecessary jobs.

The banning of child labour in mines did not solve the problem of child poverty, but it was a good thing.

We can't stop boxing as an amateur sport, but we can stop boxing as a job, and we can stop the huge world boxing industry sucking in and chewing up working-class youth who want a way out of poverty.

Garry Meyer says boxing could be made a lot safer if "a doctor rather than a referee decided when a fight should stop."

Well, the British Medical Association has decided: they want a ban on boxing. It's time to stop the fights now!



Winners wind up losers: like Mohammed Ali, who has brain damage

Organise Young Labour!

Dear *Rebellion*,

ACROSS THE country young people in the Labour Party have been setting up Young Labour Groups in order to attract more young people into the party.

In order for these groups to be successful they must be campaigning organisations which fight on issues which affect young people. That is why the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network have called a national meeting for the left in Young Labour. Tony Benn MP will speak and workshops will discuss building Young Labour groups, anti-fascism and unemployment.

Building a campaigning youth section of the Labour Party is vital if we are to convince young people of the importance of being active in the Labour Party. If you are involved in a Young Labour Group or are interested in setting up a local group, then please come to the meeting on 7 May.

For more information write to me c/o 15a Langham Road, London N15 3AX.

Elaine Jones, London

Student leaders try to ditch national demo

By Kev Sexton, NUS Vice-President

ON THURSDAY 21 April the leadership of the National Union of Students [NUS]

attempted to call off the national student demonstration against grants cuts scheduled for 4 May, after telling the membership at the union's conference that the demo would go ahead.

The conference over, they thought they could get away with calling no action against grant cuts.

The National Student Alliance [NSA] called a lobby of NUS headquarters. NSA supporters from around the country deluged them with letters and jammed the switchboard with phonecalls to the President. As a result of our action the leadership backed down and the demo is going ahead.

The fact that the NUS leadership had not sent out a single poster or leaflet by 21 April shows that they don't want a big demo.

Activists need to make sure that the demo is a success, and that the

campaign against grant cuts continues.

In forcing the leaders to back down and go ahead with the demo, the NSA has proved that we can force the leadership to move.

The task now is to keep up the pressure on local and national do-nothing leaders to make them campaign against grant cuts.

We can shake the *rigor mortis* out of NUS but only by building action from below.

This means continuing to build local and national action, setting up NSA groups, and linking up with education unions to build a mass campaign.

How we are fighting the Nazis

By Hannah Wood

STUDENT ACTIVISTS at Goldsmiths College, South London, are canvassing for Labour in Marlowe ward of Deptford constituency, where a local National Front nazi is standing in the local government elections on 5 May.

Goldsmiths Labour Club has agreed to book a minibus, pay for petrol and organise students to canvass in the run-up to 5 May.

Open meeting called by the Campaign Group Supporters' Network for the left in Young Labour

Saturday 7 May, 1pm

University of London Union, Malet Street, London

Nearest Tubes: Euston, Euston Square, Goodge Street

South Wales miners doctrine of "extreme"

The closure of Tower Colliery — announced last week — marks the death of the South Wales coalfield. But the militant, fighting traditions of the South Wales miners will never die. In this article Gerry Bates looks at the great days of militancy in the South Wales pits around the time of the First World War.

"THE IMPRESSION conveyed to my mind in regard to the actions of the strikers throughout these disturbances, and the motives for rioting, is that the doctrine of extreme socialism preached by a small but energetic section is entirely responsible for the premeditated attempts to destroy property."

It is General Macready speaking about Tonypany in South Wales. The time is November 1910. Macready was blaming these 'extreme socialists' for causing riots and running battles with the police in the main street and attacks on scabs and collieries that were still open for scabs.

Macready blamed the Reds, but the 15,000 striking miners of the Cambrian Combine Co. and their families preferred to blame Macready and his coalowner friends, who had moved 1,300 police, 120 mounted police, one company of infantry and two squadrons of Hussars into the Rhondda, with 300 infantry and 200 cavalry in reserve, to intimidate them back to work.

But they weren't intimidated and the strike lasted a bitter 12 months, making Tonypany a

symbol of working-class militancy that bordered on the revolutionary. As late as the 1980s, schoolkids in the Rhondda still sang songs about Churchill, Home Secretary at the time; probably the majority believe that troops shot down striking miners in Tonypany.

There was one death — police batoned Samuel Reys to death — but what Tonypany also killed was the support inside the South Wales Miners' Federation (the 'Fed') for class collaborationist policies of the leadership.

Out of the experience of this leadership selling out the strike came the pamphlet, *The Miners' Next Step* published in 1912.

It bitterly attacked their determined attempts to do a deal with the employers when wages were being reduced and the cost of living was soaring. Generalising from this it declared, "All leaders become corrupt" — they take away the 'power of initiative' from the rank and file and fight against democratic accountability.

As long as these shepherds were in charge there could be no real solidarity because "sheep cannot be said to have solidarity." "But the remedy is not new leaders." The remedy was one big union covering mining and quarrying in Britain, "which, recognising the war of interest between workers and employers, is constructed along fighting lines, allowing for a rapid and simultaneous stoppage of wheels throughout the mining industry" for a seven-hour day and a minimum wage of 8 shillings for those seven hours.

The Executive would be made up of working miners and nothing could be negotiated or become law in the organisation without sanction from the lodges. The more perfect the

organisations, the more militant the policy, the more profits are reduced and the capitalists squeezed out, to be replaced not by nationalisation but direct workers' control with elected local officials, and a central board to control production.

The Miners' Next Step in its turn became a symbol and a declaration of war against the old leadership. The pamphlet was written by the "Unofficial Reform Committee" which included local strike leaders Noah Rees and Will Hopla, and Marxists and syndicalists like W.H. Mainwaring and Noah Ablett.

They had been sent to Ruskin College in Oxford on a union scholarship where they had come into contact with the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in Ablett's case, and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in Mainwaring's.

All of them had been influenced to some extent by Tom Mann's syndicalist ideas. When they returned to the pits they put their knowledge to use by running education classes, drawing about 50 supporters around them, mainly in the Rhondda and Aberdare.

The Miners' Next Step represented the collective ideas of these "extreme socialists" thrashed out in a series of meetings in 1911, and the effect it had was electric. The leadership of the Fed was exposed and the minimum wage became a national issue, leading to the first national miners' strike in 1912.

URC leaders were elected to the Executive in 1911 and up-and-coming militants like A.J. Cook and Arthur Horner were magnetised by the committee and by Ablett, more of a teacher than an agitator.

But the URC, like every other left-wing organisation, was swamped by the wave of patriotism which swept the country when war was declared in 1914. The Fed leaders literally became army recruiting agents and the rate of voluntary enlistment was high in South Wales in the first years. All opposition, apart from a few pacifist members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was effectively silenced — until, that is, the 1915 strike dropped out of the air.

In that year, the whole coalfield came out for an increase in wages to compensate for the rise in food prices caused by war profiteering. It was completely unofficial and as near spontaneous as possible. In defiance of their won officials and a wartime government backed up by a baying press, they won.

They won higher wages and the anti-war

forces won some breathing space to regroup, setting up the Rhondda Valley Anti-Conscription Committee. The mainstream was still pacifist, but James Connolly, the Irish Marxist, was fairly well known in the Unofficial Movement in South Wales because of his writings on industrial unionism, and the British presence in Ireland was as loudly denounced as its intervention in Russia following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Cook is typical — he started out agitating against food shortages but ended up denouncing the war as a capitalist war with no benefit for the working class.

After the impact of the first Russian revolution of February 1917, Tom Mann was getting audiences of up to 2,000 on a speaking tour, and at one of these meetings, Ablett called for peace negotiations with no annexations or indemnities, the formula used by the Menshevik-dominated Soviets at the time. He wasn't aware of the finer points of debate with the Bolsheviks.

This is fairly symptomatic of the isolation of the British left, and in particular the left in South Wales from the international movement, but the Unofficial Movement (UM) embraced Bolshevism in October 1917, seeing it as an expression of workers' control. The political consequences of the Bolshevik victory took a little longer to sink in.

In 1920 Councils of Action were set up to oppose British intervention against the new Soviet government, and Cook, in the Rhondda, saw them as potential soviets in their own right — that is, powerful workers' councils that might contest for power with the ruling class.

In fact, the UM had reached its peak in 1919 when education classes were 500 strong and a South Wales Socialist Society had been set up. Politically it was an unstable coalition of the Independent Labour Party, the British Socialist Party (formerly the SDF), and some Socialist Labour Party members, which flew apart under the strain of the negotiations to set up a Communist Party. Most of the ILP members withdrew into the Labour Party, while the BSP and some members of the SLP joined the Communist Party. A group around Cook set up the syndicalist Communist Party of South Wales and the West of England before following Sylvia Pankhurst's group into the Communist Party in 1921. Ablett and the true syndicalists stayed aloof — and increasingly alcoholic.

1919 was also the year when the UM launched an attack on the miners' leaders' proposals for nationalisation before the Sankey Commission.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) would agree to increase production by local co-operation between management and union officials to reach state-determined targets. In return, the miners would get a six-hour day, pit-head baths, and the maintenance of the national wages structure built up before the war.

The only clear alternative was presented by the UM in their pamphlet, *Industrial Democracy for Miners*.

Amplifying the ideas in *The Miners' Next Step*, this pamphlet set out a complete blueprint for workers' control when a detailed technical argument was needed. Responsibility for nationally agreed production targets would rest with local pit committees controlled by the lodges and all district and national committees were to be elected and accountable to delegate conferences.

It was an elaboration of the "encroaching control" idea in *The Miners' Next Step*.

By 1919 this idea had become feasible in the minds of most miners. The South Wales Miners' Federation, SWMF, was the biggest union in Britain before the war. Industrial militancy secured the minimum wage in 1912. In 1915 in South Wales, industrial action won out against all the odds. It began to appear as though a reformed Fed could challenge the state and the capitalist economy.

At a time when the shop stewards' movement had gone from strength to strength in engineering it appeared to many that maybe all that was

The Minority Movement

BEFORE AND during World War 1 powerful rank and file movements existed not only in the coalfields but also in engineering and on the railways.

Those movements suffered heavily from a slump and severe industrial defeats in 1920-22. But the difference that a politically coherent leading force could make was shown when the Communist Party pulled the pieces together by founding the Minority Movement in August 1924.

A Miners' Minority Movement was set up in January 1924, and industrial sections of the Minority Movement were also formed in engineering and rail.

The Minority Movement ran into problems when the Communist Party became disoriented by Stalinism. In the run-up to the General Strike of 1926, it allowed necessary criticism of the TUC leadership to be overshadowed by the slogan "All power to the General Council." And then, after 1929, the CP went on an ultra-left, ultra-militant binge. The Minority Movement was wound up in 1932.



1910: the use of police and troops against South Wales miners, under the authority of Winston Churchill (then Home Secretary), foreshadowed Tory tactics in 1984-5

s and the ne socialism”



The South Wales miners fought a long battle against closures. Photo: John Harris

needed was that extra shove.

In reality the initiative was already slipping away from the UM. The Sankey Commission was ignored by Lloyd George, the Prime Minister; it had only ever been a delaying tactic.

By 1921 industrial militancy was ebbing and the government felt safe enough to return the mines it had run during the war, to their private owners.

The story of Black Friday was once well known — the miners were locked out, the employers wanted wage cuts, the Triple Alliance were set to come out in support, but Jimmy Thomas, the railworkers' leader, betrayed them at the last minute, just as in 1984-5 the TUC leaders betrayed their pledge to the miners.

The UM's response was pathetic — an immediate appeal to the railway workers over Thomas's head would have brought them out. But they didn't even meet for two weeks and let the moment slip by. In response to the movement of the army and navy into industrial areas Ablett advised "masterly inactivity." Ablett and Cook recommended acceptance of the terms offered and a couple of lodges in Cook's district called for his resignation.

Just then, Cook left the CP claiming they were "causing divisions in the movement." The CP was left to pick up the reins in 1923 with the Minority Movement. The Minority Movement at its peak had affiliated to it about a quarter of all the trade unionists in Britain. It

organised all across industry and was the most powerful organised militant rank and file movement in our history.

The URC was effectively eclipsed as an active force. One consequence was that the question of workers' control was dead and buried for two generations.

Unemployment and economic crisis after 1921 buried syndicalism as an organised movement, but its basic ideas had already been absorbed by most militants in the unions.

That syndicalism hadn't just consisted of "pure militancy." The education classes were an attempt to create an educated Marxist vanguard capable of challenging capitalism. It had sustained an anti-imperialist movement in World War 1. And in fact it gave the Minority Movement its basic ideas for reforming the trade union structures.

Their central mistake was that they placed their Marxist vanguard, not at the head of a disciplined revolutionary organisation able to challenge the state, but at the head of the miners' union, and this tied them to the routine, reformist rhythm of the trade union movement, unable to act and react quickly.

Despite the experience of Tonypandy, where the state used force and was prepared to use armed force, to defeat the miners, they were left with nothing to say about how to defeat the state violence and eliminate it once and for all.

The UM derived both its strengths and weaknesses from the Fed. It was strong because its

ideas struck very deep roots in the movement. It was weak because it didn't get beyond the level of spreading ideas, issuing occasional manifestos and pamphlets, keeping militants in touch and generally playing the role of a ginger group when what was needed was a revolutionary organisation.

Tonypandy

TONYPANDY IS a mining village in the Rhondda valley in South Wales. It was the scene of fierce battles between police and striking miners during the strike of November 1910.

Churchill sent 300 extra police to the Rhondda, and kept a cavalry squadron in reserve at Cardiff and infantry units at Swindon. The police freely used their truncheons and killed one striker, Samuel Reys.

It is not strictly true that Churchill sent in the troops in November 1910, but troops were encamped at Penycraig, a few miles south of Tonypandy after the strike.

In August 1911 Churchill did send in the troops against strikers who were trying to stop a train at Llanelli. The troops opened fire and four men were killed.

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How the ANC came to dominate the unions

By Anne Mack

THE LARGEST trade union federation in South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is supporting the ANC in this week's elections. This reflects the fact that the South African Communist Party (SACP), who are staunch supporters of the ANC, are the dominant force in the leadership of the workers' movement.

The SACP are also the *hard right wing* of COSATU. Their people were the architects of the power-sharing deal between the ANC and De Klerk and are the most vociferous supporters of wage restraint to "help" the "progressive," "patriotic" capitalists.

This Stalinist dominance in the workers' movement was not inevitable. It came about because of the failures of the left and the missed opportunities of the 1980s.

Part of the answer to how this happened is provided by the huge weight of the ANC's apparatus. It had massive funds and managed to present itself as the symbol of black resistance to the regime.

But this does not explain why the ANC triumphed against the left.

It was the intellectual and ideological weakness of the left that guaranteed the ANC's dominance.

The trade union left — who were strongest in the old FOSATU federation [see other article on this page] — tended to reduce all political questions to questions of organisation. In the FOSATU framework, once the working class was well enough organised, then working-class politics would dominate almost automatically.

The FOSATU left had a political agenda, and functioned in part like a political tendency. But they had one crucial weakness. They had a two-stage theory of *first* building a strong trade union movement and *then* moving into politics. This meant in practice that the building of political organisation and the development of socialist ideas outside the immediate process of production were postponed to a later period. In the early 1980s there was a political vacuum in the country, but FOSATU let slip a favourable opportunity to prepare workers politically for the tumultuous times to come.

The ideas of the FOSATU left took root in a relatively small but crucial cadre of union activists and shop stewards. The ANC, however, were able to appeal directly to the rank and file over their heads, and to exploit the lack of a wider political perspective.

So, when the townships exploded in 1984, it was the ANC who appeared to have all the answers to the big political questions of power.

The unions didn't know how to respond to the massive uprising. In part they were held back by a sectarian attitude to community organisations which were not 'proper' working-class organisations like unions. They were influenced by syndicalism — a philosophy which reduces the whole of working-class politics to trade union action. In the absence of a clear lead from the left in the union, the working-class struggles in the black townships — and they were working-class struggles, over issues like rents — were quickly subsumed and generalised into a vague and unspecified populist protest against apartheid in general.

Right from the start of the township revolt, the trade union left allowed the ANC populists to define the political issues.

Very quickly this powerful, spontaneous revolt in the townships was fastened into the populist mould. There was no real living link between the issues around which workers and youth were mobilising — rents, fares, racist schooling — and the maximum goals attached to them, "Free our leaders!", "End apartheid!", "Ungovernability!", "People's power", etc.

The crazy adventurism of "ungovernability" helped create the anarchic conditions which still prevail in the townships today. It was also

a deeply cynical adventurism, because all the time the ANC were calling for "ungovernability" and "people's power" they were actually hoping not for revolution but for the regime to start negotiating with them, as De Klerk eventually decided to.

Back in 1980, the FOSATU left had recognised the importance of state 'registration' or recognition of the unions, and exploited to the full the new legal rights associated with recognition. They broke from the perspective long dominant in the ANC and, for different reasons, in the syndicalist wing of the trade union movement — that all dealings with the state should be boycotted on principle. But those gains were not followed through politically.

In 1982 the general secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster, made a speech about the need for a working-class political movement. He did not clarify what this meant programmatically or organisationally, and in any event his ideas were not followed through. The trade union left chose the road of 'union unity' and 'disciplined alliances' with the popular movement instead of building its own political wing.

The populists were against a workers' party. They were committed to broad national movements organised in Congresses rather than party politics; and the ANC saw the South African Communist Party as the sole representative of working-class interests. They could not be confronted sufficiently by a trade union left which was influenced by its own anti-party ideas stemming from syndicalism.

A workers' party — even a small and weak one — launched out of FOSATU in the early '80s, and armed with a creative approach to the township struggles, could have radically altered the course of events. It was not to be.

COSATU was formed in late 1985 by the unification of FOSATU with some ANC populist-led and other unions. This was a massive step forward. But it gave the ANC a weight and influence within the unions that they did not deserve.

In its first year, COSATU was held back by submerged political disagreements and infighting. While the populists organised, mobilised and conspired, the workerists retreated to the shop floor. They kept their heads down.

The left hoped that their stronger industrial unions would allow them to absorb the populists. That didn't happen. COSATU was formed in the midst of the fire and fury of the township revolt. That propelled it into a political tumult for which the trade union left was ill-prepared.

What was the trade union left's view on disinvestment? On sanctions? The ANC?

Buthezi? The 'homelands'? Black councils? For better or worse, the populists had a position, while the trade union left was groping in the dark.

As the township revolt declined, the ANC started to put more and more resources into strengthening its position in the unions. One expression of this was its campaign to get union after union to adopt the ANC's Freedom Charter.

Those people, like the left in the shopworkers' union CCAWUSA, who obstructed the ANC, found themselves on the receiving end of a classic Stalinist stitch-up.

Some ANC supporters even started turning up to trade union meetings equipped with car tyres and talking about the need to eliminate "enemies of the people."

At the same time as using terror against independent leftists, the SACP also went on a verbal "left turn" in the unions, designed to recruit amongst the shop stewards' layer. The SACP talked a lot about "uninterrupted revolution."

This created a situation where the SACP became the dominant political force in the trade unions while it was still illegal.

When the SACP was legalised in 1990, it tried to present itself as an open, multi-tendency, non-Stalinist, tolerant and broad left party. This was dishonest hype which provided a convenient excuse for some tired ex-FOSATU leftists to collapse into the arms of the Stalinists. Unfortunately, thousands of workers joined because of a misunderstanding: they believed that they were actually joining a "communist" party.

This broad working-class support for the SACP should have been tested by the Marxist left.

They could have attempted to affiliate as a tendency and argue within the SACP and COSATU for a position of standing workers' candidates in the upcoming elections.

Even if the comrades had been refused admission to the SACP it would have opened up the debate on the need for an independent workers' party that is not simply a wing of the ANC's cross-class alliance.

This did not happen. It means that the Workers' List Party have to fight in very difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, the ANC's commitment to run South Africa hand in hand with the mineowners and apartheid bureaucrats means that the huge working-class support they enjoy at the moment will not last forever.

The Workers' List's brave stand in this week's elections will be vindicated in future battles.



In 1988 supporters of the ANC tried to hijack the militant shopworkers' union CCAWUSA. The left fought back. They took the issues to the rank and file and organised mass rallies to explain their case. This picture shows the 2,000 strong Johannesburg rally in March 1988. The caption on the banner reads: "Down with Stalinism."

The South A The chai

Anne Mack looks at the growth of the black workers' movement in South Africa. In the last analysis, it is this multi-million strong force that has compelled the apartheid regime to reform from above in order to stop revolution from below.

Here is this mammoth creature
which they mocked!
That it had no head
and certainly no teeth!
Woe unto you oppressor
woe unto you exploiter.

We have rebuilt its head
we lathed its teeth on our
machines.
The day this head rises
Beware of the day these teeth
shall bite.

On that day:
mountains of lies shall be torn
to shreds
the gates of apartheid shall be burst
asunder
the history books of deception
shall be thrown out.

The Tears of a Creator. Poem composed for the launch of COSATU (the main trade union federation) by Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo and Alfred Temba Qabula

THAT MAMMOTH creature has not yet really begun to bite. Nevertheless, it is the struggle of the black working class which will shape the future of

South Africa.

The origins of the present workers' movement lie in the Durban strikes of 1973. In January and February of that year some 100,000 workers — shipbuilders, stevedores, drivers, brick and tea workers — struck over pay.

This marked the beginning of the new wave of resistance to white supremacy in South Africa, one to which black workers and their trade unions have become central.

In 1969 there were about 16,000 black workers organised in independent unions outside of the control of the state and the officialdom of the racist white unions. Today that figure stands at well over one million.

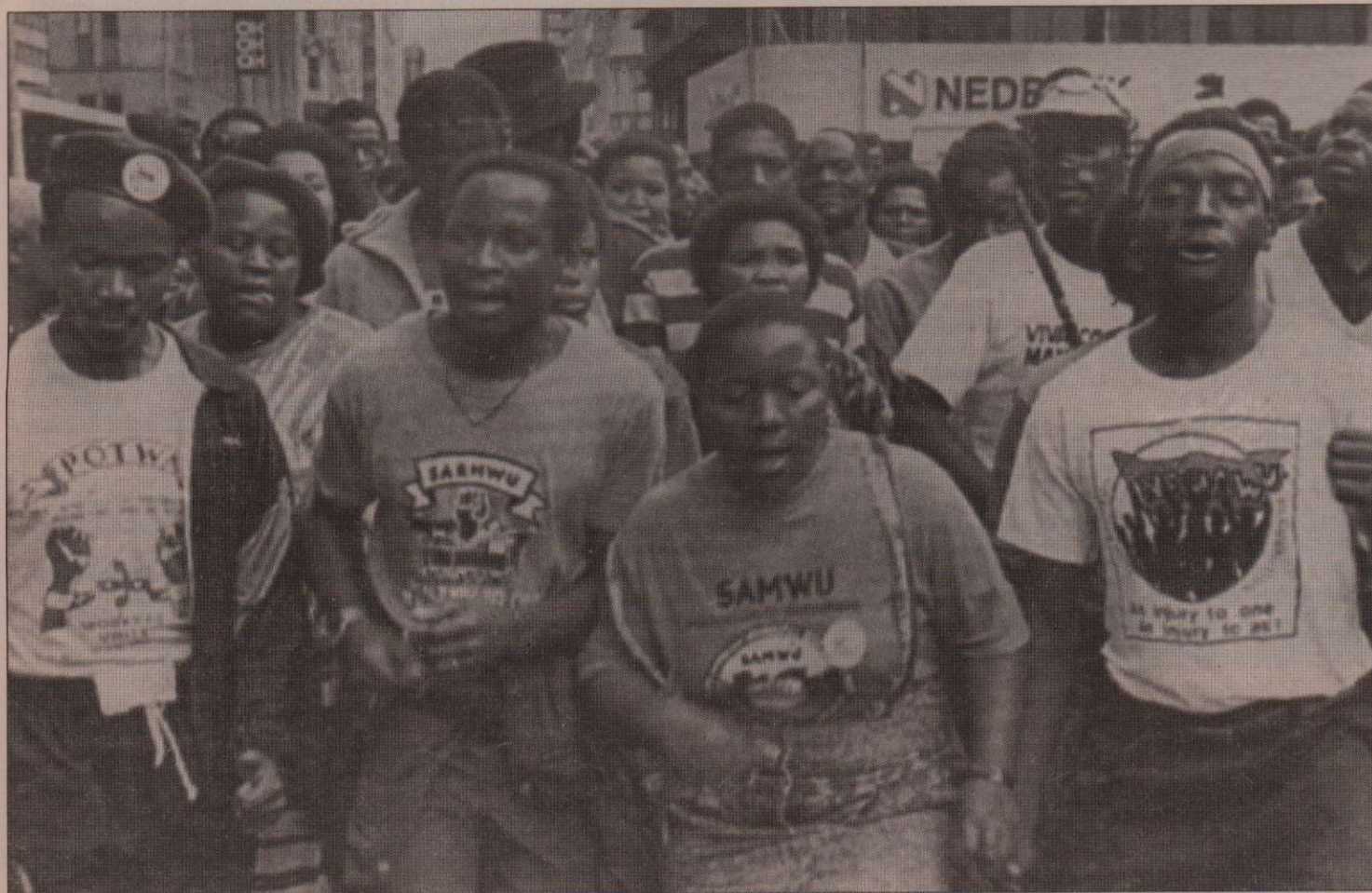
Why has this development taken place? The underlying cause is that the growth of capitalism in South Africa has also meant the growth of the black working class. And the concentration of capital into ever larger factories has meant the concentration of workers into large collective units.

The development of manufacturing industry has brought with it the concentration of resident black workers in large urban townships and has made possible a rise in the level of education and skills of black workers. Many black workers in manufacturing industry have largely cut their ties with a rural past.

All these causes have contributed to the growth of worker organisation and consciousness.

Black workers have had a long tradition of trade union organisation and activity in South Africa. In 1920 there was a strike of some 70,000 black mineworkers; in the 1920s the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union grew to over 100,000 members; in the late 1920s and 1930s industrial unions like the Garment Workers' fought against the

African working class

power to
change a continent

Public sector unions march against privatisation, Johannesburg, 1989

racial divisions which the state was fostering in the workforce; in 1946 there was a massive strike of mineworkers organised by the African Mineworkers' Union and backed by growing industrial unions; in the mid-1950s, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) rapidly mobilised black industrial workers culminating in mass demonstrations and stay-at-homes around the time of Sharpeville in 1960.

However, each of these waves of trade union militancy was eventually contained by

In 1976 South Africa was shaken by the Soweto uprising — a revolt of students and youth against "gutter" education — which managed, despite difficulties, to draw in working-class support in the face of protest strikes or "stayaways".

The unions turn reforms against the bosses

In the wake of Soweto, sections of big business and the government decided that reform of apartheid was needed to protect white privilege and capitalist profits.

In 1979 the Wiehahn Commission reported. It proposed the gradual dismantling of "job reservation" in the colour bar and the granting of limited union rights to a section of the black working class — permanent urban workers, known as "section tenners."

The aim was to create a buffer between the majority of blacks and the whites, a relatively privileged layer separated off from the mass of black workers.

One leading mineowner has since described the Wiehahn reforms as "letting the genie out of the bottle."

In a sense he is right. The unions utilised the state's reform programme to create a space for working-class organisation.

At first the union movement was far from unanimous about how exactly to respond. This debate came to a head over the issue of state "recognition", i.e. registration of black unions.

The more 'orthodox' trade unionists, like the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), which was aligned to the black consciousness movement, welcomed the state's proposals with few reservations and sought registration roughly on terms laid down by the state.

The General Workers' Union (GWU), which was strong on the docks, argued that

registration would mean the kiss of death for independent and democratic trade unionism, and called for a boycott of any official machinery of state recognition of the unions.

The more nationalist trade unionists (like those in the South African Allied Workers' Union, SAAWU) also rejected what they regarded as a recognition of apartheid and made an alliance with the syndicalists on a boycott platform.

The Federation of South African Trade

"Non-collaboration' for the trade union movement was as ridiculous as the idea that because socialists are against capitalism and the wages system we should not fight for higher wages."

Unions (FOSATU), which had powerful metal, car and textile industrial unions in its ranks, came nearer to a working-class political perspective. They argued that new restrictions which registration threatened against independent unions — like a ban on the registration of multi-racial unions or unions which include migrant workers — should be boycotted; old restrictions on trade unionism to which registration makes no or little difference — like restrictions on strike and political affiliations — should continue to be fought against; and that new rights afforded by registration should be exploited by the independent unions and,

whatever the intentions of the government, could be turned to advantage by the unions.

In practice this meant that FOSATU unions applied for registration on their own terms; that is, as non-racial unions comprising all categories of workers. It also meant that FOSATU maintained their commitment to fight for unrestricted rights of free association for black workers.

This strategy met with considerable success. The government gave in on the question of banning 'mixed' unions and migrant workers from registration. This allowed the unions to side-step management excuses about refusing to recognise non-registered unions.

At the same time registration *de facto* did not subject the unions — as some of the boycotters feared — to levels of control by the state which would stop them being militant and democratic.

The use of flexible and realistic tactics by FOSATU showed that most of the moralistic, middle-class talk of "non-collaboration" with the apartheid state and its machinery of domination over black people represented a blind alley. It certainly wasn't a serious option for building a workers' movement.

"Non-collaboration" for the trade union movement was as ridiculous as the idea that because socialists are against capitalism and the wages system we should not fight for higher wages.

The unions grew steadily in the early 1980s. There were strike wavers in the car and metal industries in 1981-2. At the end of 1982 CUSA formed a miners' union (NUM) and appointed a lawyer, Cyril Ramaphosa, as its secretary.

The unions consolidated their position by fighting for small and winnable demands, often around issues like wages, hours, union recognition or maternity rights. Over time a considerable base of working-class organisation was created.

The unions and politics

The black townships exploded in the autumn of 1984. A nation-wide urban revolt quickly developed. Initial issues like rents, racist education and police brutality were soon subsumed into an all-out assault on apartheid. Township youth — the "comrades" — really believed that the state was about to suffer a gigantic loss of will, Mandela's release was imminent and apartheid's days were numbered. This perspective was summed up in the slogan of the school boycotters: "No education before liberation!"

In November 1984 black trade unions joined with student, youth and community groups in the Transvaal to call a two-day stayaway. Up to 800,000 workers participated. In 1987 a massive strike wave drew some half a million workers — miners, railworkers and metalworkers — into action.

The unions were now drawn into politics all the way.

The tragedy has been that the politics the trade union movement has come to adopt have been based on the idea of class collaboration between the black workers on the one hand and the rising black middle class and white liberal capitalists on the other.

This class collaboration has now reached a point where leading trade unionists on the ANC's election list are prepared to accept calls for wage cuts for black workers with jobs, while the mines and major industries remain in the hands of a tiny white capitalist class of less than one percent of the population who own 80% of the wealth.

"The growth of capitalism in South Africa has also meant the growth of the black working class... black workers have largely cut their ties with a rural past."

the state and the capitalists and some met with terrible defeats. Those defeats were in part self-inflicted as independent working-class politics was subordinated to the protest politics of nationalism.

Most recently, after SACTU was driven underground and then into exile in the early 1960s, the level of organisation and activism among black workers collapsed for a decade while South African capitalism grew at an unprecedented rate. But it was organising its own gravediggers.

Out of the Durban strikes of 1973 a small but solid base of working-class organisation was built.

A Black Panther in the '90s



Mark Osborn
reviews *This
Side of Glory*
by David Hilliard

Black Bay Books,
USA, 1993

DAVID HILLIARD grew up during the late 1950s and early '60s in Oakland on America's West Coast.

Hilliard became the Chief of Staff of the Black Panther Party and held the organisation together when its main leaders, Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale, were in jail.

Hilliard tells his story in *This Side of Glory*. The book seems to be an honest, insider's account of the Panthers. It has some of the same feel as *A Taste of Power*, the autobiography of Elaine Brown, another ex-Panther leader. It is a mix of tales of rebellion, a depiction of state brutality, and the story of a political party overseen by a cult leader: Huey P Newton. It is also strangely apolitical and without clear opinions and conclusions.

Like Elaine Brown's book, Hilliard's contains many descriptions of the violence that characterised inner party 'discipline' — for instance, beatings meted out by Special Squads.

One low point in this sorry tale is when the Security Officer of the Chicago chapter installed an electric chair in the basement of the Chicago Panther offices! The Central Committee decided that he had gone a little too far.

Although this man was later exposed as a state informer, this should be food for thought for anyone who still believes that the Panthers are a model to follow.

Like Elaine Brown, David Hilliard is still obsessed with Huey Newton, nearly twenty years after the collapse of the Panthers. Newton expelled David Hilliard from the party while Hilliard was in jail. According to Hilliard, Masai Hewitt was nearly beaten to death for defying Newton and objecting to this expulsion on the Panther Central Committee.

This Side of Glory is a very sad book. Hilliard writes about his years after the party. He is released from jail into a world which he does not recognise.

"It's 1974, under Gerry Ford, people are living on the margin... the community's changed... the Oakland of my youth was a working-class town, people holding down nine-to-fives. Now the community seems increasingly devastated. There's no politics on the streets anymore... Now the main action on the streets is drugs and prostitution. The kind of kids who four or five years ago were

chanting 'Free Huey!' and 'Power to the People!' are now flaunting their bodies or dealing on the corner." Hilliard too hits the booze and cocaine, and later he becomes a crack addict.

David Hilliard's personal disintegration mirrors the battering and atomisation of the whole community. Under Reagan matters get much worse for black people in America.

"I feel humiliated by the kids, the dealers and the would-be dealers, dressing like millionaire athletes, wearing gold, arrogant and violent. Their presence rebukes me: I should be able to talk to them, deal with them — they are the sons and daughters of the people the Party organised... one morning I park in the space they use to deal... You can't reason with these fools. They pull out a gun and I move.

"One day the family holds a picnic, scores of us gathering in a city park for a barbecue. I spot some youths checking us out. Suddenly bullets spray the place." An eight year old girl was shot.

Hilliard describes his feelings: "I became consumed with a general hatred toward all male black youths. I despise them.

"Twenty years ago these guys would have been Panthers. Now they're violent, undisciplined, apolitical, fratricidal maniacs. I have never felt such hatred toward another black person.



David Hilliard, ex-Panther, now trade unionist

I've been able to withstand every attack and failure of the Party, but not this — the existence of these kids seems to be the complete nihilistic repudiation of everything the party stood for. I want to kill them."

It has come to this. And the next

sentence in the book says: "I relapse." Hilliard hits the drink and drugs again.

Nevertheless David Hilliard never gave up. He is now a union rep in California. I wish him well. He is a respectable man.

Dialectics great and small



Jon Pike
reviews *Dialectical
Investigations*
by Bertell Ollman

Routledge, 1993

DIALECTICS HAVE got a bad name. Time was when every rightminded leftist could assert the superiority of the scientific method, dialectical materialism, culled from a *History of the CPSU (Short Course)*. Those days are long gone, as are those when the high priests of theory in Gerry Healy's organisation could use dialectical nonsense to cow and condemn opponents both internal and external to his regime.

Most people who want to be Marxists also want to be dialecticians yet are faced with great difficulty in finding out what one looks like. The temptation is then to opt for a sort of lowest common denominator of dialectical sayings that socialists can get their heads round, and which have a sufficiently rational basis to form a kind of philosophical identity for activists, without degenerating into mumbo jumbo.

These tend to include saying that the world is a complex, changing place, and that we should emphasise its dynamism and not look at it in freeze frame; that contradictions in a system drive it forward; that when you get to the bottom of things, they are often not as they first appear; and that how you understand a situation often depends on where you are looking from.

This, it seems to me, is all true, all useful, all dialectical, but neither a

theory nor a method. The significance of Bertell Ollman's latest book, *Dialectical Investigations*, is that he tries to integrate low-level dialectics into a method and then apply it to various preoccupations that are pressing on his section of the American Left. Ollman is perhaps the most important Marxist intellectual in America and the project should get a guarded welcome — it's good to see someone writing serious philosophical Marxism in a non-technical way, outside the current right-wing vogue of "rational choice" which rejects dialectics entirely.

The book is in three parts, an introduction to dialectics, a more advanced study of aspects of the method, and seven applications of it.

Ollman gives frequent references back from the 'applied' to the 'pure' dialectics so the reader is able to follow through his thinking. Certainly the distinctions made are nice ones. His approach is sophisticated, emphasising now one, now another aspect of a problem in a way that marries up to Marx's own flexibility in interpreting history; and all in all the book is a useful corrective to those who reject dialectics as simple minded. If it starts up a debate on the usefulness of dialectics in studying social reality from a socialist point of view, then it will have done an important job.

But there are two related problems in Ollman's book, one which is directly his fault and one — the way in which the book reflects the failings of the American left — for which he shares no more blame than anyone else.

The classical Trotskyist approach to the development of the working class movement in the US has been, for many years, to call for and to

assist in initiatives to form a labour party, based on the trade unions. The absence of a political organisation of the working class is the biggest obstacle facing the left in the US, and the left, of course reflects this; with the result that it is almost entirely an isolated and academic left. Thus the biggest gathering of socialists in New York is called the Socialist Scholars Conference where — it's no exaggeration — two hundred can discuss the possibilities of advancing towards a Marxist psychology, while down the hall a tenth of that number listen to speakers from the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, explaining the most important step forward for the rank and file for decades — the victory of the Carey slate in the Teamsters' Union.

Not only are the concerns of the American left far distant from the working-class movement in their academicism but a lot of this stuff is lousy, subjective academicism — this is, of course, the arena of the politically correct.

Ollman is much better than most, because of his genuine attachment to Marxism as the theory of the emancipation of the working class and to some form of Trotskyism. He has consistently stuck up for a form of classical Marxism, and has been victimised because of it.

In a better political environment, Ollman's stuff would be more widely discussed, and the left would gain. But a lack of rootedness, both political and philosophical comes through in this book. Sophistication and flexibility are not advantages in themselves, but only when rooted in a wider intellectual orientation to the real working class.

Thus when he discusses the Soviet Union, Ollman argues that it "is neither socialist nor capitalist, neither a

dictatorship nor a democracy, neither a workers' state, nor a bureaucratic state... but contains elements of all of these." This eclecticism means that for Ollman, the Soviet Union was best understood as a "regency of the proletariat" where the CPSU was analogous to a sixteenth-century regent ruling in place of an underage monarch — the working class. It's difficult to be charitable about this. The relation between the CPSU and the proletariat was not just a "dysfunctional" one, and the collapse of Stalinism can't be explained by the failure of the regent to decide to hand over power to the mature monarch. In fact, the CPSU stood in murderous animosity to the Soviet working class, and never had any intention of handing over power.

Despite all their faults, the post-Trotsky Trotskyists recognised this, if only formally. In contrast, Ollman plays fast and loose with the real history of the Soviet worker, for example, suggesting that poor planning was "probably" something to do with the collapse of Stalinism...

Apart from this, the concerns of the book with academic freedom and with studying class consciousness (we should, apparently, "study with workers in groups — a strike offers one example of this, visits to the unemployment office is another... asking workers what they see in pictures or cartoons that are relevant to their situation...") betray the outlook and political poverty of the American Left.

A perspective from which workers appear almost as another species which we study with a particular method outlined by the left's intellectuals, is a terrible degeneration of Marxism. And I want to argue that this has something to do with the

view of dialectics that ends up as yet another mystification.

Ollman's philosophical rootlessness hampers all his desires to get out of the political isolation of the left in the United States. For his useful stuff on dialectics is no more than a worked up series of insights, similar to those of every Marxist wannabe but much more worked-up. Marx understood things slightly differently: a dialectical understanding of the capitalist world was necessary because that's the way the (capitalist) world is. To use the philosophical jargon, Marx's dialectic is thus a product of the ontology — the real being — of capitalism rather than an epistemological choice — how we know about it. A dialectical theory is a theory first of all of how the world is: what things it contains and how they behave.

This means that we are likely to go wrong if we try to apply a method that springs from the nature of capitalist political economy to something outside that realm like physics, the US constitution or academic freedom.

The dialectical method is important because it shows how the use-value/exchange-value contradiction is the essence of the capitalist organism. This means that that organism behaves in a certain way. But dialectics doesn't, rigorously, mean much more than that. To argue that it does, gives a whole series of hostages to fortune, and risks constructing an anti-method of enquiry where just about anything goes.

Ally that with political isolation on the American left and the result is Ollman's new book. For all its sophistication it remains unable to salvage the unsalvageable the conception of 'big' dialectical materialism as a universal method.

All quiet on the Eastern Front



Matt Cooper
reviews
Stalingrad

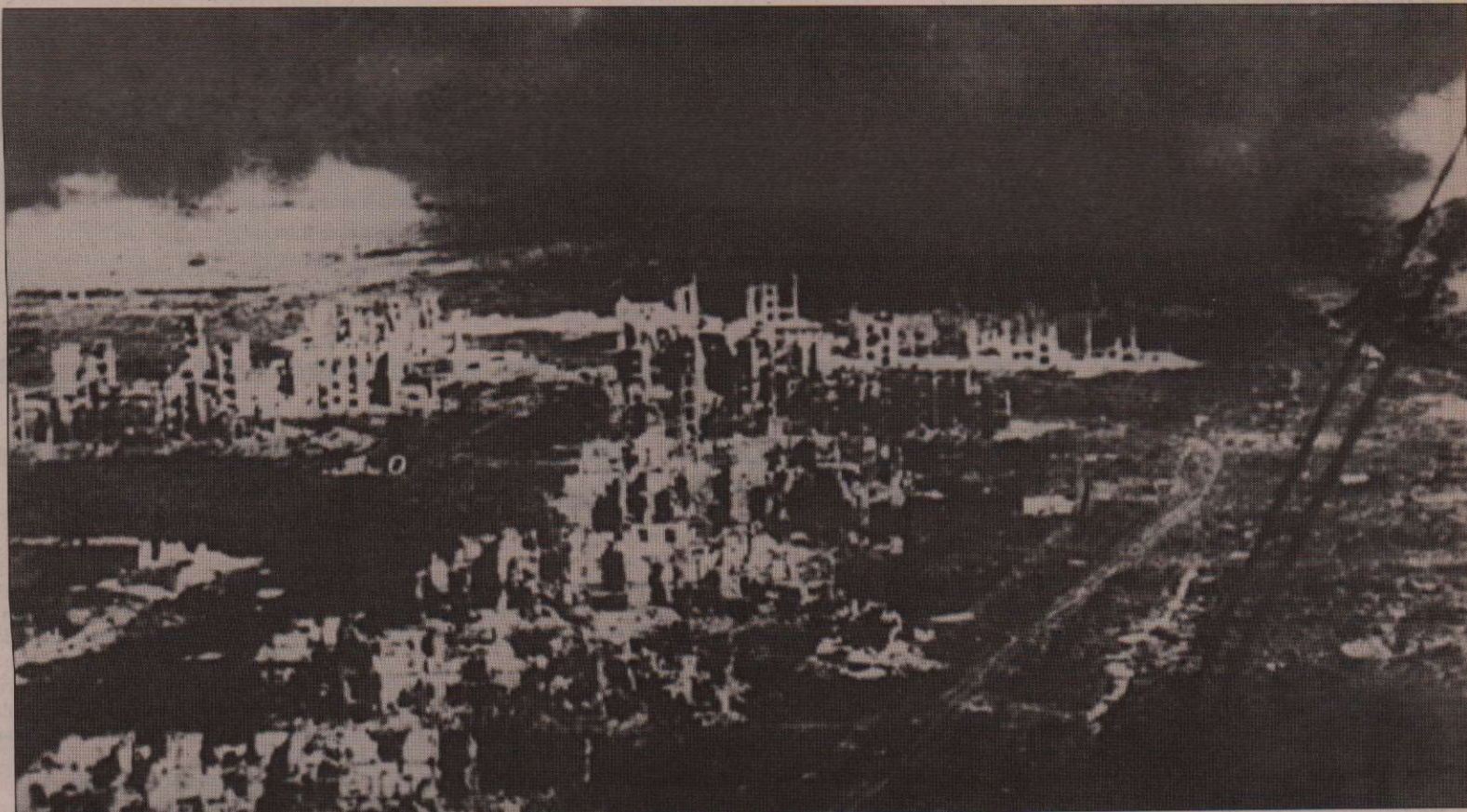
Directed by
Joseph Vilsmaier

STALINGRAD walks very familiar ground — it is a film of the “war is hell” type with the implicit anti-war sentiment that the genre implies. It covers this terrain with some success, as well as some flaws, but contains nothing very surprising along the way.

The Stalingrad of the title refers to the Russian city where Hitler's armies faced their first major defeat of the Second World War. At the mouth of

“By the end of the campaign a million people had died in battle, of starvation and in the cold of the Russian winter.”

the Volga Stalingrad was one of the cities on which the balance of power between the Soviet Union and Germany pivoted. By the end of the campaign a million people had died in battle, of starvation and in the cold of the Russian winter. Russian soldiers and civilian deaths outnumbered the 250,000 Germans three to



Stalingrad was a pivotal battle of World War 2

one, but the losses on both sides defy human comprehension. The film does not attempt to convey the enormity of this, but relies on following the fate of 600 German storm troopers. Vilsmaier has been attacked for focusing on people who are styled “Nazi soldiers,” the perpetrators of the crime, not its victims. The detractors have argued that the defenders of Stalingrad should be the focus of the film. Vilsmaier's approach is, I think, valid. While at no time so naïve as to

suggest that these soldiers are in any sense anti-Nazi or even against the war in any worked-out way, Vilsmaier suggests that they are ordinary people caught up in something they do not understand. The squadron is cut down by the brutality of both the war and their own leadership, first to sixty. As the film grinds inexorably and inescapably on, the numbers get fewer and fewer.

The main characters are standard for a film of this genre. There is the inexperienced and idealistic young Lieutenant who commands the squadron (Thomas Kretsman), the battle-hardened sergeant who is the real power behind the troop, Rolo (Jochen Nichol), and the fresh faced recruit Muller (Sebastien Rudolph). The lieutenant goes into battle believing it will make him a man, but in the end is unable to cope with its brutality and inhumanity. Rolo comes to recognise that in his commitment to fighting he has become less than human. Muller is simply overwhelmed by fear of war and death — again, all as you would expect. The soldiers realise that even if they survive, with the experiences they carry with them they can never return

to the homes that they left.

For the most part the film is merely an evocation of the horror of war and particularly siege. The film is often over the top with its gore — limbs are blown off, people cut in two by tank fire. Through this, soldiers come to realise their position as the cannon fodder of the top brass. As this happens the men themselves rot (literally). One unfortunate aspect of the film is that it is riddled with some rather leaden clichés — German soldier confronts Russian soldier, but neither can shoot, soldiers are forced to shoot civilians, the officers eat while the soldiers starve. It is all done with some aplomb and does have some success of communicating the feel of war, although the plot is sometimes confusing.

Any recommendation for this film has to carry one heavy proviso. The realist “war is hell” genre is nearly as old as modern cinema. There is little in *Stalingrad* that makes it fundamentally different from Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, made in 1930. *Stalingrad* borrows liberally from *All Quiet...*, its character are essentially the same, and although *Stalingrad* offers much

more gory set-pieces, the horror of the trench warfare of the First World War is communicated in the same way of the siege and battle of Stalingrad. As such, *Stalingrad* does not do anything new, it is merely recycled. This does not diminish the film's potent message, but many will find it very familiar territory.



Cannon fodder of the top brass

The publishers without politics



Jeni Bailey
reviews *Cop Killer*

X Press

COP KILLER is the latest novel from X Press, “Publishers With Attitude” who brought us *Yardie*.

Cop Killer centres on Lloyd Baker, whose mother is killed by the police.

Lloyd decides enough is enough and seeks vengeance by killing as many policemen as he can before they catch him.

Cop Killer seeks to make black people angry at the injustices and harassment which the police carry out amongst the black community.

Unfortunately, it doesn't channel the anger into anything positive to forward

the struggle for liberation of black people.

Instead, we are urged to back this “hero” of the black community, to respect his views and morals without question, to accept him as he is and see him as the representative of all black people.

“...what they lack is the ideas that liberate.”

Cop Killer offers no real answers to the harassment both black and white people suffer from the police and government, and in society as a whole.

X Press have the attitude to agitate, what they lack is the ideas that liberate: socialist, class struggle, black and white unite and fight ideas.

Class conflict as comedy



BBC1
Tuesdays 10pm

Geoff War
reviews

The Riff Raff
Element

THE RIFF RAFF *Element*, Debbie Horsefield's comedy of class conflict, has been resurrected for a second series.

The Riff Raff are the working-class Belcher family, who answer an advert and find themselves living as tenants under the same roof as the bourgeois Tundish family in Tundish Hall.

Cultures inevitably clash as these eleven weird and wacky people interact.

In contrast with Tory Britain, here, the class divide is being smoothed over and the characters are becoming chummy.

Itinerant musician Alister, the least stuffy of the Tundish men, is planning to go on holiday with Pet Belcher. Mortimer Tundish (who speaks like a circumlocutory civil servant) is being incredibly decent and supportive — okay, wimpish — while his wife becomes pregnant by the young, roguish Declan Belcher.

And both of them are helping the Belchers cover up the murder of Maggie Belcher's brutish partner so as not to “complicate the pregnancy”.

Only the eldest Tundish, Roger, a retired diplomat, gave vent to his class instincts when he considered evicting the Belchers — only to be talked out of it by his less class biased American wife.

If all this hasn't whetted your appetite consider the statement in the *Times* about the last series “the best thing on television for at least five years”.

Now that is hilarious.

Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 28 April
"How to fight the fascists"
 Speaker: Mark Sandell
 1.00, Students Union,
 University of Central England

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 28 April
"South Africa in crisis"
 Speaker: Tom Rigby
 7.30, SCCAU, West Street

Saturday 30 April
"Socialism and the fight against fascism"
 1.30, after the anti-racist demonstration, SCCAU, West Street

BOLTON

Thursday 28 April
"How to beat the Nazis"
 12.00, Room 110,
 Chadwick Site, Bolton Institute

LEICESTER

Thursday 28 April
"Labour must fight!"
 7.30, Castle Community Rooms

Monday 9 May
"How to beat the fascists"
 Speaker: Mark Sandell
 1.00, Leicester University

LONDON

Wednesday 4 May
"How to defend education"
 Speakers: Elaine Jones and Jason Bonning. Chair: Kev Sexton
 Barley Mow pub,
 104 Horseferry Road, SW1

MERSEYSIDE

Wednesday 4 May
"How to fight fascism"
 7.30, Wallasey Unemployed Centre,
 Seaview Road

GLASGOW

Tuesday 10 May
"Where we stand: the politics of the AWL"
 7.30, City Halls

LANCASTER

Tuesday 10 May
"After the elections, what next for anti-racists?"
 Speaker: Mark Osborn
 1.00, Student Union

"Where next after the elections?"
 Speaker: Mark Osborn
 7.30, Farmers Arms

MANCHESTER

Wednesday 11 May
"Where next after the May elections?"
 Speaker: Mark Osborn
 7.30, Unicorn pub, Church Street

LEEDS

Thursday 12 May
"Can we make Labour fight?"
 7.30, Adelphi pub

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 19 May
"How can we beat racism?"
 7.30, ICC, Mansfield Road

M25 Three

The truth will out!

WE ARE grateful for your article by Bob Royale in *Socialist Organiser* (596, 14 April) publicising the injustice done to the M25 Three. However it did contain some factual mistakes. You stated:

"To make matters worse, at the actual trial two of the prosecution witnesses, who were white, admitted to carrying out the murder but under instructions of the accused. For this heinous act the assassins were promised the princely sum of ten pounds each."

In fact the two white witnesses did not admit to carrying out the crime, and there was no suggestion of anybody being given instructions to com-

mit the crimes.

Their fingerprints, however, were found on the robbers' car at the scene of the crime and they fitted the descriptions made by the four victims which described two of the robbers as being white.

In addition, one of these men fitted a victim's detailed description of a man with fair hair and blue eyes! The

same fair-haired man also possessed a gun which was identified by a victim. Finally, the two white men were also seen attempting to burn the two cars stolen by the robbers.

I do not blame you for misunderstanding the issues in this case. How could it be that three black men were convicted, let alone charged, when the victims have maintained two of the

robbers were white and one was black?

How? — Racism is rooted in the legal system, that's how!

There is nothing complex to understand. We are victims of two of the most horrendous crimes to humanity that politics provokes: 'Racism and Injustice.'

It is important for human equality and justice that we continue to unite, to get the facts right to help the different struggles against injustice and discrimination.

Yours in continuous struggle,
Raphael Rowe (Hostage)
 HMP Gartree,
 Market Harborough,
 Leicestershire, LE16 7RP

Anyone wishing to get a dossier about the case or to help the campaign to free the M25 Three, please write to:

South Bank House,
 Black Prince Road, Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SJ.
 Telephone: 071-582 9120

The Hebron massacre and collective guilt

"Not our opinion"

RE: YOUR editorial of 31 March 1994, "Are all Israelis responsible for Hebron?"

The above editorial was recently brought to my attention. The introduction to Michel Warshawsky's article, "Hebron reveals bitter truth" (*International Viewpoint* no.254, March 1994), was the author's own and did not reflect editorial opinion on the part of *International Viewpoint*.

Further, a member of your staff rang our office specifically about the article. In that conversation I feel I had made the above facts perfectly clear.

Please inform your readers at the earliest opportunity.

Roland Wood,
 for *International Viewpoint*.

John O'Mahony comments:
 THIS BUSINESS becomes odder and odder. It was dealt with in last week's *Socialist Organiser*, but Roland Wood is entitled to his say.

Once more, the facts are these. An editorial blurb, laid out like the other blurbs in *International Viewpoint*,

appeared as an introduction to Warshawsky's article (see the reproduction in last week's *Socialist Organiser*).

Both the first sentence of the blurb ("As we went to press...") and the last sentence ("We asked our Jerusalem correspondent for his initial reaction") separated it off from the article and presented it to the reader, *whoever wrote it*, as "editorial" matter.

Thus, when commenting, we called it an editorial blurb on the authority of the information conveyed to us by typography, by phrasing, by the place of the blurb in relation to the article, and by the blurb's uniformity with all the magazine's other editorial blurbs.

We are now told: no, it was not an editorial blurb because it was written by the author of the article, Michel Warshawsky (though the blurb itself tells the reader that it was written by someone other than "our Jerusalem correspondent").

So? Is there some rule in the "Fourth International" forbidding Michel Warshawsky from contributing edito-

rial blurbs to its publications? Or a rule depriving editorial blurbs he does write — or which are adapted by the editor of *International Viewpoint* from what he writes — of full editorial authority?

I'm beginning to feel that I am playing in some game whose rules I do not understand!

Let us define it as an editorial blurb written by Michel Warshawsky and separated off by Warshawsky, or by the editor, from his mere "initial reaction" to make the point — that the "entire Israeli people" was responsible for the massacre perpetrated by the religious-racist lunatic Goldstein — more authoritative. That is what Roland Wood's "additional information" adds up to. And where has that got us?

Yes, a phone conversation, accurately described by Roland Wood, did take place between Roland Wood and Mark Osborn. But it is a strange idea that privately conveyed information about the authorship of what appeared as an unsigned editorial introduction cancels out both its public status and any reason for public comment on it.

A comment like that, blaming the entire Israeli people for Goldstein's terrible deed, might have a weight and significance in a signed article coming from one in the heat of the struggle against the Israeli chauvinists very different from the weight it has when presented as a cold editorial statement. But it did appear as editorial statement, and in a magazine a lot of whose supporters demand the elimination of the Jewish state.

Many *International Viewpoint* readers cannot but have read the imputation of general collective guilt to the whole Israeli people as one more moral sanction for the Arab chauvinist programme of destroying the Israeli state.

And, I repeat, whoever initially wrote it, it was as an editorial blurb that the comment appeared. Unjustly attributing bad faith to *Socialist Organiser* for reacting to it can't change that. A convincingly forthright and vigorous denial of Zionophobia, that anti-imperialism of idiots, might. If Roland Wood sends us such a statement, we will be glad to print it.

Was Jesus born in Bethlehem?



By Rob Dawber

THE IDEA that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, well-known as it may be, has so far found little support in the Gospels. But now we come to Luke.

Beginning with the assumption that Jesus is of Nazareth, Luke has to get Mary to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-6):

And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of

David, which is called Bethlehem: (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

Think of it. A Roman Emperor decides that everyone has got to be assessed for tax by completing some sort of census form; everyone — "all the world." But they can't do it at home.

They must travel to wherever their ancestors were born (which ancestors exactly do you choose? Presumably they moved around as well) and there give the necessary details. This at a time when records were more scarce than they are now. Who was to know where their ancestors were born?

So "all the world" is travelling around to fill in census forms. Can we really believe that any Empire would produce such turmoil for no purpose?

In the case of Jesus we go to Bethlehem because Joseph "was of the house and lineage of David." Why? Was he the father? Surely we should have followed Mary's line which, according to Luke, was of the house of Aaron?

According to Josephus, the census ordered by Cyrenius was made on the occasion of Judea becoming part of the Roman Empire in AD6 and was only of Judea. There is no suggestion that everyone had to move around.

This also conflicts with Luke setting

Jesus's birth within six months of that of John the Baptist, who in his turn was supposed to have been born during the reign of Herod — who died in 4BC.

The whole thing is an invention. It is to Luke also that we owe the "no room at the inn" story (Luke 2:7): *And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

There then follows in Luke (2:8-20) an account of how the shepherds visited him in the manger. Luke nowhere mentions any wise men. Matthew (2:11) says that the wise men (no number is given anywhere) visited the young child in "the house" after having "seen his star in the East" (2:2). And he does not mention any shepherds. Mark and John, of course, are entirely silent — apart from implicit contradictions — on this part of the story.

So the nativity part of the Jesus story is made up by selecting different bits from two Gospels; by ignoring the contradictions within each Gospel and between all four; by not worrying about how any dates or names given of events or known historical figures do not accord with what is known independently about them; and by later elaboration — for example, not only are we

to understand that there were definitely three wise men but some children are even taught their names!

There is nothing further in any Gospel of the Jesus story until the baptism by John the Baptist with the exception of the piece in Luke (2:42-50) where Mary and Joseph notice Jesus is missing and find him talking to the doctors in the temple; we are told he is twelve years old and the doctors are astonished at his understanding and answers. This is one of the passages already mentioned where Joseph is referred to as his father.

To sum up the Christian evidence so far on this small but "well-known" part of the Jesus story, we can note that the Gospels say the following: he was born before 4BC (Matthew and Luke); he was born in 6AD (Luke); he was born about 1AD (Luke); he was born of a virgin (Matthew and Luke); Joseph was his father (Luke and John); he was descended from King David through the male line — the Messiah (Matthew and Luke); he was not descended from King David (John); he was born in Bethlehem (Matthew and Luke); he was not born in Bethlehem (John); he was born in a manger (Luke); he was born in a house (Matthew); he was visited by shepherds (Luke); he was visited by wise men (Matthew).

Next week: Jesus of Nazareth

Fight for the right to strike!

CAMPAIGNING

By a NATFHE member,
Southwark College

TRADE UNION activists from British Telecom, the Fire Service, London Underground, the Civil Service and other sectors met last weekend to discuss building a campaign for the right to strike.

The meeting, called by Lambeth Trades Council and initiated by activists from the college lecturers' union NATFHE after the High Court banned their national strike last month, focused on how this latest round of Tory anti-union laws make organising legally water-tight strike action very difficult if not impossible.

A lawyer from the Haldane Society explained how the Appeals Court even ruled that a margin of error of ten is all that is allowed in postal ballots.

That means that if a union branch, region or section has failed to update the addresses

of the tiniest fraction of its membership then the ballot can be declared invalid even if the verdict is unanimous!

Everyone present agreed that a major labour movement campaign should be built on the issue. A further planning meeting will be held in the near future.

If the right approach is adopted it should be possible to forge broad based unity across the movement in defence of the most elementary right to working class resistance.

A trade union alternative to the Tory laws.

And the campaign should involve putting forward an alternative legal framework which would protect the rights of trade unionists.

Labour is committed to the idea of a set of positive rights but is equivocal about their precise content. We would support the following:

1. The right to union membership

Without the right to organise, workers will be helpless victims of exploitation.

2. The right to organise.

Legislation must protect all workers against discrimination or dismissal on the grounds of union membership. It must provide rights of access for union representatives from outside — full-time officials or shop stewards from other workplaces. It must give clear protection against victimisation.

It must allow all shop stewards at a workplace a broad range of facilities as well as time off for meetings and courses. It must allow ordinary members time off to attend meetings.

3. The right to recognition.

Clear obligations must be imposed on employers requiring them to recognise and bargain with the representatives of independent trade unions.

4. The right to strike and take solidarity action

For the first time in our history, UK law should contain a clear and unequivocal positive right for individuals to withdraw their labour.

If they exercise their rights to take direct action against their employer or action in soli-

arity with others, they should be protected against dismissal or discrimination. And their unions should be protected against injunctions or sequestration.

5. The right to picket.

The right to attend at your own or another workplace to express your support for fellow workers and hostility to the bosses is a fundamental civil liberty. Restrictions on the numbers of pickets are as undemocratic as restrictions on the numbers of those taking part in demonstrations.

6. The right to union democracy.

The right of union members to control their own rulebook is an important extension of democracy in our society.

Certainly every union member should have a vote on who should lead their union. It's a scandal that some unions refused that right, and thus enabled the Tories to look as if they were putting through a democratic reform. But union democracy should be enforced by union members themselves, not by anti-union judges.

7. The right to political action.

A Labour government should simply repeal the present Tory restrictions, leaving the whys and wherefores of political expenditure solely to the membership of each union.

8. The right to job security.

A Labour government must legislate so that the law on unfair dismissal and allied areas covers all workers. A special tribunal must be established to adjudicate on redundancy. All tribunals must be given power to compel reinstatement where they find dismissal is unjustified.

9. The right to a safe workplace.

The Tories have undermined the law on Health and Safety by starving an already inadequately resourced Health and Safety Executive and Inspectorate of Funds. Crucially union reps. must be given the right to stop the job immediately in the face of hazards.

10. The right not to be discriminated against.

Because of their ineffectuality, only a handful of cases are heard each year under the

anti-discrimination legislation. We need clearer and stronger rights to protect workers against discrimination on the grounds of race, sex and sexual orientation. Industrial Tribunals must again be given the power to compel reinstatement.

11. The right to consultation and information.

Immediately, a Labour government should introduce improved rights for shop stewards to receive information and consultation over profits, investment, takeovers, hiring and firing, and all aspects of the operation of the business.

12. The right to a full and proper contract For part-time workers, short-term contract workers and homeworkers.

The "peripheral" workforce must receive the same rights as full-timers.

Finally, and crucially, we demand reform of the judiciary. The implementation of the Workers' Charter will be undermined were its interpretations left to the present unrepresentative and unaccountable judges.

UNISON left needs a serious strategy

UNISON

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON

UNISON Fightback met in Sheffield last week to discuss the left's response to the pay freeze, cuts and redundancies.

UNISON Fightback is an initiative sponsored by 25 UNISON branches. The key branches behind the initiative are Newcastle, Sefton and Sheffield. Unfortunately the event was dominated by the SWP.

On pay the meeting agreed to circulate a motion calling for a UNISON-wide one day strike over pay and for national delegate meetings to control the pay claim. Both ideas should be welcomed and supported, but the meeting failed to sort out the details necessary if the left are going to seriously challenge the national leadership.

How precisely are we demanding UNISON organise this strike? Are we calling for a national ballot? Are we calling for Jinkinson and Bickerstaffe to call a national unofficial one-day strike? Are we calling for a UNISON 'day of action'? All this to the SWP is probably bureaucratic detail but to any serious UNISON activist it is

essential.

UNISON's local government conference in March voted for a day of action. Unfortunately the conference voted down proposals to ballot the membership on one day strike action. In the run up to national conference the proposal for a UNISON-wide one-day strike sanctioned by a ballot should be re-raised. At the same time the UNISON leadership must be asked — what happened to the day of action agreed at the local government conference?

For the pay battle. AWL supporters proposed a rolling programme of strike action of at least 6 days. The SWP voted that no discussion be taken on this. The meeting restricted itself to a vague call for a one day strike.

Most of the discussion on pay was dominated by "consciousness raising" speeches about the importance of stickers and displays. The other main discussion on cuts and redundancies also lacked the sharp edge of national strategy.

UNISON Fightback could be an important initiative organising the left based on branches. To succeed a wider layer of UNISON activists need to be involved. Also it needs to set itself the task of organising the left around a thought out alternative strategy to that of the national leadership.

Tower colliery closes

TOWER colliery, the last remaining pit in South Wales, is to close.

The workers had stood firm even in the face of a £9,000 bribe. They voted twice to keep their pit open, but after management went for savage pay cuts that meant some workers could lose £16,000 by Christmas, resistance finally

ended.

NUM activists at Tower say that the blame for closure lies not just with the Tories but with the TUC, who failed to build for industrial action on the back of the massive support the miners received when the present wave of pit closures were announced in October '92.

Obituary: Bob Smith

WE'LL ALL miss Bob Smith. Last Saturday, while waiting for a bus on his way to work at Birmingham Union Club, Bob collapsed and died. He was forty seven years old and had been in bad health for many years. But his health problems never slowed him down: Bob was sure to be present at every dispute, every rally and every significant political event in the Birmingham area. He was also a regular at national events, from the TUC (where he represented his union, the GPMU) to the SMTUC (at which he was a Socialist Outlook stalwart). It's difficult to believe that we won't be seeing him again.

Bob came to left-wing politics rather later than most — he was in his thirties (the age at which a lot of "revolutionaries" drop out) when he first got involved with remnants of the IMG. He went with the Socialist Outlook offshoot from that

organisation and stayed loyal to them for the rest of his life. It's not quite clear how he first got involved, but once he did, he devoted his life to socialist activity. He'd been a printer and typesetter, active in the NGA, before leaving the industry in the late 70s. By his own admission, he'd had difficulty coming to terms with new technology. At the time of his death he was attempting to familiarise himself with modern computerised printing techniques and was looking forward to producing publications for Birmingham Trades Council.

Bob could be infuriating — he had an almost uncanny knack of picking up the wrong end of the stick and not letting go. He didn't just not understand opposing arguments: he seemed not even to hear them. But there was no doubting his commitment and integrity. For us, he had another big saving grace that

inevitably came to the fore after even the most heated argument: he liked a drink.

Bob had always lived with his mother and his father, both of whom had died within the last few years. The left was his only remaining family. We weren't, perhaps, close relatives, but we liked and respected him. The left in general could do with more people with Bob's tenacity, loyalty and sense of principle.

As Bob lay dying at the roadside last Saturday, a bus-driver stopped his vehicle and called an ambulance. He then returned to Bob and attempted to give him aid. Later, when the driver heard Bob had been a trade union activist, he contacted the Trades Council and asked to be allowed to attend the funeral on behalf of the TGWU. He'd never met Bob before those last few minutes. Our friend and comrade would have appreciated that.

Left builds up momentum in CPSA poll

By a CPSA member.

THE ELECTION for the National Executive Committee of the low paid Civil Service workers union CPSA is set to be very close.

The left have mounted a united campaign this year — called UNITY. The campaign is on a much firmer basis than last year's botched attempt and the UNITY election platform includes a clear commitment to national strike action to defeat the Tories' "Market Testing" assault on civil service jobs, terms and conditions.

If the mood in the workplaces where the left is strong is reflected in other parts of the union then the useless rag-bag called the "National Moderate Group" are bound to lose their stranglehold on the Executive.

A sign of how desperate the "Moderates" have now become is provided by their crude attempts to interfere in the ballot.

General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom has described the UNITY slate — which has the support of the vast majority of CPSA branches, even including those of the right wing President and Vice President — "as mainly Trotskyists e.g. Militant, Socialist Caucus, Socialist Organiser." Though we don't mind a bit of recognition, we don't claim to speak for the overwhelming majority of CPSA activists. They can speak for themselves and will do so by kicking out the Moderates.

But once the UNITY Executive slate has been elected the real battles — against management and the entrenched CPSA bureaucracy — will begin.

RMT trackworkers conference

By a RMT member

EVERY year delegates at the P.Way, S&T and OHL grades conference of the RMT stand for one minute's silence in memory of those trackworkers killed at work since the previous conference.

Of all railworkers, these are the most aware of how dangerous the Permanent Way is and is about to become under privatisation. Despite being despondent over the result of the

recent P. T. & R. ballot, they nonetheless voted that the fight should go on. A resolution calling on the leadership to fight at every turn, against the process of privatisation was passed unanimously.

Representatives of the leadership got a roasting from delegates about their treatment of last year's conference decision over the fight against redundancies. Jimmy Knapp had attempted to stifle a resolution condemning the minority on the execu-

tive who conspired to get last year's strike action alongside the miners called off. He failed.

In particular it was demanded of Vernon Hince that he used his position on the Labour Party NEC to push the Party leadership in to making re-nationalisation of the railways — without compensation — a clear policy commitment and campaigning priority. Hince was pushed into accepting this was policy for resistance in the here now.

The Employment Service left needs to get it's act together

CIVIL SERVICE

By a ES CPSA member.

MANAGEMENT in the Employment Service are taking an increasingly hard line, attacking our terms and conditions, pay and victimising union activists. The current BL '84 union leadership has done nothing. Their record in office has been appalling. They've refused to launch any campaign against market testing, they recommended support for the New Personnel Handbook which is a clear attack on our rights, and they have allowed the new pay system to be introduced without a fight.

In the current ES elections the main priority must be to remove this incompetent leadership. We must therefore call and work for a vote for the Broad Left, along with the four Socialist Caucus candidates where the Broad Left has double banked. What we don't need is certain supposed left wingers being ambiguous which Broad Left members to vote for or whether you should vote for them at all.

New Problems, New struggles
A handbook for trade unionists
£1 plus 36p postage from PO Box 823, London, SE15 4NA.

SOCIALIST

Richard Nixon obituary

Rot in hell!

ORGANISER

Two horse race on Isle of Dogs

Work for Labour in Millwall!



The TUC demo on 19 March gave a boost to anti-racists in East London. Photo Gary Meyer

Labour's Tower Hamlets agent, Rob Shooter, discussed the issues with Socialist Organiser.

LABOUR'S CANVASS' returns show that our vote is holding up well in Millwall. We expect a much larger turnout on 5 May than in the by-election

last September, when Derek Beackon was elected on a 35% turnout.

The Liberal and Tory votes are being squeezed. Voters are coming over to Labour because they fear the threat of a BNP-run neighbourhood council on the Island.

Labour's message on housing is beginning to get clearly across. In

Tower Hamlets we are pledged to create 1,000 new homes if we take control of the council. This policy commitment is combined with a promise to radically improve the repairs service in the area.

Our candidates are committed to equality. We are against discrimination on the basis of race, and we are closely in touch with the Bengali community leaders on the Island. Jillul Karim, a well-respected local leader, is vice chair of the Millwall Party.

The Bengali community is very solid for Labour. This is not the problem. The problem is that some people may be frightened to vote. During the by-election gangs of BNP members intimidated voters.

We want to assure voters that this will not happen again. We are providing transport to these polls. Various groups are providing observers on the polling stations.

Millwall Labour Party will need help on polling day, Thursday 5 May. You can help by phoning us and telling us when and how you can help — phone 071-729 6682.

EX-US President Richard Nixon has died of a stroke at the age of 81 to cries of sorrow and mourning from the USA's political establishment. President Clinton has declared a national day of mourning to mark the passing of this man who during one 24-hour period in 1972 dropped more bombs on North Vietnam than the entire tonnage of bombs exploded by both sides during the Second World War!

Nixon is now praised for the fact that as well as bombing Vietnam and Cambodia back almost to the stone age, and at the same time as he was doing it, he was also covertly manoeuvring and negotiating to get the USA out of a war that he knew it could not win.

The Chicago small-time mass murderer Al Capone was jailed not for murder but for tax evasion: and the big time mass murderer Richard Nixon was forced out of the Presidency not for being a mass murderer but for complicity in burgling the headquarters of his opponents in the 1972 Presidential elections! In the last 20 years Nixon worked his way back to "respectability."

Nixon's close comrade-in-arms, Henry Kissinger, the war criminal who helped Nixon rain down death and destruction on the peoples of Indo-China was given a Nobel Prize — the Nobel Peace Prize, no less, for his work in Vietnam.

Nixon and Kissinger should have been hanged as war criminals. May Nixon rot in hell! May Kissinger soon follow him!

**Look to the future:
Organise now!**

SOCCIALIST ORGANISER has been campaigning to raise money for the Workers' List Party in South Africa. The opponents of the Workers' List have huge funds - the National Party from South Africa's white capitalists; the ANC from various governments, from moneyed Western liberals, and from capitalists buying "insurance" for their future under an ANC government.

The South African socialists have to depend on thousands of small donations even to begin to counter the propaganda apparatus of the other parties.

We need funds to help the voice of socialism in Britain, too. The different factions of the ruling class have the TV and the mass-circulation newspapers. To champion the struggles and the interests of the working class we have only the small newspapers of the left, like Socialist Organiser, produced and circulated on a shoestring.

When the class struggle in Britain revives on a big scale - as it will, though no-one can say exactly when - and throws politics into flux here as it is now in South Africa, a lot will depend on the tough uphill battle we now fight to raise money for and produce Socialist Organiser.

If the revolutionary left is strong enough - with enough organisers, a sufficiently-circulated press, and so on - then we can make that next upsurge take a revolutionary direction. If we are not strong enough, then Gordon Brown, Tony Blair, and the rest will turn a left face, mouth a few demagogic phrases, and lead the movement into a blind alley.

Those are the choices. In the future a lot will depend on the preparatory work which we are doing now and which cannot be replaced by last-minute improvisation in the midst of large-scale struggle.

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