

SOCIALIST

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revolution against
welfare**



centre pages

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Post Office jobs and services at risk



Royal Mail

Stop the

Tory sell-off

frenzy!

THE TORIES' PROPOSALS to privatise the Post Office spell disaster for postal workers and users alike:

- 5,000 rural post offices and 1,200 rural delivery units are under threat.
- Postal charges will rocket — as have charges from privatised utilities like BT, gas and electricity.
- Daily deliveries in isolated places will stop — further hitting the rural poor, particularly pensioners who cannot afford other means of communication.
- 5,000 jobs could go with the abolition of the second delivery.

Continued on page 2

TUC must call day of strike action

The lie machine



ACCORDING to the Sun, the police themselves call the new "armed response units" — now authorised to open fire at any time, without prior clearance — "the psychos". The Sun's report of a typical day with "the psychos" had them screaming round London's streets at 110 mph, getting nowhere near any crime — but not killing any other road users that day.



"GOD BLESS you, Paddy", Princess Di is supposed to have said as she gave £5, to the man saved from drowning by someone else when Di was nearby. The man's name is Martin, and £5 is about one per cent of what Di squanders each day on "personal grooming" alone.



THE BBC quickly backed down when Tory MPs raised a bigoted outcry against its decision to extend its usual bonus for staff getting married to gay couples. But what do those Tory MPs and the tabloids think about John Birt's expense account?



FAMOUS FOR ... being famous. Jackie Onassis, who died last week, never did anything with her life except marry two rich men. The Star quoted an American TV commentator describing her as "the nearest thing we had to royalty". Truer than they realised ...

Labour left calls for more time for leadership contest

Candidates are urged to address the real issues

By Alan Simpson MP, Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs

THE SOCIALIST Campaign Group has called on Labour's National Executive to hold the vote for the leadership at the party's annual conference in the autumn.

The Socialist Campaign Group is appalled at the calls over the last week to truncate the party's procedures for electing its leader. A rushed election would be an insult to members in the

constituencies and the unions. The most realistic and democratic time scale would be to hold the election at the party's annual conference.

In 1983 the election for leader was conducted between 9 June and the end of September. In 1992, from 9 April to 16 July.

To hold the election in July would be to hand the contest over to the press, which has already offended many party members to presuming to conduct and even conclude our election. The party deserves not only sufficient time to make up its own

mind, but also the widest possible choice of candidates, hopefully including women candidates.

The National Executive should consider the impact on our Euro-election campaign of any announcement that a leadership contest would be rushed through immediately afterwards. An early election might be flawed by irregularities and inconsistencies.

The party and the public know what the key issues facing the next Labour government will be: a return to full employment, re-building the welfare state, an assault on poverty and home-

lessness, and an international response to post-Cold War realities. The party needs to be reassured that this election will focus on issues, not media images.

Our democracy is our strength. A summer for reflection and discussion will be a summer well spent.

The annual conference of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network will proceed as scheduled on 11 June at Manchester Town Hall. The conference will give active party and trade union members a chance to discuss the issues which all the candidates should address.

Tories block disabled rights



Disabled demonstrators crawled into Parliament on Monday 23 May to protest against the Tory Government filibuster which blocked a Bill to ensure civil rights for disabled people. Labour MP Dennis Skinner joined the demonstration.

Bookshop fights landlords

NEWS FROM Nowhere, Liverpool's radical bookshop is facing possible eviction in its 20th year.

The shop has been in its present High Street premises for over five years, having endured 15 years in dark, damp and dingy back streets. Trade has increased dramatically since the move.

The landlords bought up most of the buildings in the area a few years ago and are now beginning to play Monopoly with existing occupiers. They want News From Nowhere's building empty in order to make it more "commercially viable" — i.e. so they can sell it and make more profit.

Having survived many fascist attacks, both to staff and premises, News From Nowhere is determined to stay put.

Messages of support to: News From Nowhere, 112 Bold St., Liverpool, L1

Union leader calls for Labour commitment to jobs

JOHN EDMONDS, leader of the giant GMB union, has called on candidates in the Labour leadership contest to commit themselves to policies of full employment, a minimum wage and employment rights.

"The new electoral college, proposed by my union last year, gives every trade union member the opportunity to take part in the elections for a new Labour leader. The GMB will encourage candidates to recognise this enormous test of opinion and reflect issues of concern to trade unionists in their campaigns."

Releasing evidence from three separate polls conducted by MORI on behalf of the GMB union, he demonstrated that a commitment to a policy of full employment would be popular among the 4.5 million trade unionists voting in the Labour leadership contest and would also win votes for Labour in a general election.

- 58% of voters who changed their vote in the local elections on 5 May said policies on creating jobs and reducing unemployment were very or fairly important in their decision to change their vote from the general election 1992 to local elections 5 May 1994.
- A massive 86% of the electorate,

in a separate survey in March 1994, felt that it was crucially, very or fairly important that the Labour Party makes it policies on full employment a major issue when it talks about its aims and objectives.

- If the Labour Party made full employment a major issue in its campaigning the surveys show that the party could gain a swing in support of 8.5% from Conservative to Labour.

- The phrase "Full Employment" was found to be a vote winner.

"This evidence shows", said Edmonds, "that candidates in the election for leadership of the Labour Party should actively promote a policy of full employment."

"The 4.5 million trade unionists will also be interested to hear the candidates' views on issues such as the minimum wage, employment and pension rights, regulating the gas, water, and electricity industries as well as trade union recognition, CCT and the role trade unions should play in the Labour Party."

"The GMB congress in June will be discussing these issues as well as expressing a commitment to full employment. I will be raising these issues in any discussions I have with possible candidates," said Edmonds.

Activists meet to discuss welfare rights campaign

PENSIONERS, unemployed workers and trade unionists from around the East Midlands met in Nottingham last Saturday 21 May, at a conference for Pensions, Benefits and Welfare Rights. The conference was called by the East Midlands pensioners' groups and unemployed centres and attracted between 80 and 100 delegates.

Labour MPs Alan Simpson and Tony Benn called for the Labour Party to launch a crusade in defence of the welfare state. Helen Grew from the

National Pensioners Convention and Angela Palmer from the civil service trade union NUCPS also spoke, outlining the kind of pensions and benefits system we should be fighting for.

Activists agreed to promote support and co-operation between the different welfare campaigns and link up with campaigns for jobs and full employment. There was recognition that a Labour government committed to full employment and a restored welfare state would have to fund it through taxes on the very rich.

Stop this Tory sell-off frenzy

Continued from page 1

This privatisation will be like every other privatisation — it will be an exercise in asset stripping to line the pockets of the Tories' rich friends.

The labour and trade union movement needs a coherent industrial and political strategy to defeat it.

Mass action at a local and national level, from street meetings and petitioning through to a monster demonstration in central London and a one-day protest strike, should form one aspect of this campaign.

Simultaneously postal workers must pursue their own demands over jobs and conditions with industrial action. After all, a militant and self-confident

workforce will make Post Office privatisation a less enticing prospect for potential buyers.

By doing this, the unions can build on the massive public opposition to Post Office privatisation and turn it into a mass movement that can hammer the Tories.

The Tories' unveiled more crazy sell-off plans this Tuesday 24 May.

More public transport is to be privatised and the deregulation and contracting out bill will be forced through (see page 15). On top of this, the Tories want to abolish the GCSE and replace it with a new general diploma to include elementary office skills that should really be provided by bosses, not the taxpayers.

John Edmonds is right: put Labour leader candidates on the spot!

Organise in the unions!

JOHAN EDMONDS, General Secretary of the GMB trade union, has called on candidates for the Labour Party leadership to commit themselves to full employment.

He says he will ask all the candidates to take a stand on full employment and on seven other points:

- * A statutory minimum wage of £4 an hour;
- * An end to "compulsory competitive tendering", the Tory policy forcing local councils to hive off work to private contractors;
- * Keeping the Labour/trade-union link;
- * The right to trade union recognition;
- * Equal employment rights from the first day of work;
- * Employee control of company pension schemes;
- * Tough regulation of gas, electricity, and water.

Edmonds's statement, which we print on page 2 this week, reflects the growing conflict between the demands of Labour's working-class supporters and the bland, do-nothing policies of Labour's leaders.

Rank-and-file trade unionists should take up Edmonds's call and run with it. We too should put our demands on Labour's leaders.

- * Rebuild the Welfare State and public services;
- * Repeal of the Tory anti-union laws, and legislation for a Workers' Charter of trade union rights, including the right



Nurses strike against closure of the casualty department at University College Hospital. Photo: John Harris

- to strike;
- * A 35 hour working week;
- * No Lib/Lab pact; keep the Labour/trade-union link;
- * A minimum wage of £4 an hour.

If committees are organised round these demands, they can build support for the candidates for deputy and leader closest to the demands, countering the media's Blair-boasting. And they can help to build up direct trade-union campaigns, acting independently of all the candidates. They can orient to rank-and-file action, unlike Edmonds, who is always much stronger on the press-release than on the picket-line.

We can trust none of the candidates. Even Gordon Brown is now putting on a sort of left face for the leadership contest, with his speech to the Welsh Labour Party conference.

Of the front-runners, John Prescott is the one closest to Labour's working-class base, and

the one most likely to rally the votes of those committed to the Welfare State and a fight for jobs. Votes for the rumoured Cook/Prescott ticket would represent a limited but real blow to the "yuppie" orientation of Labour policy under Kinnock and Smith. But Cook and Prescott, too, are not to be trusted, as Prescott's treacherous role on "one member, one vote" last year showed.

Ken Livingstone has talked of standing if all the other candidates withdraw in favour of Tony Blair as leader. Since that is very unlikely indeed, it looks as if Livingstone, typically, is just promoting himself without committing himself. Given Livingstone's chequered history, including association with the *Sun* and with the crazy sectarian Gerry Healy (who was financed by Libya's Colonel Gaddafi), his intervention adds confusion rather than clarity.

The Labour Party will not get a socialist leadership from the coming contest — nor could it conceivably do so in the labour move-

ment's current condition of mind and body. What it could conceivably get, and what we should fight for, is a leadership that will break from the do-nothing, promise-

nothing policies of Kinnock and Smith, and start to campaign actively against the Tories.

Organise the rank and file! Fight for the Welfare State!

Democracy and OMOV

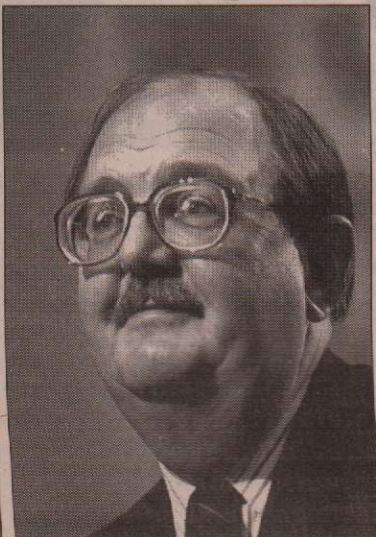
THE MEDIA loudly supported John Smith's push for "one member, one vote" in Labour leadership elections: so modern! so democratic! they said. Now they are beginning a hue and cry about the anomalies and complications — though they ignore the biggest anomaly, that this supposed "one member, one vote" system gives one MP's vote 15,000 times the weight of one trade unionist's vote.

Very likely, the hue and cry will be used to try to bounce the Labour Party into scrapping the whole idea of a wider democracy in the party, and returning to the

old system, from before 1981, when Labour's leader was elected by MPs alone.

In fact the best alternative would be to go back to a system similar to that decided in 1981, with trade unions and Constituency Labour Parties casting their votes for leader at a party conference in the same way as they vote on policies.

That would not rule out trade unions balloting their members and thus giving millions of workers a direct voice in the matter; some unions balloted in 1981, when Tony Benn stood against Dennis Healey for deputy leader.



John Edmonds

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

Karl Marx

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WE SAY

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

Vote Labour on 9 June!

LAUNCHING THE TORIES' Euro-election campaign, John Major claimed that he never leaves Britain without his spirits sinking.

This desperate kitsch-patriotism is designed to paper over deep splits in Tory policy on Europe. An increasingly aggressive Tory right wing wants Britain to be the cheap-labour, deregulated, offshore base in Europe for international capital, and therefore opposes any moves to closer Euro-integration which imply some levelling-up of Britain to European standards.

Against this, Labour should be campaigning for a democratic united Europe and for levelling-up across Europe of workers' rights and welfare provisions. Unfortunately, Labour's leaders are far too timid and feeble for that.

So desperate are they to be "middle-of-the-road" that Margaret Beckett presented Labour as standing halfway between the Tories and the Liberal Democrats!

Labour, she said, would offer "the right balance" between the Tories' nationalist flagwaving and the Liberal Democrats' capitalist Europeanism — in other words, something on the lines of a "pro-European" Tory or a nationalistic Liberal...

Labour has even deleted the common Euro-Socialist commitment to a 35 hour week from the British manifesto, saying instead that work hours must be "a matter primarily for agreement between employers and employees".

Still, a Labour victory on 9 June will be a blow to the Tories and a boost to the labour movement, and the bigger the Labour victory the bigger the boost.

Vote Labour on 9 June!

South Africa: not yet real democracy

APARTHEID — OPEN WHITE minority rule — is dead. Democracy — majority rule by way of periodic elections — has taken its place.

Nelson Mandela is president of South Africa.

Not alone for the black and "coloured" peoples of South Africa, who lived under its yoke for so long, but for the working class everywhere the fall of the white-supremacist state is cause for heart-felt rejoicing.

We rejoice and, together with the vast majority of the people of South Africa, we celebrate this emancipation.

Yet there is more to say, and now, at the height of the liberal euphoria, is the time to say it.

The working people of South Africa fought apartheid because they wanted a better life. They fought white minority control because they wanted democratic control of their own lives and thought black self-rule — majority rule, such as they now have — was the way to get it.

In fact they have not won any of those things. The limited political democracy they have won can not — even if it proves stable — give them those things.

In the countries such as Britain, France and the USA, where this model of democracy — bourgeois democracy — has been perfected and refined over decades and centuries, its purpose is not to facilitate real mass self-rule but to canalise and frustrate the drive to social self-control.

George Orwell made the rulers of his nightmare regime in a imaginary future work systematically to bowdlerise the language so as to banish troublesome ideas by abolishing or twisting the words for them. Almost everywhere the bourgeoisie has succeeded in doing that with "democracy," and in South Africa too.

By narrowing the very idea of democracy down to mere political democracy, exercised at periodic intervals, the bourgeoisie has eradicated from the popular political consciousness the great ideal of the early plebeian and working-class democrats — social democracy. This is the ideal the people of South Africa have been groping towards. But without a clear definition of what it is and what it means, they can not attain the comprehensive social and political democracy which alone would give them that self rule for which the working people of South Africa have fought.

Many tens of thousands of South African workers are in general for "socialism". But socialism — in the counterfeit Stalinist form in which the South African working class has had it presented to them — has long been severed from all real notions of democracy. Conversely, in the vile Stalinist idea of first completing the "bourgeois" stage of the South African revolution and only then thinking of socialism, democracy has been separated from the ideas of socialist self-emancipation. It has been proclaimed to be a separate, preliminary, down-payment, for "this stage" of the revolution. Thereby it has been narrowed down to the mere exercise of a political vote every few years, that is to the unidimensional bourgeois political democracy we have in Britain.

The South African bourgeoisie, mainly but not only white, has survived this transition, and can hope to go on surviving it with the help of the ANC and the South African Communist Party. The masses of black and "coloured" people have not gained possession of South Africa. They have gained only the right to elect black politicians to administer South African capitalism.

That they have not gained socialism, despite the prominence of the South African "Communist Party" in the new regime, is clear. Who says otherwise? The point is that they have not gained democracy either because they have gained only bourgeois democracy, political democracy, paper-thin democracy. The real social and economic decisions that will govern their lives will be made by unelected South African and international capitalists now as under the apartheid regime.

Even this form of black self-rule is progress compared to what there was before, but it is not yet freedom. For the working class of South Africa the fight goes on.

Workers' Liberty '94 Ideas For Freedom

Friday 8-Sunday 10 July
Caxton House, Archway, North London



Guest speaker

Neville Alexander, a leader of the South African Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), and a Workers' List candidate in the recent elections, will be speaking on Saturday 9 July at Workers' Liberty '94

This year at Workers' Liberty...

Some short introductory courses

Why does capitalism have crises? ● The World Crisis ● Can people really change? ● What will socialism be like? ● Why a working class revolution? ● Does socialism mean state tyranny? ● What is imperialism? ● Talking socialism ● Socialism from below.

International briefings Brazil ● Mexico ● South Korea ● Nigeria

The Russian crisis Hillel Ticktin and Bob Arnot from the journal *Critique* discuss the issues.

The left *Revolutionary History* sponsors a series of discussions about the post-war history of British Trotskyism

Labour movement issues Are legal strikes possible any more? ● What sort of rank and file movements do we need in the unions? ● Will Labour fight? ● How do we defend the Welfare State?

Forums for discussion on

Women, sex and pornography ● Videos and violence ● Crime and punishment ● Modernism and Back to Basics ● Religion and belief in God.

Debates at Workers' Liberty include

Should boxing be banned? ● Should socialists support the PLO-Israel peace deal? ● Is full employment possible? ● What role do left-wing papers have? ● How do we win lesbian and gay liberation? ● How do we defeat the Tories?

How do we get peace in Ireland?

Sinn Fein debates the Alliance for Workers' Liberty on Saturday 9 July



Workers' Liberty is an annual event to promote political debate on the left. All major issues which face socialists — from the politics of beating the Tories to issues of sex and sexuality — are discussed.

Cheap food, entertainment, a bar and accommodation are available. There is a professionally staffed creche.

For full agenda / ticket fill in and send to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name:

Address:

Enclosed: £.....

BEFORE END OF JUNE: £7 (unwaged), £11 (low-waged/students), £16 (waged). Subtract £1 (unwaged) and £2 (other) for Saturday-Sunday tickets only. Cheques payable to "WL Publications."

New report shows that unelected quangos run one-third of public sector

The State behind the scenes

By Martin Thomas

JUST HOW far Britain is from being a real democracy was highlighted last week in a report on the 5,521 "quangos" which control one-third of all public spending. 73,000 "quangocrats", appointed by the Government, run vast areas of the public sector without elections, accountability, or any democratic control, and the number is growing almost daily. "Quangocrats" running local services outnumber elected local councillors two-to-one.

These committees, boards, commissions, agencies and Health Service trusts are stuffed full of Tory bigwigs, failed Tory

election candidates, and business people. Yet no quango has to release its policy papers to the public.

Only 7 per cent of them have to organise even one public meeting a year. Half of them have no public register of their members' interests. All but 14 per cent are exempt from scrutiny by ombudsmen. It is very difficult to challenge their decisions in court. Only one-third of them have their accounts examined by the Audit Commission or the National Audit Office.

In short, they are more like the 18th century system of running the country through Justices of the Peace and Lords Lieutenant than any modern

democracy.

Repeated scandals, especially in the Health Service trusts, have shown that they are nests of corruption and patronage.

Britain has long had an unelected state machine - run by the civil service hierarchy, armed forces top brass, police chiefs, and so on - which regulates much of public life and shapes the decisions of elected representatives as much as, or more than, those elected representatives shape it.

The Tories' quango-boom adds a further layer of insulation between the theoretical democracy of the polling booth and practical public decisions. At least in theory, ministers are responsible to an elected par-

liament for what civil servants do in their name, and can be forced to change course or voted out. The "quangocrats" are free from even that thin accountability.

The "quangos", moreover, have been shaped into a sector of the unelected state machine with a very clear party-political bias and purpose. They enable the Tories, for example, to control local services in areas like Scotland, Wales, and the inner cities of England, where they are a minority in elections.

The labour movement must campaign for democracy - for real, effective, democracy, which should include workers' and community control over public services.

Mexican teachers show how to fight

LETTER FROM MEXICO

By Pablo Velasco

MEXICAN teachers — organised in the biggest union in Latin America: the Sindicato Nacional del Trabajadores de Educacion (SNTE) which has 1.2 million members — have a long history of militancy and struggle.

The reasons for their militancy are not difficult to determine. The average wage for a teacher in Mexico is NS800 per month (£160). This is in a country where everything except basic food-stuffs like bread and milk is similar in cost to the UK and where rents are sometimes 400% higher. Most teachers have a second job, either as a taxi driver or working a second seven hour shift at school. Along with other workers, teachers have suffered a 50% fall in their purchasing power over the past 15 years, and in 1992 faced an attack on their conditions of service when the working year was extended from 190 to 200 days.

The teachers' situation is worsened by the fact that their union, the SNTE, is closely tied to the government's austerity programme. This is the result of having senators, deputies and hundreds of mayors amongst the membership. The SNTE leadership has combined gangster tactics against activist teachers with the persistent pillage of union pension funds, so much so that the government agency (SSSFE) is bankrupt as a result.

Nationwide at least five million children receive no

schooling at all and millions more attend only sporadically, as they are working with other adults in dangerous factories or on the street. The worst conditions exist in Chiapas where 70% of 12 year olds have not finished primary education.

But the teachers' militancy has been severely tested over the past fifty years and they have been resilient. Their determination, the existence of a powerful national organisation and a healthy left opposition force makes the teachers one of the key forces for change in Mexico at the moment.

"Despite the killing of 150 activists by the union bureaucrats' goons and the police, the movement grew."

Their resilience is best shown by the experience of the 1950s and onwards.

Between 1938-52, the 15,000 teachers of the capital, organised in Local 9 of the SNTE, had seen their real wages fall by 50%, and this was exacerbated by the devaluation of the peso in 1954.

Beginning in 1956, with the "Committee of Struggle" (later to be called the Teachers' Revolutionary Movement — the MRM) they organised around the demand for a 30% wage rise and a democratic union.

This left opposition organised itself democratically and was able to co-ordinate strike action and organise success-

ful demonstrations with parents, including one in July 1956 attended by 20,000 people. The movement was headed by the CP-influenced Othon Salazar.

When the SNTE refused to organise elections in Local 9 in September 1956, the MRM organised a convention in Mexico City which nearly 12,000 teachers (i.e. 70% of all those in the city) attended. Its support in the workplace, its democratic organisation and its readiness to call action, official if possible, unofficial if necessary, overcame the machinations of the SNTE and the violent attacks by the police, who used clubs and tear gas against its peaceful demonstrations. By June 1958, these teachers had won a 20% pay rise and 40,000 celebrated their victory with a march.

However, despite its courage and tenacity, certain weaknesses in the movement became evident by 1960. Throughout the struggle, the MRM leaders remained supporters of the PRI.

When the PRI and SNTE combined in April 1960, the result was disastrous: armed goons took over the MRM-led Local 9 union offices and protesting strike leaders were fired by the state, thus decapitating the MRM. Although other workers, such as the militant railworkers, had backed the teachers, the absence of a rank and file movement across all industries allowed the state to pick off each group one at a time.

It wasn't until nearly twenty years later — when membership of the SNTE had risen to 800,000 — that left opposition forces could emerge again as a real force. 14,000 teachers in Chiapas

struck for a pay rise in 1979. They consolidated that victory by organising the Comité Coordinación Nacional del Trabajadores de Educacion (CNTE) within the SNTE. Like the MRM, the CNTE was based on school delegates at local, regional and national level. It spread from the south to include teachers from all over central and southern Mexico, including the capital.

Despite the killing of 150 activists by SNTE goons and the police, kidnappings and brutal repression, the CNTE movement grew.

2-300,000 stopped work in May-June 1983 to fight for a pay rise. And in 1989, after a CNTE-led strike for a 100% pay rise and a democratic congress of the SNTE in Chiapas, Oaxaca and the Federal District, the PRI-government forced the union leader to step down and offered the teachers a smaller, but significant pay increase. The 100,000 who demonstrated their victory included some of those who have in the course of 1993 organised strikes in Durango, Michoacan, Oaxaca, Baja California and Monterrey.

The terrible repression orchestrated by the PRI, the police and the SNTE bureaucracy continues, however. In Monterrey last December one strike leader was kidnapped, pistol-whipped and left semi-conscious and seminaked on the highway to the USA. But the democratic opposition today is far less tied ideologically to the state machine than its predecessor. It has continued to show what workers can achieve when they organise themselves for a fight.

Defend democracy in UNISON!

By Tony Dale

UNISON, the new public-sector super-union, has adopted the oldest practice of trade-union bureaucrats — witch hunting left-wing trade-union activists. Members of the ex-NALGO Liverpool branch have been called to disciplinary hearings on 27, 28 and 29 July. Rumours are that they may well be expelled from the union.

The background to the dispute is a battle for control of the branch. In the right corner is Judy Cotter, present Branch Secretary, National Executive member and CP/Morning Star supporter, in the left corner senior shop stewards supported by various stewards' committees and the local UNISON black workers' group.

In early 1993 unofficial strike action took place in the Social Services

department over racism at Fairfield Day Centre. The branch secretary

condemned the action. Since then the strike has been vindicated, with Liverpool Council taking disciplinary action against the manager of the Day Centre.

At the same time the Branch Secretary's role in other disputes met with widespread disapproval.

In January 1993 the Council reduced the car mileage allowance following secret negotiations with her.

Following the dispute over racism at the Day Centre, the Branch Secretary tried to discipline senior stewards for organising unofficial action and allegedly running it as "a sign of their virility". The Branch Secretary then told them the National Executive would now investigate the issue — and their union cards would be taken off them.

Ordinary women members in the Council's Treasury department became so insulted by the Branch Secretary allegedly calling them liars, they refused to process the union subs. This brought an immediate crisis to the Branch, putting it on the verge of bankruptcy.

An emergency Branch Executive on 5 August voted 56 votes to 9 for no confidence in the Secretary. It felt the most democratic process would be to put this to a mass meeting and then call an election with a secret ballot.

A special General Meeting on 24 August voted by over 300 votes for no confidence. It also rejected calls for a national inquiry. All of these meetings have, without exception, been called unconstitutional by the Branch Secretary and the General Secretary. The Branch Secretary continues to say stewards will lose union cards.

An AGM was called for 23 November, when members representing a Unity campaign stood against the Branch Secretary. The AGM was cancelled.

The dispute over the way the branch was being run could have been resolved easily by letting the members in the branch decide. The branch rules are clear: the Branch Secretary would be elected by a secret ballot of all the branch's members.

Instead the Branch Secretary reported the matter to headquarters. An enquiry was started. The AGM and the elections were put on ice.

Since November, against the rules, no elections have been held. The branch membership have been disenfranchised. The enquiry dragged on.

Last week UNISON held its conference. Delegates wanted to raise the issue on conference floor. Over 100 branches signed an emergency motion protesting over the way Liverpool had been denied an AGM. Any conference discussion was ruled out of order as the matter was deemed sub judice. During conference the dates for the disciplinary hearings were set: 27/ 28/ 29 July.

All this is no way to deal with internal branch disputes. Democratically accountability dictates that branches will experience differences of opinion and battles for control. That is the lifeblood of union democracy. Union democracy must mean those who disagree with you having a right to organise.

The Liverpool dispute can be resolved easily — let the members decide through an AGM and Branch elections.

In the shadows stalks the ex-NUPE leader Tom Sawyer, who was a key player in launching the witch hunts in the Labour Party. If the witch hunt of UNISON members in Liverpool succeeds, then activists across UNISON are at risk.

On the last day of UNISON's conference over 120 delegates attended a fringe meeting jointly organised by the rank and file journal Unity and the Liverpool delegation. This is the start of the campaign to defend activists in Liverpool and to defend UNISON democracy.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



The bad old days

WITH the Euro-elections coming round, you'll be wanting to drag out those old manifestos from 1990 and see how well the parties have kept their promises.

The Conservatives promised to maintain Britain's zero-rating of VAT on fuel and protect Health and Safety standards. But of course these were promises made before that nice Mr. Major was leader, and the party was still in the hands of the despotic Maggie.

SO WHAT would you guess that the most common article left in churches is, as revealed by a recent survey of 400 clergy people (as they must now be called)?

Is it:
(a) Skateboards, left by young people drawn into this relevant and vibrant social institution.
(b) Push chairs left by young parents wanting to enlighten and morally guide their children in this respected and socially aware foundation of society.
(c) False teeth, removed by the over-70s to help them sing, and carelessly left behind because their memories aren't what they used to be.

A zimmer-frame and Book of Common Prayer to the first correct entry to the "Better a carpet warehouse competition" at the usual address.

OH DEAR. There seems to have been a dangerous outbreak of equality breaking out at the BBC following the granting of one week's paid leave for a honeymoon for a gay man who had gone through a "confirmation of love" ceremony. To make matters worse the BBC gave the couple £75 of gift vouchers — the same as heterosexual newly weds. receive.

Harry Greenaway, Tory MP for Ealing North, said: "this is a very serious abuse of public money. It outrages me to think of the struggle which many people have to raise the licence fee when they hear of it being misused in this way". John Birt's expense account, of course, is by contrast a very proper use of the money.

Nicholas Fairburn joined the hue and cry, and Geoffrey Dickens seemed to sum up the Tory backbenchers' line "we

GRAFFITI

VIVELA
REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

seem to have gone raving mad".

Er, yes, quite. But the ever-pliant BBC still backed down.

SO THE BBC continues to offer moral guidance to the nation. Take last Tuesday's episode of the BBC's comedy "The Riff-Raff Element" You have Carmen and Maggie (husband-killer and armed thief respectively) running over the local psycho who has kidnapped Carmen's son. Meanwhile the young homeless inject heroin and the upper-class Mortimer invades a football pitch.

Of course, all this moral laxity could not be presented to the audience without some comment, not with Mary Whitehouse retiring this week. So as the credits rolled, the retentive voice of the man from Auntie reminded the viewers that "entering a football pitch during a match is an offence."

OF course you don't have to engage in sex for purposes other than procreation to raise Tory politicians' ire, you can just be born abroad instead.

John Corrie, Tory candidate for the Euro-seat of Worcestershire and South Warwickshire, thought he was on to a winner when he discovered the Labour candidate was Gisela Gschaidler. Careful research revealed to Corrie that this was a German name and that Ms. Gschaidler was born in Germany.

Corrie promptly put out a press release saying "I'm sure what the people of Worcestershire and South Warwickshire want is a British MEP to look after their interests in Europe and not a German MEP to look after their European interests ... I hope the candidate enjoys her short sojourn in this beautiful heart of England until 9 June". And what about the Hong Kong Chinese and other foreign millionaires who fund the Tory party? Corrie has no objection to them.

Battle royal — how I took command

PRESS GANG

THE TODAY
SUNDAY
THE GUARDIAN
THE WORLD
THE PRESS

By Jim Denham

MY OLD CHUM Charlie "Chazza" Windsor has many qualities but, it must be admitted, PR is not amongst them. Ever since he got unhitched from the dreadful Di, poor old Chazza has blundered from one PR disaster to another. His mistake, of course, was to surround himself with a lot of egg-heads like that Laurens van der Post chappie and the TV presenter with the sinus trouble — Bragg, isn't it?

Sound fellows, no doubt, but when it comes to good old common sense, sadly lacking. As for his press secretary — one Allan Percival — the fellow's simply out of his depth. Dreadful Di and her nouveau cronies (helped not a little by various infatuated hacks from the tabloids) were running rings round Chazza and his egg-heads.

It was time for yours truly to step into the fray and take command. No doubt you've noticed how over the past couple of months the Prince has been scoring rather better in the publicity stakes. There was that powerful, frank TV interview with my old pal Gordon Brewer, in which Chazza opened his heart to the nation and explained his overwhelming urge to "sort of be useful, so to speak." I don't mind telling you, it brought a tear even to my worldly-wise eye.

But the master stroke was the speech attacking "Political

Correctness", social workers and modern art. In a trice the Prince transformed his image from ineffectual airy-fairy dogooder, to outspoken down-to-earth Man of the People.

The tabloids loved it and Chazza was (as we PR boffins say) "on a roll." Di and her Sloane Ranger entourage were completely wrong-footed. I mean, let's face it, incisive commentary on the great issues of the day is not exactly their strong suit, it is?

Modesty prevents me from going into exactly who wrote the speech, but I trust that I am giving away no secrets when I say that the Prince received considerable help and advice from one who knows a thing or two about the old "public image" game!

The St. Petersburg trip, however, was most certainly not my doing. In fact, I counselled against it all down the line. "Scratch the fixture," I urged, pointing out that the hacks would not take kindly to trudging round muddy potato fields and listening to interminable speeches about "international

partnership and sustainable development." All my good work would be undone at a stroke.

There were also worrying signs that the enemy was planning some kind of surprise attack. My spies informed me that the lovely Di had been spending rather a lot of time closeted with one Richard Kay, a smarmy character who claims to be the *Daily Mail's* "top royal reporter." For someone who can do a fairly passable imitation of the Greta Garbo "I want to be alone" routine, Diana certainly seems to have a soft spot for the oilier elements of the tabloid rat-pack. I feared dirty work at the crossroads.

A pre-emptive strike was called for and it just so happened that Chazza, in his innocence, had already given me the ammunition I needed. It seems that the poor chap's still having to stump up about £3,000 a week for Di's "grooming" expenses — clothes, hairdos, mud-packs and something particularly nasty called "colonic irrigation." Naturally,

I wasted no time in leaking this highly damaging material to the tabloids who obligingly ran front-page stories comparing the Princess unfavourably with Marie Antoinette and Lucretia Borgia. I must confess that I allowed myself a small chuckle of satisfaction: surely, the enemy was now vanquished once and for all.

But — would you believe it? — the very next day the *Daily Mail's* front page headline was "Diana Rescues Drowning Man." The loathsome Mr. Kay reported that the plucky Princess had leapt from her car to rescue an "unconscious tramp" from Regent's Park lake. It turned out, of course, that the story was a lot of hooey and the "plucky Princess" hadn't even got her feet wet. She'd held a ruck-sack for some Finnish student and kindly allowed her car-phone to be used to summon an ambulance. Not exactly Anneka Rice stuff, as I'm sure you'll agree. But once again, the enemy had regained the PR initiative. Never fear, I am working on a counter-attack even as we speak.

The problem is poor old Chazza. He seems to have lost his enthusiasm for the fray. "Don't you think this whole sordid charade is discrediting the entire institution of the monarchy?" he asked me on his return from St. Petersburg. The dear chap's obviously completely out of touch!

Sarah and Di



SARAH IS a tramp. She lives on the Whitechapel Road outside the tube station and goes to the Sally Army place wherever they will let her. She is 64, homeless and has a gangrenous leg. Her fortnightly cheque she spends on what booze she can afford because it keeps out the cold and also sends her into oblivion or at least makes the cold a bit more bearable. From so much drinking and poor living, her face is a mass of broken veins, creases, swellings and bruising. Her hair is like straw and completely colourless, her crutches to take the weight of her legs have given her a per-

manent hunchback look. Her cloths are shapeless, colourless Sally Army cast offs designed for warmth rather than looks. None of them fit.

In her more lucid moments she will spend any amount of time chatting and being friendly to anyone who has a minute to spare, or going to the hospital to demand the bandages on her leg gets changed in order to get a bit of warmth and a cuppa. In her drunken moments she will hurl abuse with gusto at anyone who passes, countering imagined insults or attacks.

How she ended up here is not known. There are plenty of routes to Sarah's destination, becoming more accessible as the Tories strip away Social Service safety nets that used, at least, to keep a roof over the head. Redundancy, homelessness, mental health, child abuse, family break-down whatever. Some people end up on the streets just because of an urgent need to get away

from contact, responsibility or scrutiny. It is the ultimate in anonymity.

"A bit more publicity never goes amiss does it? Especially when you've spent £160,000 a year making yourself look good."

Imagine then, the poor fellow tramp who wound up in a hospital bed, after having fallen or jumped in a river and almost drowning, to be told what a lucky chap he is — getting rescued by one of the richest, most publicly-watched woman in the world. Actually she didn't rescue him at all. She stood and watched someone else do it and then took all the credit. But a bit more publicity never goes amiss, does it?

Especially when you've spent £160,000 a year making yourself look good: £750 a tube of toothpaste, £40 a shot at the electronic face-lift; £55 a go at colonic irrigation (i.e. having your shit removed); £40 an hour to have a therapist listen to you talk about your self (more shit removal) and the rest on creams, pills, gels, cosmetics, moisturisers, and designer clothes. No wonder she didn't jump into the river herself.

Mind you, she does have a heart of gold, this princess. She visited the tramp twice in hospital who enjoyed the attention so much that he anonymously discharged himself, disappearing without trace.

Maybe he wanted to get back and pass on a few beauty tips to his street-friend Sarah whose colonic irrigation happens in dark alleys and whose therapy comes in cans. Who says we live in a class society?

Build the direct action fightback!

By Kevin Sexton,
NUS Vice-President Welfare

STUDENTS HAVE been evicted from the Kentish Town site of the University of North London after 17 days in occupation.

Over 300 students were occupying against course cuts, cuts in tutoring and proposed student profiling schemes.

Occupation meetings were held every day to decide on the

running of the campaign and organise events like a demonstration and rally.

Last Friday, 20 May, the UNL students had to go to court to fight an injunction. Six leading members of the occupation have had a court order placed on them, stopping them organising further occupations.

Police arrived on the Friday evening to evict the students but by this time the occupation had grown and the students were not evicted until noon on Saturday 21st.

The students, heads held high, marched from Kentish Town to Camden, where speakers called for further action at a rally of over four hundred.

Already, students at UNL have organised a campaign meeting for Thursday 26 May (6pm), at Kentish Town to plan future action.

The UNL occupation showed the way forward in the student fightback. All year the right-wing Labour leadership of the National Union of Students have said: write letters, take

Tories to tea, direct action doesn't work.

Now, for the first time in years, the media are full of stories about the occupations at UNL and Luton University. Last Friday all the news channels had long items on the occupations and the underfunding of higher education.

The NUS leadership should call for a national wave of action in the new academic year, including occupations and rent strikes, building for a first-term national demonstration.

Luton students occupy against cuts

By Alison Brown

THE government's market-based approach to education is hitting home this year as colleges cut back on facilities and teaching and pack in the students. Education is suffering, and staff wages and conditions are being cut.

This week, even though it is just before the exams, students have taken action.

At Luton University, after an overwhelming vote in favour at a student union general meeting, students have occupied their university administration block, chucking the Vice-chancellor out of his office.

Conditions at their college have been steadily declining this year.

Recently the college had the cheek to charge students travel expenses to get to their exams,

which the college had decided to hold miles outside Luton.

The demands of the occupation include an end to this, as well as reduced rents, and increased security in areas of high levels of student attacks.

The students decided to take action after months of negotiation on these issues got them nowhere.

Management have now closed the whole main site including

the library and lecture theatres. They have also postponed exams for a month.

The occupation is still strong, however, and the students are going to try and keep the whole building open.

Occupations like this should be supported by the National Union of Students and linked together in a massive national campaign to defend the right to decent education for all.

Drive the Nazis out of football!

THE FIRST division play-off match between Derby County and Millwall on

Wednesday 18 May ended in violence when racist thugs in the Millwall crowd streamed on to the

pitch and attacked the Derby players.

Roy MacFarlane, the Derby

manager, replaced the two black players in his team immediately, as they were the butt of the attack.

Eventually the game was stopped prematurely and the players escorted from the pitch (see picture).

This is the latest in a series of attacks against black players, including Nottingham Forest's highly-rated Stan Collymore, which have happened at Millwall's ground, the New Den.

After the incident, Millwall's Chairman Reg Burr disgracefully attempted to blame Paul Williams (one of Derby's black players) for the attack.

This incident is clearly linked to a resurgent fascist presence at football matches across the country.

The anti-racist and anti-fascist movement should work with supporters' groups and fanzines to ensure that the Nazis don't recapture a base in football grounds, and that scum like Reg Burr are driven out of the game.



YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

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Why they back the "free market"

The Tory cour

By Dale Street

IN THE decades immediately following the Second World War Labour Party leaders argued — and honestly believed — that the Welfare State brought into being by the 1945 Labour government was safe from attack by the Tories.

Tory governments of the 1950s and early 1960s, they pointed out, had left the Welfare State virtually untouched. Moreover, they argued, the Tories lacked the will to attack the Welfare State. According to Anthony Crosland, a leading revisionist (or "moderniser," as he would be called today) of the 1950s:

"A wholesale counter-revolution is not in the nature of the British Conservative Party — it lacks the essential attributes of a counter-revolutionary party — a faith, a dogma, even a theory."

Fundamental criticisms of the very idea of a Welfare State, such as Fredrich Von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, and the outpourings of the Institute of Economic Affairs, could be safely dismissed as the bigoted bile of a few fringe cranks.

But by the end of the 1970s it was precisely the dog-eat-dog vision of society peddled by the likes of Hayek and Friedman which provided the Tory Party's new leadership with "a faith, a dogma, and even a theory" that "justified" the Tory onslaught on the Welfare State.

In the Tory Party itself the "New Right", as it quickly became known, found its most outspoken advocates in Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph. Backing them up was a motley array of self-styled intellectual gurus and second-rate pamphleteers whose political past was often at odds with their espousal of the philosophy of the New Right.

The first chairperson of the Centre for Policy Studies was Alfred Sherman, a former Marxist and republican volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. Director of the Centre for Policy Studies was Kenneth Minogue, an outspoken Marxist in his stu-

dent days. In the sphere of education the voice of New Right bigotry belonged to a former Labour councillor by the name of Rhodes Boyson.

The philosophy of the New Right consists of a few basic principles combined with many prejudices.

At the core of the philosophy of the New Right — or, at least, so its advocates would have us believe — is the principle of freedom. "We take freedom of the individual, or perhaps the family, as our ultimate goal in judging social arrangements," writes Friedman.

Freedom is defined as the absence of external coercion, itself, in turn, defined as "such control of the environment or circumstances of a person by another that he

"The pursuit of social justice, like the pursuit of equality is a crime against the workings of the capitalist market."

(sic) is forced to act not according to a coherent plan of his own but to serve the ends of another."

But coercion is coercion only if it is consciously carried out by a human agency. Thus, argues, Hayek, a starving person who takes a job at a pittance of a wage is *not* a victim of coercion, because (allegedly) no-one intended that that person's hunger should force him/her to take such a job.

By the same "logic" the homeless who sleep on the streets are not victims of coercion either. If they sleep on the streets, it is a matter of choice, not coercion. In the words of John Major: "They are not on the streets because they have to be on the streets. It is a strange way of life that some of them choose to live."

Support for the freedom of the individual and opposition to external constraint leads the ideologues of the New Right to support free and unfettered competition in the economy.

The "free market" of capitalism, claims Hayek, is "the only method by which our activities can be adjusted to each other without coercive or arbitrary intervention of authority."

Friedman likewise equates the capitalist market with freedom: "The great advantage of the market is that it permits diversity. Each man can vote, as it were, for the colour of the tie he wants and get it." (But only, he might have added, if he can afford to pay for it.)

Not everyone, it turns out on closer inspection, has an equal right to enjoy the freedom of labouring in the capitalist marketplace. According to the former Tory MP Peter Jenkin: "I don't think that mothers have the same right to work as fathers. If the good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn't



Living on the streets. "Just their choice," says John Major

have created man and woman."

The razor-sharp minds of the intellectual giants of the New Right recognise that the virtues of the freedom of competition of capitalism do not include equality or even a reduction in inequalities. They have three — albeit completely contradictory — responses.

Firstly, success and failure, and equality and inequality, are nothing to do with the workings of capitalism. "All human differences create unfair advantages. But since the chief contribution of any individual is to make the best use of the accidents he encounters, success must to a great extent be a matter of chance," writes Hayek.

Secondly, capitalism itself provides the best prospect of advancement for "disadvantaged" sections of the population. According to Friedman:

"The groups in our society that have the most stake in the preservation and strengthening of competitive capitalism are those minority groups which can most easily become the object of the distrust and enmity of the majority."

Thirdly, inequality is a good thing. In the blunt words of Margaret Thatcher: "The pursuit of equality is a mirage. Opportunity means nothing unless it includes the right to be unequal."

In the eyes of the New Right, any government which seeks to promote greater equality is guilty of the cardinal sin of coercion in the spheres of both individual and economic freedom. The consequences of such policies scarcely bear thinking about.

"The pursuit of income equality will turn this country into a totalitarian slum,"

claimed Keith Joseph, just three years before the Tories set about inaugurating such a national transformation.

Another consequence of the pursuit of equality is a growth in the crime rate: "Hard as it may be to believe," claims Friedman, "the growth of crude criminality in Britain in recent decades may well be one consequence of the drive for equality."

(How this theory can be applied in order to explain the record of Dame Shirley Porter and Westminster Council remains to be seen.)

"If the poor are poor, then it must be their own fault according to the New Right."

It is not just the pursuit of equality which is rejected by the New Right, but the very idea of social justice itself. You do not have to have been brought up by the Jesuits to understand the New Right's rationalisation for rejecting the concept of social justice, but it certainly helps.

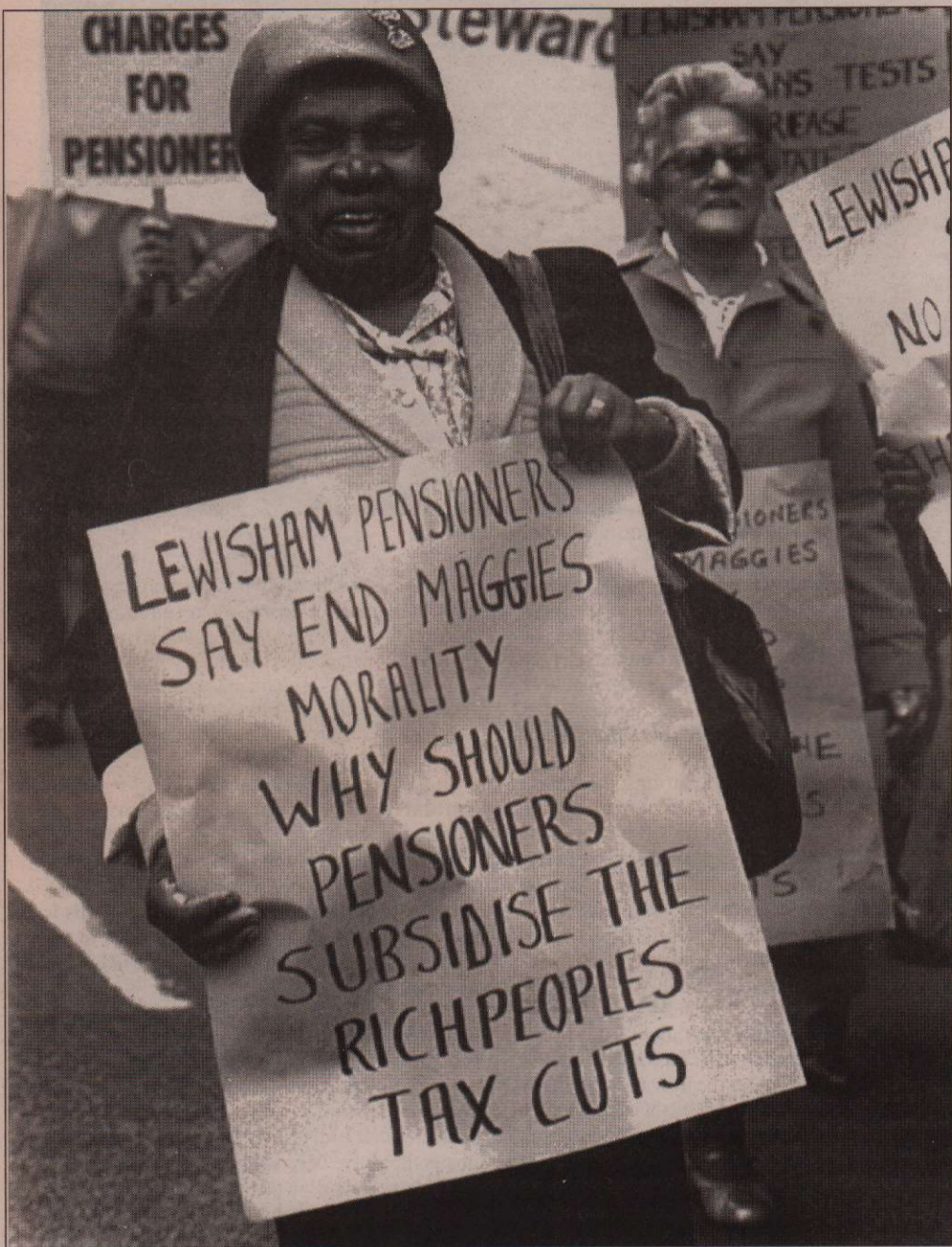
According to the New Right, a state of affairs can be described as just or unjust only if it is consciously and deliberately brought about by a human agency. If the existing allocation of wealth and services in society was the product of human plan-



Labour's leaders, until recently, have always believed that the measures of the 1945 Labour government were safe from attack.

' against welfare

Counter-revolution



The old, the sick, the children — all are “non-persons” in the free-market ideologues’ view of society, existing only as part of families.

ning, then it would be extremely unjust.

But what people receive (or fail to receive) is not the outcome of a planned process but of the free market. The free market is, by definition, spontaneous and unplanned. It therefore makes no sense to apply concepts such as “just” or “unjust”

to the outcome of the blind workings of the market.

The pursuit of social justice, like the pursuit of equality, is therefore a crime against the free workings of the capitalist market. It is, claims Hayek, “the Trojan Horse through which totalitarianism has entered”

and “probably the gravest threat to most other values of a free civilisation.”

Having rejected the notion of social justice, the New Right inevitably finds no place in its vision of how society should be for the Welfare State, “an instrument of political repression unequalled in British history” according to the Institute of Economic Affairs.

If one defines the Welfare State as a redistribution of wealth, however minimal, by the state for the benefit of the poor, then every aspect of that definition (redistribution — state-benefit of the poor) sticks in the throats, to say nothing of the wallets, of the New Right ideologues and their political masters.

Redistribution of wealth is an act of coercion against minorities and individuals. Through taxation the individual is denied the right to spend their money as they see fit. Instead, a proportion of their wealth is confiscated from them and used to finance the Welfare State.

For the state to pursue such policies is the beginnings of totalitarianism — the right of the individual to choose is overridden by the power of the state bureaucracy. State control of services provided by the Welfare State also means state monopoly and an absence of free market competition.

Re-directing resources towards the poor is to reward sloth. If the poor are poor, then it must be their own fault — given that, according to the New Right, the freedom of capitalism guarantees success to anyone who tries hard enough — and the workings of the Welfare State consequently provide a financial recompense for laziness.

The New Right objects to the proportion of state expenditure consumed by welfare provision — “We are now on a road to serfdom with a speedometer marked by the percentages of the Gross National Product devoted to state welfare services,” as Hayek put it.

On a more fundamental level, the New Right is opposed to the Welfare State as a matter of principle, irrespective of the proportion of state expenditure which it consumes. In attacking the consequences of the Welfare State, the New Right ideologues have not shown any moderation in

the accusations they level against it.

“The sexual constitution of welfare is particularly disastrous for young men,” claims American New Rightist George Gilder, “it indirectly deprives them of the example of a male provider in the home.”

“The man has the gradually sinking feeling that his role of provider, the definitive male activity from the primeval days of the hunt through the industrial revolution and on to modern life, has largely been seized from him. He has been cuckolded by the compassionate state.”

On this side of the Atlantic Rhodes Boyson has portrayed the consequences of the Welfare State in equally cataclysmic terms:

“The moral fibre of our people has been weakened. The state which does for its citizens what they can do for themselves is an evil state. No-one cares, no-one saves, no-one bothers — why should they when the state spends all its energies taking money from the energetic, successful and thrifty and gives it to the idle, the failures, and the feckless?”

A similar concern for the moral fibre of

“Fifteen years of the creeping privatisation of the Welfare State have already brought misery to millions of people.”

the nation was expressed by Keith Joseph in his reasoned critique of the failings of the state provision of education:

“Teenage pregnancies are rising; so are drunkenness, sexual offences, and crimes of sadism. The decline is spreading. If equality in education is sought at the expense of quality, how can the poison created help but filter down?”

Given that services provided by the Welfare State are, by definition, provided by the state, they must inevitably be inferior to the services on offer from the private sector. According to Friedman:

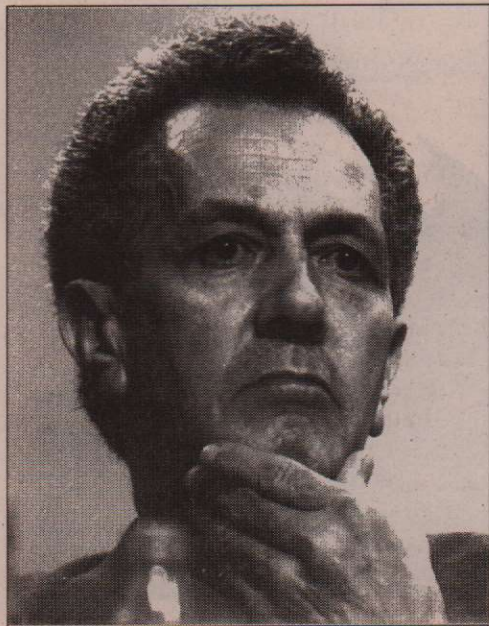
“Music or dance, secretarial skills, automobile driving, aeroplane piloting, technical skills — all are taught best when they are taught privately. Try talking French with someone who has studied it in public (state) school, then with a Berlitz graduate.”

The solution proposed by the New Right to what they see as the problem of the Welfare State (i.e. its very existence, apart from a few residual leftovers which they would be prepared to tolerate) is to open it up to private enterprise and freedom of competition, and sell off substantial sections of it to the highest bidder.

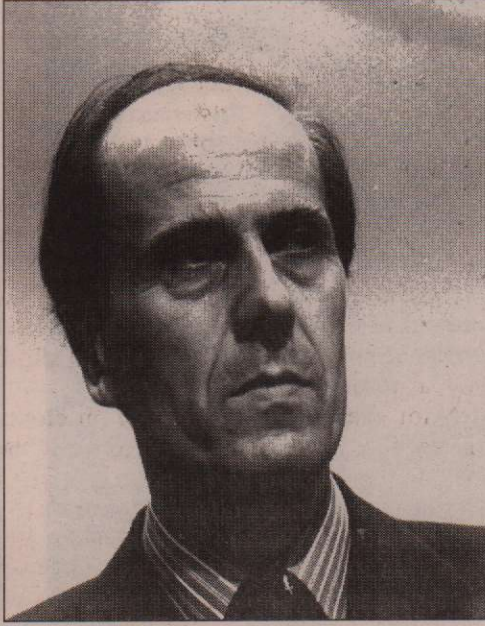
Fifteen years of the creeping privatisation of the Welfare State have already wreaked havoc on its services and brought added misery to millions of people. But, whatever else the Tories may be accused of, no-one can accuse them of allowing reality to come between them and “a faith, a dogma, and even a theory.”



Thatcher



Keith Joseph



Norman Tebbit

Socialism is d

Irving Howe, the author of this article (published in *Labour Action* in 1953 under the title "Democracy under Socialism") was for forty years an editor of the US magazine, *Dissent*, and for 20 years before that had been active in various branches of the Trotskyist movement in the USA. In the '60s he edited a valuable collection of Trotsky's work.

Howe died late last year, a reformist socialist. In retrospect one can see in this presentation indications which point towards Howe's reformism. For example, although it is true that the full realisation of democracy all through society would be socialism, revolutionary Marxists do not believe that this can be won by a linear evolutionary development from where we are now. That democracy — comprehensive, all-embracing, thoroughgoing self-control in all spheres of life — lies on the other side of a working-class socialist revolution.

Nevertheless, Howe's article is a very fine restatement of one of the basic ideas of socialism. It was made in a world where "socialism" was seen by many as identical with Stalinist totalitarianism, and where most of those calling themselves Trotskyists identified the expanding Stalinist world with progress towards socialism.

THE FUTURE of democracy in the world depends on this: can mankind learn to extend democracy into control of economic life?

That is the basic idea of socialism.

Under capitalist democracy, the people are allowed a say-so in decisions of the government, while the main control over people's lives is exercised not by the government but by the economic autocrats who own the wealth of the country and the main means of livelihood. By the same token, these capitalist rulers of industry and wealth, who hold the commanding heights of our society, also have the power to run the basic operations of the government itself and in the long run determine the direction of its important decisions.

Under capitalism, what is called democracy has a split personality. In the world today, when the system runs into enormous difficulties, the separated compartments — political democracy and economic autocracy — are at war with each other. Those who hold the money power, and the people who are its victims, go in opposite directions to solve the split. The people need more democratic control over everything — and the economic masters want more control for themselves, over everything too.

For eight hours a day (more or less) our people live under the economic autocracy of the capitalist private owners, not under the "kind of democracy", which is given by the right to vote different supporters of the capitalist system into governmental office.

Either our world will bring together these two "kinds of democracy" or totalitarianism will abolish both. In the world today, democracy is indivisible.

Socialism is not merely necessary as an "improvement" on what is called democracy today. It is that too. But above all it is the only road by which democracy can survive at all.

We propose that the people take over, in their own name, the ownership and control of the wealth of their country, its industry, its machines, its mines and mills, the economic machinery which is necessary for the people's livelihood.

This will not guarantee democracy. It will do only one thing: make complete democracy possible for the first time.

There is something else which guarantees democracy — one thing and one only. In every age and every country there has always been one way only by which the people's rights are secured. This, therefore, we look on as a foundation of socialist democracy.

This guarantee is: the active participation by the masses in political life, by their rank-and-file movement from below. All capitalist democracy is geared to minimise this: fascism and Stalinism are geared to abolish it.

In a country like the US, the voting mass enter upon the stage of politics like "spear-bearers" in an opera: during some scene in the third act, they come on to listen to politicians' promises and deliberately demagogic platforms, and then to cast their votes for candidates chosen by political machines which are not under their control. But which are the creatures of the moneybags, in a society where politics is a big business like everything else. Then for the rest of the time they become objects again, not subjects; passive applauders, hissers or tomato-throwers from the gallery, not actors on the stage.

The fascist and Stalinist "solution" is to effectively abolish even the right to vote. The Stalinists in particular, whose ideology in general is a tortured caricature of the idea of socialism, pour scorn on "voting democracy," "formal democracy," "capitalist democracy," "parliamentary democracy," etc in order only to justify their suppression of all democratic rights. They seek to discredit capitalist democracy because of its elements of democracy, not because its democratic forms are limited and negated by private-profit control of the sectors of life that its democracy doesn't touch.

Socialism goes in the precisely opposite direction.

At its heart is an idea which distinguishes it not only from Stalinism and fascism but also from the capitalist democrats — yes, even from the capitalist liberals.



Petrograd Soviet: "democratic control from below"

All of these tendencies, in their own ways, are afraid of the self-mobilised action of the mass when they get going. They are afraid when the people take their fate into their own hands, rear up and take the stage themselves, get into motion from below.

The totalitarian reacts with the whip and the club.

The liberal "deplures," cautions, restrains, tries to argue them into relying on leaders above, promises "something will be done" if only they the people cease to make scenes and behave rambunctiously, advises them not to "antagonise" the powers that be by such scandalous conduct; out of the depths of his timid wisdom, applauds their demonstration, perhaps, only to announce that now they must retire from the scene to let their fate be settled by properly "constituted authority" etc.

The conservative democrat has both methods in his arsenal, leaning on the liberal if things get tough enough, and on the whip-wielders when he can get away with it.

The socialist sees the only secure foundation for democratic control in such active self-movement of the people when they come on the stage as actors themselves.

"Active democracy" — that is the guarantee. The people will never gain back their world by merely "relying" on well-intentioned leaders — not even if those leaders are well-intentioned socialist democrats — not even if those leaders are independent socialists like ourselves, or like anyone better than ourselves. They will never be handed their just deserts from above: they must take back their world themselves.

That is what Gene Debs meant when he said that we do not come before the people as a Moses to lead them to a promised land; for if

we can lead them anywhere, so can their disguised enemies. We propose a fundamentally different kind of leadership, based upon an instilled consciousness that they must depend only on the real, organised wielded power of their own rank-and-file organisations, which will seek out their own leaders in the course of movement and struggle.

This is the link between the fight for socialism and the organisation of a victorious socialist democracy.

Political organisation from below institutionalised, to bring the masses into a constant, close, active role of participation in politics — this is the key thought of the socialist approach to the workers' government of the next stage in human history.

We approach this idea with no belief that it is either necessary or desirable to prepare a blueprint for forms of government institutions which will "guarantee" democracy. It is with good reason that most socialists have steered clear of such blueprints. In general, the blueprints that have been suggested (like the utopian setup in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*) are tinged with the outlook of all-wise leaders who will cram the action of the people into a mold which is supposed to "do them good." Sometimes, like Bellamy's, they do not even always succeed in being consistently democratic.

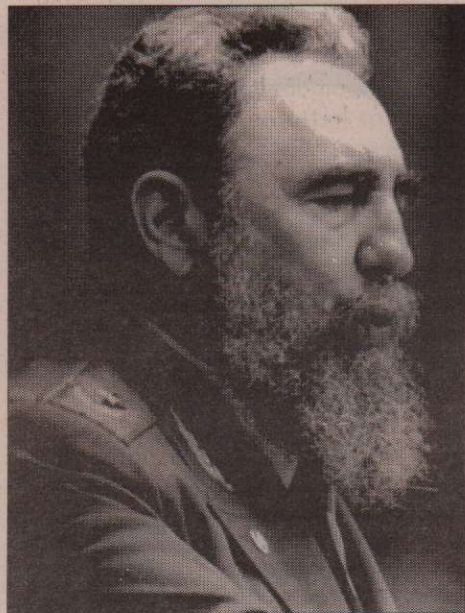
But it is not necessary to detail a blueprint to appreciate the tremendous power and possibility of the key thought mentioned above.

One thing which is characteristic of capitalist democracies — and which is a reflection of the "split" between political forms of democracy, on the one hand, and the capitalist fact of economic dictatorship, on the other — is the typical "division of labour" in the society between the professional politicians and others. Just as the political democratic forms are for only one sector of life under capitalism, so it is conceived as needing its own "specialists."

In a society which is democratic through and through, the idea of a specialist group of "professional politicians" is a contradiction. When Lenin wrote of the aim "every cook a statesman," what he meant was that every worker must have the opportunity of playing a constant role in political life.

This is why socialists' thinking turns to the task of having democratic control on permanent rank and file committees of the working people, as the basic political units of active democracy.

No one "invented" this idea. History has shown that every time the masses of people get into motion from below, spontaneously they tend to form out of their ranks precisely such revolutionary-committee forms of self-leadership. It happened in the American Revolution, with its Committees of Correspondence; in the English Cromwellian revolution with its committees of soldiers' deputies; in the French Revolution, with



Enemies of real democracy: fascist, Stalinist, and bourgeois-democratic — Fini, Castro, Clinton

democracy



Oxford students march in 1935 — some would die fighting Franco's fascists in Spain

its Jacobin clubs; in the Russian Revolution, with its "soviets"; in the 1918 German revolution that overthrew the kaiser, with its workers' councils. It is a suggestion (not a blueprint) for a socialist form of government which has been put before our thinking by the people themselves, and not by any socialist theoretician or system-framers.

It is an idea for a fundamentally different form of representative democracy a thousand times more democratic than the capitalistically-limited governments we know today, even the best of them.

It would mean that the people vote for their men, their policies, their hopes and demands not merely at intervals, as residents in an arbitrary area, but in constant association in their places of work and activity — as workers in a plant committee, as housewives or professionals, with the right of immediate recall of representatives through every section of the setup.

We do not believe that an American socialist democracy will look like any of the precedent attempts at such rank-and-file democracy, in their particular forms. It is the underlying starting-point which is the same: how to formulate governmental institutions of democracy in terms of permanent stand-by control from below and not merely in terms of the formal right to vote.

It is possible that in this country a socialist democracy may retain many or even all of the particular forms of government institutions that now serve capitalism. It is possible that these may be merely modified in the direction

of allowing greater mass participation, along lines of thinking already pioneered by various reformers — recall provisions, democratised Supreme Court setup etc. We do not believe it useful for socialists to fix a programme or a blueprint on this point; the people will decide

"...a fundamentally different form of representative democracy a thousand times more democratic than the capitalistically-limited governments we know today, even the best of them."

when they get into motion. It is useful only to suggest lines of thinking which point in the democratic direction we want to go.

As a matter of fact, it is not in the field of governmental forms that the main problem lies. It is a question of fusing political democracy with economic democracy. Preoccupation merely

with schemes of government forms, however ingenious, is an indication that the problem is still seen exclusively in terms of the old political democracy. That, as a matter of fact, is one reason why the idea of rank-and-file workers' committees in the plants as the political unit already combines the tasks of both political and economic democracy, for it tends to make the "worker" and the "voter" one. But socialism does not think only in terms of a central state which owns everything.

Socialism is not equivalent to "nationalisation". It is hospitable to all ideas of replacing private ownership of the commanding heights of the economy with social ownership.

Ownership by cooperatives is a form of social ownership as against capitalist ownership. Ownership by local communities is a form of social ownership. Ownership by free collectives is a form of social ownership. The socialist is entirely open to consideration of non-state or non-national forms of social ownership in sectors of economic life, within the framework of a planned and rationally conducted economy.

A "mixed economy" in this sense is old stuff for socialists though many liberals speak of it today as if it were a brand-new discovery of theirs — assuming they are not talking, as some of them do, of a "mixed economy" as merely some impossible compromise between capitalism and socialism.

For the big aim of socialism is not greater and greater centralisation of life, but its decentralisation. Only, socialists do not approach this aim as semi-anarchistic utopians who think that society can leap from its present-day capitalist structure to a decentralised commune. The decentralisation of political and economic responsibility becomes a possibility only in so far as a socialist system digs firm roots, eradicates the habits of the past through education and usage and the rise of new generation and creates a really new society and a really "new man."

If it is true, as some prophets croak, that the people cannot take over the economy from its present dictators without making totalitarianism inevitable, then it is not the idea of socialism which falls before the argument. It is the very possibility of democracy which is called into question.

If the state "owns everything", they say, then it becomes "all-powerful" and as the parrot phrase goes nowadays, "absolute power corrupts..."

What these people are really doubting is the capacity of the masses of people to exercise effective democratic control over their government. It is because they despair of this, and nothing else, that they think up schemes for atomising political power so that no one can get too much of it at a time. It is because they have lost all faith in the democratic capacity of the people that they even revive hopes in the doomed system of capitalism, or, if they cannot bring themselves to do this, rig up schemes for decentralised utopias.

But such schemes do not meet the real problems in the world. Society will be planned, and it remains to decide — by whom? By rulers over the people, new or old, or by the working people themselves?

Without exception, every argument that "socialism inevitably leads to greater centralisation of power, and therefore to totalitarianism" regardless of the good intentions of the socialists, is an argument of despair with democracy, and not merely a reason for objecting to socialism. If these prophets are right, if democratic control from below is impossible, not even their schemes will save them or the people of the world.

But they are wrong. That the people can win out will be proved not only by debate and theories but, in the last analysis by the struggle for democracy itself. Those who abandon the struggle are already helping to decide it in the negative, to bear out their croaks of doom. Those who fight to push the frontiers of democratic control further and deeper not as a rearguard of the past but as a vanguard of a new world, will find themselves fighting for a socialist society.

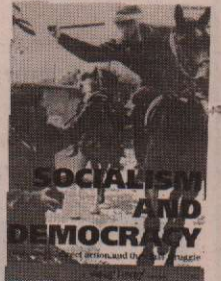
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"A variant of feudal socialism, and we can have nothing to do with it"

Engels on anti-semitism

IN PRUSSIA it is the minor nobility, the "Junkers" who get in 10,000 marks and spend 20,000 marks and thus fall into the hands of the usurers, who are into anti-semitism, and in Prussia and Austria it is the petty bourgeois, guild handicraft workers and small shopkeepers ruined by big capitalist competition who form the chorus and screech along with it.

However, when capital annihilates these classes of society, which are reactionary through and through, then it does what is its duty, and does good work, no matter whether it is Jewish or Aryan, circumcised or baptised; it helps backward Prussia and Austria forward, so that they finally come to the modern standpoint, where all the old social differences go off into the one great contradiction between capitalists and wage-workers.

Only where that is not yet the case, where no strong capitalist class yet exists, and thus also no strong wage-worker class, where capital is still too weak to seize hold of the whole national production, and thus has the stock exchange as the main scene of its activity, where production is still in the hands of peasants, squires, handicraft workers and suchlike classes surviving from the Middle Ages — only there is capital disproportionately Jewish, and only there is there anti-semitism.

In the whole of North America, where there are millionaires whose riches can scarcely be expressed in our paltry marks, guilders, or francs, there is not a single Jew among those millionaires, and the Rothschilds are veritable beggars by comparison with those Americans. And here in England Rothschild is a man of restricted means compared to the Duke of Westminster, for example. Among us, on the Rhine, where we chased the nobility off the land 95 years ago with the help of the French and we have built up modern industry, where are the Jews?

Anti-semitism is thus nothing other than a reaction by medieval, declining social groups against modern society, which consists essentially of capitalists and wage-workers, and it serves only reactionary ends, under a spurious socialist cloak; it is a variant of feudal socialism, and we can have nothing to do with it.

If it is possible in a particular country, that is proof that not enough capital exists there yet. Capital and wage-labour are inseparable today. The stronger capital is, the stronger also is the wage-working class, and the nearer is the end of capitalist domination.

For us Germans, and in that I



Jewish proletariat — homeworkers in London's East End

include the Viennese, I therefore wish for a rapid development of capitalist economy, and certainly not for it to get bogged down in stagnation.

It follows that anti-semitism falsifies the whole state of affairs. It does not even know the Jews that it decries. Otherwise it would know that here in England and in America, thanks to the East-European anti-semites, and in Turkey, thanks to the Spanish Inquisition, there are thousands and

ing for his devotion to the cause of the proletariat in prison in Vienna; Eduard Bernstein, the editor of the London *Social Democrat*; Paul Singer, one of our best MPs — people whose friendship I am proud of, and all Jews! I myself am made into a Jew by the *Gartenlaube* [a right-wing German magazine], and besides, if I have to choose, rather a Jew than "Herr von..."

THIS DENUNCIATION of anti-semitism by Frederick Engels was published in the Austrian socialist paper *Arbeiter-Zeitung* of 9 May 1890, and is here translated from Marx/Engels *Werke*, vol.22, p.49-51. It was part of a reply by Engels to an Austrian correspondent who argued that anti-semitism in Austria had an anti-capitalist content.

That argument then was as widespread on the left as is now the view that anti-Israeli sentiment is progressive and anti-imperialist. Jews were pilloried as the archetypal money men — capitalists. (This is the sort of anti-semitism discussed by Max Beer and Emile Zola — see last week's *Socialist Organiser*). Engels had just had a long, and eventually exasperated, exchange of letters with the French socialist leader Paul Lafargue, husband of Karl Marx's daughter Laura, who believed that socialists could gain from the populist, chauvinist and anti-semitic agitation of General Boulanger, because Boulanger was denouncing the existing capitalist regime. Boulanger was the leader of a strange proto-fascist mass movement that looked all-powerful for a while in the late 1880s and then suddenly fell apart.

Engels equates anti-semitism with

what the *Communist Manifesto* had called "feudal socialism" — a reactionary form of "socialism" which denounced capitalism from the point of view of the old pre-capitalist institutions and classes destroyed by capitalist development.

Engels did not believe that every anti-capitalism must be progressive, or that socialists could proceed by always putting a plus where the capitalist class put a minus. He would have denounced

"Here in England and in America, thanks to the East-European anti-semites, there are thousands and thousands of Jewish proletarians."

the sort of "anti-imperialism" advocated by Islamic fundamentalists today, for example, as reactionary compared to capitalist development.

To us today, knowing as we do about Nazi Germany and about the revival of Nazism in Europe now, Engels's argument also shows how grossly he (and all the other Marxists of the time) underestimated the danger of anti-semitism — by way of "over-optimism" about capitalism.

At the time anti-semitism was indeed much more widespread and virulent

in Eastern Europe, where capitalism was at an early stage of development and the traditional role of some Jews as moneylenders and small traders, inherited from the Middle Ages, was still important. Since the French Revolution of 1789-99, West European countries had steadily removed traditional restrictions on Jews, and integrated them as citizens with equal rights. Engels was aware of continued anti-semitism, in France for example, but evidently considered it to be just a left-over which would be wiped out by the advance of capitalist civilisation and then by the socialist revolution.

He drastically underestimated the capacity of capitalist politicians to adapt such "left-overs", and use them to mobilise masses of people who were ruined by capitalism yet alienated from the organised working-class — and such masses remained, and remain even in the most modern capitalist society.

In our time, in the wake of the Holocaust in which six million Jews were murdered, anti-semitism was driven underground for two or three decades. Then it re-emerged as "anti-Zionism," feeding off the Arab-Jewish conflict in the Middle East. It became a powerful force on the left.

Much of the left still stands for the destruction of Israel, denouncing "Zionism" as racism and adopting an attitude of comprehensive hostility to Jews who are not prepared to agree that Israel should be destroyed.

This is more like the medieval Christian who only wanted to "convert" the Jews, than the Hitlerite anti-semites. It is not unconditional, racist hostility. Yet it is comprehensive hostility to most Jews alive today. Where the "socialist" anti-semites Engels deals with were justly dismissed by Marxist socialists such as Karl Kautsky and August Bebel as people infatuated with a "socialism of idiots," modern "Trotskyism" — most of it — has long indulged in an *anti-imperialism of idiots*, denouncing Israel. This is properly the politics of reactionary Arab chauvinism, not, as the left-wing "anti-Zionists" think, of working-class socialism.

Now that the first, inadequate steps are being taken towards the only socialist solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict — two states for two peoples — it is time for the left to sober up and understand that Israeli chauvinism can only be fought by the Israeli left, never by supposedly "anti-imperialist" Arab-nationalist states or Islamic or Arab chauvinist mass movements. These comments of Engels on an earlier anti-semitic infection of the socialist movement may help us take a fresh look. It is long overdue.

The film Ronald Reagan might make about poverty



Matt Cooper
reviews
*A Home of
Our Own*

Directed by
Tony Bill

IF YOU THINK that a film about a single mother struggling to bring up her six children in poverty while living in one of the most affluent countries in the world would be political, you'd be right.

But if you thought that these politics must be at least liberal, or left of centre, you'd be wrong.

As its property-owning-democracy title might suggest, *A Home of Our Own* is centred on the rugged individualism and self-reliance that, we are supposed to believe, can win out against all the odds in the American mid-West.

"Poverty here is merely a test to prove the worth of characters as shallow as they are all-American."

If Ronald Reagan had the wit or the imagination to make a film about poverty, this might well be it.

Frances Lacey (Cathy Bates) and her irksome Lacey Tribe quit Los Angeles in early 1961. Since the death of her husband Mother Lacey has been surviving on dead-end jobs. Equipped with no more than some loose change and a '49 Lincoln that



Heralds of free enterprise: Mother Lacey (Cathy Bates) with dream child

runs on hope and a dream, she sets off to find a new life.

The dream is realised in the form of a ten per cent built house, little more than a frame, which Mother Lacey persuades an Idaho American-Japanese farmer to sell to her in return for the labour of some of her brood.

The "tribe" set about turning the sack into their dream home with nothing but the mother's family-centred determination and stubborn refusal to take anyone's charity to drive them.

In the end as disaster beckons, the community rallies round the day is saved.

The general effect is like hav-

ing your brain sucked out through a straw by a grinning idiot dressed as Uncle Sam, while a syrup sea of sickly-sweet sentimentality washes wave after asphyxiatingly dull wave over you. Poverty here is merely a test to prove the worth of characters as shallow as they are all-American.

The film is supposedly based on the early life of the writer, Patrick Duncan, who narrates the film through the character of the eldest son, Shane Patrick Lacey.

Throughout the film Shane strains to get back to the life that he knew in LA before suddenly being absorbed into the syrup of the blissful family unit. Through Shane Patrick, Patrick Duncan ends the film saying that he never did return to LA.

The cruel irony that this film is the product of them myth making that lives in LA's most famous suburb, Hollywood, is completely lost.

A Home of Our Own is a piece of Amercian apple pie that has been at the back of the icebox for far too long. Don't touch it. It's rotten inside.

Quick-fix comes unstuck



Geoff Ward
reviews
Frazier

Channel 4
Wednesdays 10pm

I WAS NEVER a fan of the long-running American comedy series *Cheers*, but one of my favourite characters from that show was the haughty, mixed-up shrink, *Frazier*.

Now starring in his own show, he plays a radio phone-in therapist based in his home town of Seattle.

He has been living alone since his marriage broke up, but now his personal space is invaded. First his ageing father, with his dog, moves into his apartment. Then he takes in a kooky maid from Manchester.

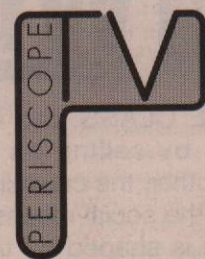
The comedy revolves around the friction between father and son, with a backlog of personal hang-ups still to be resolved between them.

"Smooth-talking over the airwaves, he finds it almost impossible to talk with his dad."

This sitcom pokes fun at the American obsession with psychiatry and therapy, particularly the quick-fix solutions peddled over radio phone-ins. *Frazier* can be smooth-talking over the airwaves, but he finds it almost impossible to strike up a meaningful conversation with his dad.

The people may not be as endearing as the crowd from *Cheers* and the comedy differs slightly from having only five principal characters.

It's worth sticking with it only to see the unpretentious dad mercilessly ribbing his son for his snobbery.



By Wayne
Geoffries

We have fed you all for a thousand years

(WRITTEN BY "An Unknown Proletarian" and first published by the Industrial Workers of the World in the USA in 1918)

We have fed you all for a thousand years
And you hail us still unfed,
Though there's never a dollar of all your wealth,
But marks the workers' dead.
We have yielded our best to give you rest
And you lie on crimson wool.
Then if blood be the price of all your wealth
Good God! We have paid it in full!

There is never a mine blown skyward now
But we're buried alive for you.

There's never a wreck drifts shoreward now
But we are its ghastly crew.
Go reckon our dead by the forges red
And the factories where we spin.
If blood be the price of your cursed wealth,
Good God! We have paid it in!

We have fed you all for a thousand years —
For that was our doom, you know,
From the days when you chained us in your fields
To the strike a week ago.
You have taken our lives, and our babies and wives,
And we're told it's your legal share,
But if blood be the price of your lawful wealth,
Good God! We have bought it fair!

Alliance for

WORKERS'
LIBERTY

Meetings

LEICESTER

Thursday 2 June

"Should anti-racists vote Labour?"

Debate between AWL and Inter-Racial solidarity

7.30 Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street

LONDON

Wednesday 1 June

"How to defend the Welfare State"

Speakers Chris Hickey and a member of St Thomas's UNISON

7.30 Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road

LEEDS

Thursday 2 June

"Did D-Day bring freedom?"

7.30 Adelphi pub

MANCHESTER

Saturday 4 June

"The fight for workers' liberty" dayschool

10.30-5.00, The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Fallowfield

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 2 June

"Where next for Sheffield council workers?"

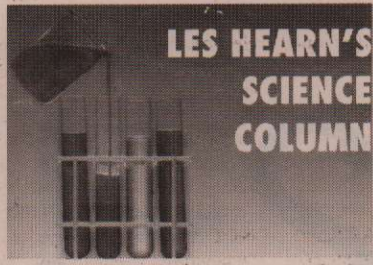
Speakers: Mark Serwotka and Chris Croome

7.00 SCCAU, West Street

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has branches in many towns, for details of our work in your area phone 071-639 7965

LETTERS

Lavoisier: a chemical revolutionary



SCIENCE AND politics often collide. A particularly destructive collision took place two hundred years ago when the Committee of Public Safety in revolutionary France sentenced the brilliant scientist Antoine Lavoisier to be guillotined. Some 40,000 other members of the public were also guillotined during the "reign of terror" of the Committee of Public Safety. Lavoisier's "crime" was to have been a tax collector under the old regime. This offence, not usually a capital one, was thought more important than any contribution Lavoisier might have made to human knowledge, had he lived. The judge is believed to have said: "The revolution has no need of scientists."

"Lavoisier was part of a revolution in science, helping to overthrow the pseudoscience of alchemy."

Lavoisier was in fact part of a revolution in science, helping to overthrow the pseudoscience of alchemy, disproving the important but misguided theory of "phlogiston" and making chemistry a systematic science. There being little public money available for the support of scientific

research in the late 18th century, Lavoisier funded his work through his income from the Ferme Generale, the system by which the king "contracted out" tax-collecting to individuals who were then free to enrich themselves on the side.

Working on a mining survey, Lavoisier became interested in the composition of minerals and his first scientific paper, published in 1768 when he was 25, showed that gypsum and plaster of Paris were both sulphate of lime (calcium sulphate), their differing properties being explained by the different amounts of water in their crystals.

Turning his attention to alchemy, he tackled the ancient belief that the "element" water could be transformed into the "element" earth. Heating water in glass apparatus for one hundred days failed to produce any "earth" apart from a small amount of residue. This he showed came from the glassware. Heating the water in metal apparatus left no residue.

Around the same time, he began studying combustion. The established explanation for the changes caused by burning was that combustible substances contained "phlogiston." This substance was liberated when the substance was burnt in the atmosphere. This implied a loss of weight and, indeed, some substances did weigh less after burning. However, metals gained weight on burning or calcination (roasting in air). Did phlogiston have negative weight?

Lavoisier and others soon showed that metals combined with air during calcination. He heated the metals inside sealed containers and showed that the total weight was the same before and after. But, on opening, air rushed in, the extra weight being about the same as the increase in the weight of the metal on calcination.

From 1771, Lavoisier was assisted

by his remarkably talented wife, Marie. She assisted with and wrote up his experiments. She studied drawing under the great artist David (who painted the assassination of Marat in his bath) so that she could illustrate Lavoisier's publications. She engraved copper plates with drawings of apparatus invented by Lavoisier. She learnt languages so that she could translate foreign scientific publications into French, as well as translating Lavoisier's work.

In 1774, the English chemist Priestley discovered oxygen, collecting it when mercury oxide was heated in a sealed container. However, being a supporter of the phlogiston theory, Priestley did not realise the significance of the gas which he called "dephlogisticated air."

Meeting Priestley in Paris, Lavoisier realised that dephlogisticated air was found in the atmosphere and was absorbed by metals when burnt. In fact, burning could be described not as a loss of phlogiston, but as a chemical combination of a substance with part of the atmosphere, "eminently breathable air." He recognised that the atmosphere was a mixture of at least two gases, the residual gas being mainly nitrogen, though this was not known till later. Toying with different names for dephlogisticated air, Lavoisier finally settled on "oxygen" or "acid maker."

In 1787, with three other eminent scientists, Lavoisier started to set chemistry on a systematic basis. Many of the modern terms for compounds, oxides, sulphates, sulphides etc. were coined by them, and they came up with a list of 55 substances that could not be broken down any further — true elements as opposed to those of the alchemists. They introduced a scheme of symbols for elements and compounds and used them to write the first chemical equations. In 1789, he published his *Traite ele-*

mentaire de chimie, popularising his new anti-phlogiston school of chemistry, outlining his theories of combustion, acid-formation and salt-formation. He also stated for the first time the Principle of Conservation of Mass (that mass is not created or destroyed but just changed from one form to another).

Lavoisier was also involved in the chemistry industry, being prominent in the newly formed Regie de Poudres (Administration of Powders) from 1775. This harmless sounding body was in fact responsible for improving the supply of gunpowder. Though sulphur and charcoal were easily obtainable, saltpetre (potassium nitrate) was not. He caused to be set up pits in the ground where decaying organic waste was left for several months. On mixing with wood ash and hot water, followed by evaporation, artificial saltpetre was obtained. His method doubled gunpowder output by 1778.

Though of aristocratic background, he seems to have accepted the Revolution. He became involved with the introduction of the metric system and drew up plans for universal education. Regarded with suspicion because of his tax-gathering activities under the monarchy, he was finally arrested in late 1793 and guillotined with about 30 of his colleagues after a dubious trial. The mathematician Lagrange was to say: "Only a moment to cut off that head and a hundred years may not give us another like it."

"In defence of the French Revolution"
The Revolution, democracy and the "Terror"
Worker's Liberty no. 12/13.
£1.80 plus 52p postage from
WL Publications, PO Box
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Why you should be a socialist

TODAY ONE CLASS, the working class, lives by selling its labour-power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the social means of production. Life is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes unemployment, the maiming of lives by overwork, imperialism, abuse of the environment, and much else.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty fights to convince and mobilise the working class to overthrow capitalism. We aim not to create a new labour movement, but to transform the existing workers' movement, trade unions and Labour Party.

We want socialism: public ownership of the major enterprises, workers' control, and democracy much fuller than the present system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We stand:

- For social planning, for a sustainable use of natural resources.
- For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working-class-based women's movement.
- For black and white workers' unity, organised through the labour movement, to fight racism and the despair which breeds racism. For labour movement support for black communities' self-defence against racist and fascist violence; against immigration controls.
- For equality for lesbians and gays.

- In support of the independent trade unions and the socialists in Russia and Eastern Europe. We denounce the misery caused by the drive to free-market capitalism there, but we believe that Stalinism was a system of class exploitation no better than capitalism.
- For a democratic united Europe; against the undemocratic and capitalist European Community, but for European workers' unity and socialism, not nationalism, as the alternative.
- For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.
- For the Palestinians' right to a state of their own, alongside

Israel, and for a socialist federation of the Middle East with self-determination for the Israeli Jews.

- For national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide.
- For a workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, to take solidarity action, and to decide their own union rules.
- For a rank and file movement in the trade unions.
- For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.
- For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

BBC strike bites

THIS TUESDAY (24 May) saw the first in a series of one day strikes by production workers and journalists at the BBC.

The strikes were very successful, hitting news and sports coverage in particular. There were pickets at all the main BBC workplaces.

The dispute, which involves both BECTU and the NUJ, is over management's attempts to introduce performance related pay and longer hours.

As one BECTU member explained:

"Performance pay is weighted against us. It is designed to

give management the chance to reward people who toe the line and to punish those who's faces don't fit. What's more, many departments will be told to achieve cuts of up to 5% in their pay bill, so they've already decided that someone's "performance" has got to be poor so that they can achieve the cuts that they want."

Strikers are also angry at proposals for a "flexible" pay structure which could lead to the virtual abolition of overtime payments and a cut of around 15% in gross pay for some workers.

The magnificent stand of the

BBC workers will cheer up trade unionists across industry.

It's great to see a well-co-ordinated national strike causing serious trouble for bosses.

What you can do

● Organise a delegation from your workplace to visit the BBC

picket lines.

● Invite a BBC worker to your union branch, stewards' committee, trades council, Labour Party etc.

● Organise a collection at work for their strike fund.
● For more details phone BECTU — 071-437 8506 or NUJ — 071-278 7916

Unite to build a fighting UNISON

By a conference delegate

UNISON, the new lumbering giant of public sector trade unionism, held its first annual conference in Bournemouth between 15 and 18 May. As expected, it was dominated by four main issues: the lack of effective Branch-level mergers; the complex fudge over political funds which gives effective Labour Party control to ex-NUPE bureaucrats; the battle over the response to the Tory assault on the public sector, welfare state and NHS; internal democracy, in its starkest with the enquiry by the NEC into activists in Liverpool.

In the merger a disunited Left was largely outmanoeuvred by a combination of an ex-NUPE "block-vote" Labour Right and an ex-NALGO Stalinist Right. The

balance sheet drawn up after conference leaves us with far more minuses than pluses.

But by day two, an orchestrated "block-vote" was evident, with ranks of delegates using points of order to threaten a walk-out unless the Labour Party matters were left firmly in the hands of the Affiliated Funds. The result was deference to this threat of a major split at this first conference and acceptance of the fudge over funds.

On day three, set aside for rule amendments in which the Left had expected to win key changes, the mobilisation of the Right largely continued. Amendments lost included those facilitating the calling of special delegate conferences, delegate control of industrial action, the right to distribute information within conference(s), and yearly

elections to the NEC. Despite some victories, such as the assertion of conference's sovereignty over rule changes, the power of the bureaucracy remained largely intact.

In addition, the Left lost the key composite on fighting the pay freeze. Conference supported the NEC motion which prioritised "imaginative campaigning" against the industrial action strategy which is necessary.

Significantly, it was on the NHS that the NEC was defeated, with conference overturning the NEC's request to defer motions arguing that industrial action and solidarity action were essential to fight closure of units.

UNITY, a broad-based network of UNISON Left activists, including supporters of the Alliance for Workers Liberty, continued to

argue the key issues of democracy. Three successful fringe meetings were held. We produced the only daily activist bulletin, giving a well-received combination of analysis and consistent Left positions on conference items.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Conference was the way in which both striking Housing Benefit workers from Birmingham and the Liverpool Branch activists threatened with expulsion were refused the right to address conference on a number of occasions. (See Sleeper, page 7).

We must also start to draw together the strands of the Left in UNISON to campaign for a merged, fighting union with one political voice. The lessons of this first conference must be learnt, and fast!

UCW conference ducks fight on shorter hours

POST OFFICE

By a conference delegate

ATTEMPTS AT this week's UCW conference to impose a deadline in the claim for a shorter working week have been turned down by delegates. The union leaders have failed to do anything about the claim for the past year; pressure was on them to either get an agreement in the near future or ballot the members on industrial action.

The defeat of all amendments with timescales in them has now got the leadership off the hook. There is every chance that another year will go by without anything happening, causing confusion and frustration among the membership.

Given the strength of feeling on this issue, how did they get away with it? Firstly, because General Secretary Alan Johnson gave an assurance that if the claim wasn't settled by the end of year he'd be balloting the members anyway. This was news even to other members of the Executive. It's possible he was being genuine. But it's strange that he chose to make the announcement in replying to the debate. In later debates, when he had got the result he wanted this commitment started to wobble a bit.

Added to this the debate took place on the first day of conference in conditions of some confusion. Delegates were faced with a forest's worth of additional reports, amendments and corrections on their seats. Some delegates didn't even realise what was being discussed.

But probably the major reason for the decisions was the announcement just days before conference that Royal Mail letters and parcels were to be privatised. Without doubt this put the wind up some delegates. It also allowed Johnson to argue that everything must

take second place to the campaign against privatisation and that threats of industrial action would alienate public opinion.

This view is both wrong and dangerous. Having public opinion on our side is all very well, but at the end of the day how many jobs did it save in the pits? The way to stop privatisation in Post Office is for the UCW to state quite clearly that we will defend existing jobs and conditions in the event of privatisation and we will continue to press ahead with our own agenda, including the shorter working week.

Privatisation of the Post Office is on the cards because the Tories and their city friends sense a financial killing. The spectre of widespread industrial action from an angry and determined workforce would certainly dampen their ardour.

Yes, there is a need to win public support through a political campaign against privatisation. Yes, industrial action might put some people off. But to refuse to take it when it becomes necessary became of that would be to invite our members to commit suicide.

THIS WEEK'S conference of the postalworkers' union UCW is due to discuss the privatisation of Royal Mail. It is vital that conference adopts a strategy that will combine both political and industrial action. Delegates should support the emergency motions which would seek to turn the TUC's public service day set for 9 July into a major national trade union demonstration in defence of the public services and against the post office sell-off. Mass action such as this could be linked to industrial action in defence of jobs and against Royal Mail managers' offensive.

CPSA: Vote Anne Jarvis!

CPSA members have a chance to hit back at the ruling right wing "Moderate" group by electing the UNITY candidate Anne Jarvis in the re-run of the union's presidential election.

Jarvis's campaign gives activists a chance to go out and rouse up the vast majority of CPSA members who do not vote in elections. We can use the campaign.

We can stop Chambers' from making her controversial "Presidential rulings" which are entirely outside normal labour movement procedures but in perfect harmony with the "Moderates" desire to block action at any cost.

Once Jarvis's election campaign is over it is vital for supporters of UNITY to get together and plan what to do next.

The first stage should be an open conference of all UNITY supporters which can pool the ideas and shall the experiences of all the

activists on the ground.

Fight Market Testing: strike on 7/8 July

THE EXECUTIVE and support grades civil service union NUCPS is to ballot its members in the DSS for a two day strike against Market Testing — the Tory plan to contract out civil service jobs.

The strikes should take place on 7/8 July

It is vital that the CPSA — the low paid clerical workers' union — ballot its members to strike alongside NUCPS, not just in the DSS but in every section where the activists think they can win action. If the CPSA ballot does take place it must be organised over a realistic timetable in order to give union reps time to organise workplace meetings before the ballot papers go out.

Tories plan bonfire of health and safety rules

THE DEREGULATION and Contracting out Bill represents a qualitative stepping up of the Tory onslaught on public services and public sector workers.

Paving the way for further contracting out and providing ministers with enormous powers to simply dump health and safety legislation (for the public as well as at work), it is a threat to life and limb as well as jobs.

The Bill, which may become law within the next few months, will give ministers such sweeping powers to amend or repeal primary legislation without any Parliamentary debate that it has become known as the "Henry VIII bill." Laws which have been passed after Parliamentary debate may be abolished without further ado!

Helena Kennedy QC has rightly commented: "The Bill is a stalking horse. It lists 23 pieces of legislation it wants to be rid of now. But its first chapter gives ministers the power to change or repeal any non-civil rights legislation in the future if that legislation imposes a 'burden' on business..."

"They have been consulting on 3,500 regulations in preparations for this, including those which ban flammable

children's nightwear and foam-filled furniture. They have also asked the Health and Safety Executive to review 400 health and safety at work regulations. You would be forgiven for suspecting that the more controversial 'burdens' on business which the government wants to scrap won't be announced now, but will go through under their streamlined procedure in the future."

Kennedy is right to be suspicious. Burdens are defined entirely in terms of business interests. The task forces which advised on regulations to be abolished were set up on the advice of Lord Sainsbury to Michael Heseltine and were composed entirely of business representatives.

Ministers would also be empowered to contract out work which current legislation requires public servants to carry out in the "public interest." The Bill would expose many more civil servants to the pressures and threats of mass Market Testing. In the Patent Office, the Insolvency Office and the Forestry Commission for example.

Giving the Bill one last vicious twist, workers' redundancy rights would be weakened. It would no longer be automatic unfair dismissal to sack a worker in breach of a redundancy agreement.

UNISON Health Conference

Richard Bayley (York Health UNISON) and Debbie Leonard (St. Thomas' UNISON)

UNISON's Health Care sector, organising some 450,000 healthworkers, should be a real gain for a section of workers under constant attack. Its first sector conference on 19th May, however, revealed basic problems in organisation and confidence in the branches, which need to be addressed urgently by activists.

The conference was very badly attended, with the highest card vote only representing some 60% of UNISON's Health membership. Notwithstanding the difficulties some branches had in registering for the conference, the low turnout probably indicates the bad state of branch organisation in many areas, with small, unmerged branches being the norm.

This situation showed in the lack of confidence of delegates to vote against the National Health Committee's opposition to all meaningful action on either pay or cuts. A motion calling for firm opposition to the pay freeze in the NHS, arguing a recommendation for industrial action if a "substantial" rise was not achieved, was narrowly defeated on a card vote; a composite calling for a stepping up of the campaign to defend the NHS, with a weekday Day of Action and a ballot for strike action for that day across the NHS, was

defeated by almost 3-to-1 on a show of hands.

No doubt some opposition to action came from delegates who felt that they could not "deliver", but the National Health Committee put forward nothing to even address the gap in confidence, and were happy to see all calls for action go down.

There were some bright spots,

however, most notably the informal gathering of almost 100 delegates and visitors at a UNISON Health Activists Network meeting the night before conference. Although very loosely organised, it provided a useful forum for discussing the major issues, and showed that there is a layer of activists who wish to seriously debate and advocate taking action on pay and cuts.

NCU Executive elections: Broad Left lose control

By a central London BT engineer

THE NCU National Executive elections have given a majority for the right wing and Clerical alliance against the Communications Broad Left candidates: 20 to 15.

The fact that three prominent engineering BL candidates lost their seats reversed the previous BL majority. The three who lost their seats, Ian Cuthbert, Paul Moore and Colin O'Callaghan, are amongst the most solid supporters put up by the BL. They had a high profile in the recent contractors' ballot in London where, despite NEC backing, the vote for strike action was 60% lost to 40%. This failure and the fact that the three candidates are perceived as 'hard-left' politically may explain

the loss of their positions. Some moderate branches put forward mixed slate recommendations to their members and these BL candidates were omitted.

On the clerical side, the hoped breakthrough against the Clerical faction, which sides with 'Member First' the engineering right-wing faction on industrial and political issues, did not materialise. The Clerical faction organised very efficiently to maintain their control against Clerical BL candidates and independents.

These election results do not promise well BT's Customer Service Improvement Programme. This is an attempt to get BT engineers to work anti-social hours and weekends for much reduced payments (in some cases no extra at all). At present the NEC are in negotiations with no agreement in sight.

NUJ conference report

By Steven Holt, NUJ Book Branch

THE 1994 Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) of the National Union of Journalists was a tame affair, partly because John Foster, our new General Secretary, is a serious trade unionist compared with Steve Turner and Jake Ecclestone, but also because struggle has ebbed recently.

The meeting passed motions condemning leadership passivity over derecognition. Now activists have to build members' confidence on the ground to win future strike votes.

This will be made more difficult by the reversal of previous ADM policy to build up strike funds.

ANL/ARA rivalry spilled into the conference. Marc Wadsworth called for condemnation of the Welling march in October last year because of the violent scenes when the police attacked demonstrators. The conference opposed his motion.

The meeting passed motions condemning repression of opposition journalists in Turkey, and Berlusconi's control of the media in Italy.

The left in the union remains weak and divided, with the SWP the only significant organised faction. The NUJ Left is little more than a committee.

Activists should attend the planned Birmingham conference to build support for the NUJ Left in workplaces.

In Brief

Delegates at this year's Fire Brigades Union conference have voted for a national strike ballot with a "yes" recommendation as the Tories press ahead with their plans to attack pensions.

The strike at *Elkes* biscuits in Uttoxeter is over. After 3 weeks on strike the TGWU organised won a pay rise of 3.5%

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

March on Campsfield 4 June

Close this racist jail!

By Davis St Marthe

CAMPSFIELD HOUSE detention centre near Oxford has 200 places for people imprisoned without charge or trial under Britain's racist immigration laws.

Campsfield House opened on 29 November 1993, doubling the space in British jails available to hold immigrant prisoners.

During the last year the number of such people detained has more than doubled. Most are black and a majority are seeking

political asylum, having fled repression and persecution. When they arrived in Britain they were jailed — without being charged of any crime — and now they have fewer civil rights than convicted criminals.

The regime at Campsfield is one of constant harassment with "fire drills" at all hours and video cameras watching inmates' every move.

One 11 March hundreds of detainees began a hunger strike at Campsfield and at other jails across Britain demanding temporary admission of asylum seekers while their applications are being considered.

A Campaign to Close Campsfield has been set up by Oxford Trades Council. The Campaign demands:

- An end to Immigration Act detentions;
- Scrapping of immigration laws;
- The closure of Campsfield.

You can contact the campaign c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 1RQ or phone 0865-724452.

The campaign has called a national demonstration outside Campsfield on 4 June.

Socialist Organiser urges all anti-racist and labour movement activists to attend this march and work for the release of all immigrant detainees.

We ask all those attending the Anti-Nazi

League Carnival on 28 May to march the following weekend outside Campsfield. Enjoy the ANL festival, but remember the practical activity that needs to be organised to defeat the day-to-day racism of the British state.

The "Close down Campsfield" march assembles at 1.00 at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, near Oxford on Saturday 4 June. There will be a rally at 2.00 at the Detention Centre. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Bob Purkiss (TUC) and Mohammed Idrish.

Coaches to Kidlington: from London 10.30am from Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1. From other places, phone Mark on 071-639 7967.



A Ghanaian student awaiting deportation sits in his cell. Photo Carlos Guarita.

Immigration law: one rule for the rich, another for the poor

By Dion D'Silva

CHARLES WARDLE, Tory Home Office Minister, has revealed plans to change the immigration laws so that wealthy immigrants can get into Britain.

The Tories' strict racist immigration laws are to be altered to create a new category of immigrants, "entrepreneurial investors." People who prove that they have £1 million and are prepared to invest £750,000 in British capitalism will be allowed to stay in Britain for one year. They will then be allowed to stay indefinitely if they have invested sufficient money.

Discussing the Asylum Bill in 1992 the Sunday Times floated the idea of allowing into Britain a "few hundred thousand" Hong Kong Chinese. They meant the Hong Kong capitalist

class — the rest, the six million Hong Kong workers, could be left to take their chances under the Chinese Stalinists.

Now the British government has taken the advice and is to bend the rules for the rich.

This Tory tampering with the immigration laws is entirely in keeping with the whole history of these laws, which regulate immigration in the interests of big business. After World War 2, during the boom, black workers were recruited from Commonwealth countries. As the boom slowed immigration laws were passed to stop these workers moving to Britain.

These laws are not to do with "overcrowding", they are regulated by the needs of British capital.

Scrap all immigration laws!

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Behind the hype
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