

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

**Kick out the Tories in '87!**

**Labour must win Greenwich**



**The roots of racism.**

See centre pages.

# Palestinians



# face mass murder



Palestinians flee bombing

While newspaper headlines in the West have concentrated on the 'hostage crisis', and the fate of Mr Terry Waite, 45,000 Palestinian refugees living in Shatila, Burj al-Barajneh and Rashidiyeh camps in Lebanon have been besieged by Moslem militias who are relentlessly determined to either drive them from Lebanon or murder every one of them.

For seventeen weeks, the Shi'ite Amal militias have prevented anything going in or out of the camps. The

people living in the camps have been forced to eat grass, cats, dogs and even rats, in order to survive. Now they are starving to death.

### Militia

On February 14, the militias — probably because of external pressure — did allow some refugees to escape and small convoys to enter the camp with supplies. But the food — flour and milk — will not last more than a week. Unless the siege is broken, the

Palestinians face a massacre.

Nearly 600 have already died, and according to reports, 1500 are injured. Yet Amal seem intent upon wiping them all out.

It is another act in the continuing tragedy of the dispossessed Palestinian people. Once more, in the complex conflicts of the Middle East, it is the Palestinians who are the victims, who suffer most.

**More on Lebanon, page 5**

# WORLD Brief

## Student mobilisations continue

In the wake of the student mobilisations in France and China, waves of student radicalisation have hit Spain and Mexico.

In Mexico, students have been protesting at University reforms. Last November tens of thousands of students marched through the streets of Mexico City. A demonstration of 100,000 halted traffic shortly before Christmas. And then at the end of January students went on strike for several days. 200,000 demonstrated — including trade unionists supporting the students.

The reforms are proposed for the National Autonomous University in Mexico City — with 350,000 students, the largest university in the world. Their aim is to reduce state subsidies by increasing fees and making entrance much more difficult.

In 1968 — also following mass student unrest in France — student



Spanish student shot by police

demonstrations in Mexico met with violent resistance: 400 students were shot dead by troops.

In Spain, likewise, budget cuts in higher education reducing the number of available scholarships have provoked mass radicalisation amongst school students. School students have

taken strike action, and had confrontations with the police. In January, a 14 year old girl in Madrid was shot during a demonstration.

The students, who are led by a newly organised School Students' Union, have won support from the Spanish Young Socialists.

## SS trial in Jerusalem

John Demjanjuk, a wartime auxiliary for the Nazi SS, is on trial in Jerusalem, charged with war crimes against the Jewish people, and crimes against humanity. He is accused of the murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews at the Treblinka death camp in Poland. If he is found guilty he will be executed.

The 'Ivan the terrible' trial as it has become known, is one of the biggest for Nazi war crimes

since Adolf Eichmann was hanged 25 years ago.

If Demjanjuk is guilty, he was personally responsible for the asphyxiation of 850,000 people between 1941 and 1943. 'Ivan the terrible' was operator of the gas chambers at the Treblinka concentration camp. He used to cut victims with a sword as they were led to their deaths, and often raped condemned women before shooting them, the USSR

has provided Israel with an SS identification card.

Recent right-wing 'historical' accounts have attempted to minimise the fact of the Holocaust in which six million Jews died. One reason, perhaps, for the publicity given the trial by the Israeli authorities is the understandable desire to keep the Holocaust from being forgotten or minimised.

## Police attack gays

By Reb Short

On 16 December last year, the Tory leader of South Staffordshire district council, Bill Brownhill, stated that "as a cure (for AIDS) I would put 90% of queers in the gas chambers. We must find a way of stopping these gays going round."

The leader of the Labour Group, councillor Jack Greenway, replied, "everyone of us will agree with what has been said."

On 21 December, a group of 14 protestors from the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement (LGYM) and the Nottingham Lesbian and Gay Youth Organisation (NLGYO), travelled to Wombourne to protest and show that we are ready to fight for lesbian and gay rights and take on reactionaries like Brownhill.

While protesting outside his house, 12 of the demonstrators were arrested and taken to Wombourne police station, all charged with threatening behaviour. One woman, assaulted by police during the arrest, has also been charged with assaulting a police officer, their normal response to such a complaint.

Thanks to a collaborating duty solicitor, the 12 were remanded in custody over Christmas and sent to

either HM Prison Birmingham, Brockhill Remand Centre or Risley Remand Centre. This is a much worse sentence than they could expect were they to be found guilty of the charges in court.

After seven days, the 12 (all aged between 17 and 25) were released on bail, on condition they would not go within ten miles of Wombourne. At this hearing, the police tried to retain the only black defendant for another week, claiming that he had given a false address. (This was untrue; in fact his mother turned up to vouch for him).

### Blatant

Their treatment by both prison warders and police is a blatant case of state-induced homophobia. They were subject to continual taunts and threats all the time they were on remand.

The 12 have pleaded not guilty and are being tried on 23 February at Seisdon magistrates court, Wombourne, Staffs. All around the country support meetings are being organised, and a defence fund has been set up.

A demonstration will be taking place outside the court and it is vital that thousands of people from all around the country are mobilised... we have to show the state machine that we will not put up with their thinly disguised "queer-bashing" and that we will fight to defend lesbian and gay rights.

# Greek workers say no to austerity

By Ian Swindale

Greek industry was again brought to a standstill this week — for the third time this year — as workers across the country struck for 48 hours in protest at the continued enforcement of austerity measures by the "socialist" government of Andreas Papandreou.

More than a million and a half workers took part in this latest protest which shut factories and public services, closed banks, brought public transport and the national airline to a standstill and caused power cuts in some areas. Two previous 24-hour general strikes on 15 January and 12 February saw two million of Greece's two and a half million organised workers taking industrial action.

The Greek trade union confederation GSEE — whose pro-government leadership was imposed by the courts, after a majority of the previous leadership came out against the 1985 austerity programme — has been forced to call these general strikes to appease the anger of Greek workers. But the Confederation — whose demands are anyway very limited — has no long-term strategy for defeating the austerity programme which devalued the drachma by 15%, introduced a two-year wage freeze and gutted the inflation-linked automatic pay increases introduced by PASOK after it came to power in 1981.

This attack on workers' wages has recently been compounded by the introduction on January 1 of VAT in line with Greece's accession treaty to the EEC. A combination of this new tax, the easing of some price controls and the continued imposition of 100% import duties on consumer durables has fuelled workers' resistance to what the government chooses to call its policy of "economic stabilisation".

Inflation did fall last year from a catastrophic level of 25% to its previous level of 16%, but the introduction of VAT and the relaxation of price controls will make it difficult for Papandreou to maintain the level of inflation even at 16%.

Bereft of any strategy, it is unlikely that the GSEE will organise anything other than these token protest stoppages in order to win its demands. The Communist Party trade union fraction and that of the expelled PASOK trade unionists, will continue to call monthly 24-hour general strikes but these organisations are weak and have so far failed to capitalise on the enormous discontent felt by Greek workers.

The Papandreou government remains intent on pursuing its policy of "economic stabilisation" despite the dramatic loss of support which it is currently suffering from workers, peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie, and which was clearly demonstrated last October when, in local elections, PASOK lost control of three of Greece's four largest cities — Athens,



Workers demonstrate in Athens against the government's austerity measures.

Piraeus and Salonika.

Pressing on regardless, Papandreou removed the last few "left wing" voices in the government in his latest cabinet reshuffle two weeks ago. Only Melina Mercouri, the Minister for Culture, survives from the original government of 1981.

Apart from the austerity programme, the other main pole of Papandreou's economic policy seems to consist of constant appeals to multi-national companies and expatriate Greek capitalists to invest in Greece.

The right wing New Democracy party is trying to capitalise on the government's unpopularity and its leader, Mitsotakis, has taken to predicting a general election this year, even though Papandreou is only half way through his second four-year term and has a working majority in Parliament.

### Advice

There is evidence, in fact, that the ruling class are quite content for Papandreou to remain in power. In a secret circular sent to its members, the Union of Greek Industrialists (the Greek CBI) points out that while previous governments have only offered employers *advice* on the level of wage increases they should pay their workers, Papandreou's is the first government to actually introduce a legally binding incomes policy and so *protect* the employers from workers trying to secure increases above the permitted level. For this reason, the industrialists argue, employers must discreetly support the Papandreou government.

The ruling class also see further grounds for discreet support to Papandreou in his recent pronouncements on NATO and the



Glass workers demonstrate outside their company's Athens headquarters against redundancies. Photo: Ian Swindale.

presence of US bases in Greece. PASOK was elected in 1981 on a programme which included withdrawal from NATO and the closure of all US bases. A fortnight ago in Parliament Papandreou announced that Greece would not be pulling out of NATO and that he was willing to negotiate the future of US bases — the present treaty expires next year — from the starting point of zero bases. In other words, if the price is right, the bases can stay.

Given the dramatic decline in support for PASOK and its inevitable defeat at the next election — whenever that may be — a number of attempts are being made to regroup the left in Greece.

1. The former members of the PASOK trade union federation who were expelled for opposing the 1985 austerity programme, have set up their own trade union grouping and have the vision of creating a new political party at a future date.

2. The former PASOK government minister Arsenis — known as the "Tsar of the economy" for the four years he was economics minister, and who was sacked and expelled from PASOK prior to the 1985 austerity programme, is making discreet attempts behind the scenes to pull together a new, serious, social democratic party.

### Split

3. The Communist Party of the Interior — the smaller of Greece's two Communist Parties — is planning to launch a new broader party in March. The attempt will, however, lead to a split in its ranks between the supporters of the new party and those who want the Communist Party of the Interior to remain a "Eurocommunist" party. The supporters of the new party in the ranks of the CP Interior are politically very close to West European social democracy and even to PASOK but for the time being there is no question of them entering the government for fear of being tainted with the unpopularity currently being experienced by Papandreou.

The picture therefore in Greece today is the all-too-familiar one of a labour movement ready and willing to go into action to defend its wages and conditions against its "own" government but lacking a leadership with the determination and the will to lead that struggle to a successful conclusion. And the attempts to regroup the left do not seem to hold in prospect a solution to that problem.

# How far will Gorbachev go?

**STALIN DIED** in March 1953 — the tyrant who had ruled the USSR for almost three decades. In 1939, Leon Trotsky had rightly said that Stalin's political regime was in some ways more oppressive than Hitler's Nazi regime in Germany.

Almost immediately after Stalin's death, what became known as 'the thaw' set in. The frame-up trial of Jewish doctors which Stalin had been preparing was cancelled by his successors. The innocent victims, whose conviction and annihilation was to have been the signal for a vast increase in Stalin's campaign against the USSR's Jews — officially it was a campaign against 'Zionism' — were released.

A new liberalism flowered. Writers could be critical, especially about the past. Stalin's chief henchman, Beria, was killed, and a new leading team emerged.

By the mid '50s, after a series of struggles and manoeuvres behind the walls of the Kremlin, Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new dictator.

Khrushchev had played a central role in the slaughter of millions in his native Ukraine in the '30s by government-inflicted famine and by the executioner's bullet. But he was a benevolent dictator. He had loathed Stalin's regime of terror, and considered his own survival, when so many top Stalinists of the '30s had perished at the tyrant's whim, a matter of accident or luck.

## Khrushchev

At the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956, Khrushchev delivered a 'secret' speech which denounced Stalin and much that he had done. At the 22nd Congress in late 1961, he returned to the subject and added much new detail to the chronicle of horrors.

But neither in 1956 nor in 1961 did Khrushchev attack any of the fundamentals of Stalinist rule. He insisted upon 'the leading role of the Party', which is the bureaucrats' jargon for their monopoly of power; and he was careful to praise Stalin's 'positive role' in the fight in the '20s against 'the Trotskyists' — that is, in the war against the working class during which the bureaucratic elite personified and led by Stalin established its dictatorship over the USSR.

Khrushchev employed bureaucratic 'liberalism' to ease

things for the top bureaucrats whom Stalin had ruled with the caprice of a half-mad tyrant, slaughtering them casually. By the end of that entire period — when Khrushchev was overthrown in a Kremlin coup in 1964 — that had become plain. The ruling bureaucrats — the USSR equivalent of the ruling class in Britain, who also live by robbing the working class — had normalised and stabilised their rule, not renounced it.

Under Stalin, the only retirement was to the GPU gravepits, but now it became possible for bureaucratic leaders — even in disgrace, like Khrushchev himself — to retire to country houses and end their lives in comfort. The central guiding maxim of the Khrushchevites was expressed in the words of Nikita the Good himself: "Spontaneity, comrades, is the danger. Fight spontaneity". This was bureaucratic jargon for: "Watch the working class".

## Workers

Though the liberalisation did not much affect the working class, there



Polish workers on strike, August 1980

was a danger that it would — a danger that the easing of the terror would trigger a working-class drive against the bureaucratic regime. As far as we know, it didn't, in the USSR, though there is evidence that strikes occurred and were bloodily repressed, and that there were revolts in the early '50s in the labour camps. Up to 10 million slave labourers, at any one time in Stalin's era, were imprisoned and often worked to death in these camps.

The reform era did help to trigger workers' risings in East Germany (1953), Poland (1956), and Hungary (1956). And when it did, the reformers slaughtered the workers of East Berlin and of Budapest. They would have slaughtered the Poles if the Polish reforming Stalinists had not managed to keep a precarious hold on the workers' movement, which they later slowly stifled and repressed.

Khrushchev's 'thaw' disoriented many socialists into thinking that the bureaucracy was reforming itself. So it was — but not out of existence.

And the East German and Hungarian workers learned at great



Gorbachev: the reforming Czar

competition with the USA, Western Europe, and Japan.

Just as in the '50s Khrushchev needed to end the reign of terror for the bureaucrats, today Gorbachev needs to unblock the passes of the bureaucratic system and clean the cobwebs from the window. He needs to tone up the bureaucracy, to introduce some semblance of initiative, competition, and plain speaking. The rest is public relations work for the West.

Gorbachev cannot seriously believe it when he talks of withdrawing all USSR troops and bases abroad. He has not even got out of Afghanistan — he has only offered to do so on conditions that he knows will not be fulfilled.

The permanent threat of USSR invasion was decisive in derailing Solidarnosc's drive for power in 1980-1, and Gorbachev will know that. Reagan is vile, with his contras, his US troops on Nicaragua's border, and his sponsored death squads in El Salvador. So is Gorbachev, with his napalm in Afghanistan and his occupying armies in Eastern Europe.

## Renovate

The fundamentals of bureaucratic rule in the USSR are one-party monopoly of power, bureaucratic control of the means of production and communication, and the repression of all independent working-class initiative or organisation. For certain Gorbachev has no intention of changing any of that.

Like Khrushchev, his guiding principle is 'Fight Spontaneity', and like Khrushchev he will use as much force as necessary and possible to beat down the workers of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The real significance of the present liberalisation is that it may prove impossible for the bureaucracy to suppress 'spontaneity'. The moves on top may activate or give openings to the workers and to those in their ranks who have organised the nuclei of independent trade unions — people like Klebanov and Nikitin.

It is the working class which will renovate the USSR and Eastern Europe — not the 'liberalising' tyrants.

## Stagnant

Last week's assault by KGB plainclothes thugs on a peaceful demonstration in Moscow shows how little credence can be given to Gorbachev's gestures.

What is Gorbachev really trying to do? The USSR's economic system is stagnant, inefficient, and in many ways moribund. The bureaucracy stifles the economy because it stifles the people.

They have lost out heavily in the last two decades in the economic

## Ireland: the 'bloody truth'

The British press is probably at its worst when it comes to the Irish question. The standard picture we are presented with is of hopeless, inexplicable conflict with 'our boys' holding the ring while the mad Irish fight it out among themselves for reasons no-one quite understands.

The latest atrocity will be recorded in all its horrific detail and usually attributed to the IRA. Paisley's rantings are reported and we are left with the impression that this man is just crazier than the usual Irishman who rather likes the sound of his own voice. The political conclusion which is usually drawn from all this is that the troops must stay in there for the foreseeable future. But it is just as logical from the above 'analysis' to draw precisely the opposite conclusion: something along the lines of "what the hell, bring our boys home, let the paddies fight it out among themselves."

The "what the hell" line has been espoused by the Daily Mirror for many years now — a source of considerable emotional sustenance for those on the left who nurture the conviction that a mass movement can be built around the slogan 'Troops Out!'

I imagine that the "exclusive" in last Tuesday's Daily Express, "Pull our troops out of Ulster say 61%" will be seized upon by the single issue troops out fantasists as further proof that a combination of war-weariness and unconscious anti-imperialism among the British public may yet spawn a mighty mass movement.

## By Jim Denham

"Nearly two-thirds of people living in mainland Britain would like to see British troops pulled out of Northern Ireland an exclusive Daily Express-MORI poll reveals today". MORI interviewed a total of 1103 adults in 74 constituency points around Britain in January.

22% of those questioned favoured an immediate withdrawal, 39% wanted to see a phased withdrawal — compared to 31% in May 1984, when the last poll on the subject was commissioned. 35% thought that maintaining the troops was "costing the British tax payer too much".

But before the Troops Out Movement and the Labour Committee on Ireland rush to the printers with bulk orders for fresh membership cards, they should note something else about the Express poll:

"When they were asked where in a list of priorities facing Britain they would place the Irish question, the answer, possibly quite predictable, was that none gave it priority."

And there was a three way split on what should happen when the troops are pulled out: 29% wanted the six counties to remain part of the UK. Another 29% wanted to see an independent Ulster and 27% wanted to see Ulster united with the Republic.

Coincidentally, a couple of weeks earlier Frank Chapple (remember him?) wrote in his 'Frankly Speaking' in the Daily Mail: "It's time we set a deadline to pull out. No-one wants the British in Ireland. The Irish must learn to live together. We shouldn't stand in their way."

The fact that "what the hell" appears to be gaining ground among British public opinion and in the pages of the right wing press is surely just another manifestation of the press's traditional lack of serious — or even honest — coverage of the conflict or of concern for the fate of the people of Ireland.

Postscript. The News on Sunday to be launched this Spring, promises to campaign for troops out of Ireland from a socialist standpoint. Let's hope so. The last thing the Irish need is a "left-wing" version of the "what the hell" line.

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## Wrong about breast-feeding

I was interested to read Les Hearn's article on breast feeding. Obviously he has never done it or even talked to a woman who has!

Theoretically, he is correct in all the arguments that "Breast is Best" but the problems in Western Society are far greater than just not being able to feed in public.

What most women do not realise when they take up breast-feeding, is that babies who breast feed will rarely take milk from a bottle once they are established, as it is a different method of sucking, and a different taste.

Thus the breast-feeding mother is the exclusive provider of nourishment for a baby for 4-5 months and in many cases this means every three hours, day and night. This naturally

reinforces the role of the mother as the chief carer and in fact the only person who can satisfactorily look after and feed the baby.

A bottle can be given by a man or a woman and in Western society it is just as hygienic and safe. It means that the father or man gets up in the night to feed the baby, instead of it being the mother's sole responsibility.

### Terrible

Going back to work while a baby is being breast-fed who won't take a bottle is terrible as I know from my own experience. It is all very well to say that facilities should be available for mothers to feed their babies in work, but unfortunately babies won't wait for their food, and maybe the mother would just prefer to be work-

ing and not have the additional pressure of having to feed a baby.

In peasant cultures all women breast-feed and a baby can be fed by anyone, if the mother is not available. I supposed the Western equivalent would be the 18th and 19th century 'wet nurse' who fed rich women's children to the detriment of her own children.

The only way to free women in the current situation would be to "socialise" breast-feeding!

Is it acceptable to pay women to breast-feed other women's children? "Breast is best" — but it means usually that the mother is forced into an exclusive relationship with her baby — which then sets the pattern for the rest of childhood.

MARY IRESON,  
Cardiff

# GRAFFITI

## Drugs

### US expands drug trade

The US's efforts to suppress the drugs traffic in Latin America may actually be expanding it. That, according to a report in the Financial Times last Saturday, is the opinion of many Latin American experts.

"Successful eradication in one region does reduce supply for a period but diverts drugs barons into other regions, spreading the industry. Higher US prices, meanwhile, raise their profits, making their chains of production, distribution and money-laundering more sophisticated, and increase their capacity to corrupt.

"All this increases supplies in the next phase of the cycle...Increasingly, Latin Americans believe that decriminalisation would be the only effective way to 'undercut' the industry, just as the US mafia was deflated after Prohibition".

The trade is reaching huge proportions — it may



The conference on 'tactical voting' in London at the weekend did not exactly inspire the enthusiasm of the masses.

move as much money as the whole of OPEC! In Colombia, for example, the leading drug traffickers made an offer to the country's government in 1984. If the government would

give them an amnesty and repeal Colombia's extradition treaty with the US, they they would write a cheque to pay off the whole of Colombia's \$13 billion foreign debt.

## Arrests on Wall Street

Stirring days on Wall Street. "The sight of distinguished and highly respected Wall Street professionals being arrested and led handcuffed out of their offices has sent shockwaves through the leading New

York investment banks as the Financial Times put it.

Three senior investment bankers were arrested last Thursday, 12th, for corrupt share-dealing, and on Friday

another New York finance whizzkid pleaded guilty.

Unfortunately they are being prosecuted not for drawing profits from the blood and sweat of the working class, but for ripping off other capitalists.

## Right

British Jews, traditionally Labour supporters, are moving over to the Tories, according to Noah Lucas, author of an excellent critical 'Modern History of Israel'. The reasons must be Israeli politics' shift to the right, and the drift of most of the Labour Left to an unthinking Arab nationalism which gives Israeli Jews very little place in the future.

Lucas was speaking at a symposium for Jewish academics on 8 February. Two other speakers condemned the Royal Court Theatre's banning of Jim Allen's play 'Perdition'.

Chimen Abramsky said: "It has created more storm than it merits. The play should have been shown and then there should have been an attack on it." Peter Pulzer argued that it was "a mistake for those who have an above average stake in pluralism to identify themselves with censorship, however offensive the subject".

## Brian Clough is a racist

Brian Clough, football manager, well-known Labour supporter and anti-fascist, is also a foul-mouthed racist, on the evidence of an interview he gave to the Daily Star on 29 January.

Denouncing a proposal by African nations that Britain should have one team in the World Cup rather than four (England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland), Clough raged about "a load of spear-throwers trying to dictate our role in world football..."

## Mindless militancy

Socialist Worker reacted to the 'hostage crisis' with a routine attack on 'Reagan's hypocrisy' (14 February). Reagan is the real terrorist, his Israeli allies are just as bad, and the Palestinians and Lebanese peoples have been held 'hostage' on a mass scale.

SW comments: "The US threatened to bomb

if they got their way, he said, "I would get Thatcher to send some battalions over there. She's good at that. We'll get her to blow Camerouns, Zaire and Zimbabwe to smithereens."

This outburst became the front-page lead story in the black newspaper 'Voice' last week. Neil Kinnock should say that public support for Labour from Brian Clough will no longer be welcome until he apologises.

(Lebanon) back to the stone age. Along with Israel, they have turned it into an inferno of sectarian violence."

But there is more to the Lebanese 'inferno' than what the US and Israel have done to it. Indeed, although the US role in Lebanon has been terrible, it is not clear at all that it has been a main contributor to sectarianism. What about internal factors in Lebanon?

What about Syria? SW doesn't even mention Syria's reactionary involvement in Lebanon.

The article is a crude, two-dimensional view of the conflict which by omission actually lies about the situation. Once upon a time SW aspired to be a serious Marxist newspaper, but these days it seems to be competing with Socialist Action to see which can be the more mindlessly "militant" and "anti-imperialist".

## Thatcherism and Solidarnosc

Edward Ellis may think Stoppard told the truth about Solidarnosc in his play 'Squaring the Circle'. Certainly I would agree that these societies are undemocratic and bureaucratically and incompetently ruled. And Stoppard did show us that. But that's beside the point.

My objection was to his motives. Stoppard is not sympathetic to the struggle by Solidarnosc's workers for rights. He is merely using the drama of their struggle to create anti-communist propaganda. Unlike intellectuals such as Kuron, who tried to make links with workers, Stoppard the bourgeois intellectual, looks down on them and uses them as a vehicle for his own views.

It was that, and the tone of his play that I objected to. It wasn't really Poland in the early 1980s that he was attacking. It was communism, socialism of any type. When he dragged Lenin's name into it, it was to imply that the great tradition of the Russian Revolution would inevitably lead to these scheming, desperate bureaucrats holding absolute power in a totalitarian state.

Stoppard can romanticise Solidar-

nosc because he sees their struggle as doomed. He sees the Russian army, Reagan's 'evil empire', looming behind the Polish one. If the Poles can't beat the workers down, the Russians will come in to finish the job.

### Example

He'd probably be a little less keen if Solidarnosc had won and set a revolutionary example to the workers of Britain.

Literature doesn't come out of

nowhere. It reflects the social structure in which the author is based. Stoppard's play was written under a Thatcher government which is committed to robbing workers of hard won rights and to breaking up their organisations. Workers here might be tempted to organise in protest. So maybe Stoppard's play is saying, 'Hold on, you think things are bad here? Look at Poland! You've never had it so good.'

BELINDA WEAVER  
Islington

## Wrong on Broad Left

The article by Trudy Saunders in SO 301 about the CPSA Broad Left is factually incorrect.

She states in her article about the choice of Broad Left candidate for the position of Deputy General Secretary that "BL conference voted to stand Terry Adams, a Militant supporter, in the DGS election. Recently the Militant dominated Broad Left NEC met. It overturned the decision without consulting Broad Left supporters."

She goes on to say that "the Broad Left NEC could have called a conference to discuss this, but they chose to impose the decision on the rest of us."

The facts, however, are that on 10 January a meeting of the Broad Left National Committee and regional convenors voted to recommend to Broad Left groups that the candidate be changed to John Macreadie. Broad Left regional groups have been asked to meet, discuss it, and mandate their convenor to vote at another convenors' meeting on 14 February, which will take the decision. The idea of a conference was rejected on the grounds of cost since the Broad Left is already hundreds of pounds in debt.

The decision to go to regional groups for a vote was a direct consequence of the anger displayed by the Socialist Caucus and other Broad Left members at the recent Broad Left conference regarding decisions taken by the Broad Left National Committee without consultation with the members.

Yours fraternally,  
STEVE BATTLEMUCH

Send letters to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Please try to keep your letters below 300 words, or we may have to cut them for reasons of space.

## Sectarian to Briefing

SOCIALIST Organiser gets more sectarian every week.

No.301 called Socialist Action a 'bilge-water-laden ship' sinking into a swamp. No.302 accuses Labour Briefing of descending 'to earth with a dispirited ping'.

Maybe the truth is that Briefing and Socialist Action have got their feet on the ground, while SO is up in the clouds.

Patrick Blandford attacks Briefing for demanding that Labour fight for its own radical policies, and makes great play with the fact that a Briefing article loosely called these 'socialist'.

Briefing has made it quite clear that its own policies go way beyond official Labour Party pledges. And, more to the point, Briefing can do something about its policies, because it has a real record of struggle in the labour movement.

Briefing led the fight at close quarters against the sell-outs of local government careerists like Ken Livingstone, while SO was reciting 'perfect' policies on the sidelines, and by doing so it won itself standing, respect, and influence in the Labour left which SO will never win.

KEITH SPENCER  
Oxford.



# The Palestinians and the Lebanese tragedy

Clive Bradley looks at the events behind the crisis in Lebanon and the plight of the Palestinians.

When the State of Israel was created in 1948, many Palestinians were dispersed from their land — many fled, and others were forcibly removed. They were never allowed to return. But no new Palestinian state was created: Palestine was first divided between the Palestinian Jews and the Palestinian Arabs, then in 1949 Jordan seized and divided the Palestinian Arab area. In 1967 Israel seized the Jordanian-controlled West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip (and the Syrian Golan Heights and Egyptian Sinai) and imposed military occupation.

So the Palestinians were denied their own state. Many of them live scattered about the different Arab states, and many of these in refugee camps, poorly funded by the United Nations.

After 1967, radical guerrilla movements emerged, united in the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), based primarily on the refugees. They were forced out of their main stronghold in Jordan in 1970 — when during 'Black September', the regime of King Hussein subjected them to brutal repression.

Since then, the main base of the PLO has been in Lebanon. The presence of the refugees with their guerrilla armies has been one of the many ingredients leading to the breakdown of the Lebanese political system — and society — from 1974.

Palestinians and Lebanese alike were subjected to periodic military attack from Israel. Indeed, Lebanese refugees escaping Israeli bombardment, swelled the massive 'belts of misery' in the cities like Beirut.

Many of these, the most brutalised and dispossessed of all the Lebanese people, were members of the Shi'ite Moslem sect. (In the mid-seventies, they had a popular movement called the Movement of the Dispossessed).

The Palestinian presence, massive social inequalities, and the collapse of a delicate political system that discriminated against Moslems in

favour of Christians (most of whom are Maronite Catholics) all led to the civil war's first outbreak in 1974-6. 40,000 people were the victims of that first period, which closed with the military invasion of Syria against the Palestinians and their Arab nationalist allies.

Syria has continued to occupy part of Lebanon. Israel launched a full-scale invasion in 1978, and an all-but-genocidal invasion in 1982, aimed at destroying the PLO presence. That took them to a long a bitter siege of Beirut that was culminate with the withdrawal of Palestinian guerrillas, for a while, from the country.

Added to Syrian and Israeli armies of occupation was now a 'multinational force' including French, British and American forces — who devoted much effort to the bombardment of villages in an attempt to destroy the armed groups based there, particularly, in the summer of 1983, the villages of the Druze sect and its militias.

The multinational force withdrew in 1984; but Lebanon has still not been put back together. Simmering civil war has continued — between different Lebanese groups, and between different Palestinian groups. In 1983, Syria sponsored a murderous factional split in the PLO between Yasser Arafat's group and more hard-line factions.

The government of right-wing Maronite Amin Jemayal has little real authority. Syria controls big parts of the country; the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army controls the south; and the rest is a patchwork quilt of different militia groups' power-bases. Pro-Iranian groups like Hizbollah (Party of God) have built support.

Amal (ironically 'Hope') has a long history of antagonism towards the Palestinian groups. There are many sources to this hostility, one of which is alleged to be the arrogance of PLO fighters over Shi'ite villages in the past. Certainly, in the perception of many Shi'ites, the Palestinians are the cause of all their problems: if the Palestinians went, the Israelis would leave them alone.

Full-scale attempts by Amal to destroy the PLO are therefore not new. In May 1985 Amal launched an



A Palestinian in the ruins of Tyre, Lebanon.

assault on Burj al-Barajneh, Sabra and Shatila.

Sabra and Shatila were the scene of horrific massacres carried out by Maronite militiamen with Israeli complicity, in 1982.

There are no easy solutions to Lebanon's agony. The conflict between the different factions is largely communal and sectarian — like a northern Ireland on an immensely bigger scale in a high state of communal degeneration.

## Interference

Some things are, however, very clear. Outside interference has never done Lebanon anything but harm. Syrian troops should be withdrawn; Israel should cease its support for Lebanese groups. And Ronald Reagan should keep out. The resumption of gun-boat diplomacy

will make things worse. The United Nations 'Interim' Force in Lebanon has been utterly ineffective; the multinational force sent in after Israel's invasion in 1982 was a disaster. Further involvement must be resisted.

No resolution of the Lebanese crisis is possible so long as the wider problems of the Middle East conflict are ignored. The precondition for peace in Lebanon — though not in itself a sufficient condition — is the granting of the Palestinian people the right to their own state. The Palestinians don't want to be in Lebanon: they have been forced there.

Some sort of democratic and secular arrangement for Lebanon within a socialist Middle East is the real answer. That may seem a long way off; but anything less than a fundamental reordering of the whole region will be just futile tinkering.

Last July, the Lebanese General

Labour Federation united Moslems and Christians in a general strike to protest at violence and economic crisis. It is a long way from that to a full-scale working-class political solution. But it does give reason for hope.

## PLO

The PLO have a right to struggle for their national rights, and should be supported. Their destruction will not help any moves towards peace in the Middle East. Amal's brutal attempt to destroy them is not just morally repugnant — it is politically reactionary. The labour movement internationally should do what it can to rescue the Palestinians from disaster. Money and food should be sent to the refugees. The PLO should be recognised as the chosen representative of the Palestinian people.

## Women workers and the menstrual cycle

**49% of women are wage workers. Yet work is still structured as if all workers were men who had wives at home to wash, clean, cook and raise the kiddies.**

Hours are still long. Very few jobs provide child care of any kind. The woman who has to take time off for sick children gets a hard time from her boss. It's implied that she isn't up to the job.

It's the same thing when you get your period. If you feel sick, or need to lie down for a while, there is often nowhere to go. And you're made to feel again that you're not up to the job. Men don't get these complications, after all.

No, they don't. And they're lucky. Women didn't ask to be lumbered with an absurd reproductive system which theoretically allows for over 400 chances at pregnancy in a lifetime. Who needs it?

Yet we're often made to feel guilty about menstrual troubles. We grit our teeth and get on with it, all the

while feeling queasiness, cramped and irritable.

Pain varies from woman to woman. Some experience hardly any symptoms at all. They're the lucky ones. For many others, it's a monthly cycle of bloating, back pain, mood swings, depression, bad temper and cramps, not to mention the bleeding itself.

For too long, women have been quiet about their periods. Enough. With pre-menstrual tension now recognised as a medical syndrome, it's time to look at pain and what it might mean.

Severe pain is never normal. It's a sign of things gone wrong, and should never be ignored.

Menstrual cramps can attack the lower back, the pelvic region, and sometimes the legs, too. They generally start in the early days of the period. Cramps occur because the uterus is contracting to expel the blood. The blood forms when the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) breaks down because it did not

## WOMAN'S EYE By Lilian Tomson

receive a fertilised egg.

Heaviness of the flow also varies from woman to woman. If your bleeding seems abnormally heavy, or your pains worse than usual, go to a doctor. Don't be put off if you're told to just take a pill, lie down, or get a hot water bottle. Pain is not part of a 'woman's lot'. Insist on a proper examination.

Of course, if you are using an IUD, you may experience heavier bleeding and more pain than usual. Otherwise, you may have endometriosis or ovarian cysts, or a pelvic infection.

Endometriosis occurs when tissue from the endometrium becomes displaced and begins to grow in the pelvic area, or other parts of the body, instead of in the uterus itself.

Just like the uterine lining, the displaced tissue acts as if it were preparing to receive a fertilised egg. Acted on by hormones governing the menstrual cycle, the displaced tissue swells up and enriches only to break down again. The uterine lining does the same, but the blood from that passes out of the body. In the pelvic area, the displaced tissue wells up and bleeds internally. Severe pain is the result.

Unlike period pain, endometrial pain gets worse as the period progresses, and is often worst on the light days near the end. It may also recur at other times in the month. Heavy bleeding, with lots of clots, is a symptom.

How can you tell if you have it? A simple operation can diagnose it accurately. A tiny hole is pierced in the navel. A laparoscope is inserted through the hole. This laparoscope photographs the pelvic area, so that cysts, infections or endometriosis can be identified.

Cysts can be removed and infec-

tions cured by drugs. Doctors usually try to treat endometriosis with drugs at first. A drug based on male hormones is taken daily. This suppresses ovulation, and since the tissue isn't activated by the hormones of the cycle each month, it can dry out. You don't get any periods while you are on it, which is a big relief!

It doesn't always work, and symptoms can return. But other treatments can be tried, so don't give up.

If your doctor just says it'll all fix itself up when you have a baby, don't believe it. For a start, if you have endometriosis, it can be hard to get pregnant! And the hormones released during pregnancy often give the tissue enough stimulus to keep it alive.

Endometriosis can be unbearable, so don't risk your chances of letting it get worse. Get help if you think you may have it. Your chances of having it are higher if you are over 30, childless, have used an IUD, and were or are taking the pill.

# The roots

Karl Marx wrote a hundred years ago that "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

Marx was referring to slavery in America. He saw that as long as the white workers of the USA passively put up with slavery, then these white workers themselves would be tied hand and foot to the ruling class which exploited them.

They would never fight against the employing class for their own emancipation without also taking up the battle against slavery. As long as slavery was condoned, the working class would be content with their lot as wage-slaves...as long as they were better than the chattel slaves.

Finally the American workers, together with many thousands of freed and escaped slaves, did take up arms under the Union (northern) flag against slavery and defeat it. But in a different sense Marx's words have as much importance for the working class today as they did then.

Black people in this country are just as surely branded as were the American slaves. They are not branded with the red hot iron of the slave master, but with the hundreds of indignities and attacks they are subjected to because of the colour of their skin.

In Britain today black people face constant discrimination in housing, jobs and education. To have a black skin means to live with the threat of being physically assaulted by racist gangs or the police.

## Behind the headlines

The mass of such attacks never make the headlines. Besides the physical assaults, there are the verbal assaults. Any right wing politician can get up and stigmatise black people as lazy, criminal, unclean etc., and be sure that the press and TV will give him all the publicity he could hope for. To these slanders black people have no means of reply.

Why is it that the working class turns a blind eye to the oppression that black people face? Why is it that the official trade union movement has never lifted more than a little finger against the blatant discrimina-

## Joe Wright looks at the slave trade, the capitalist plunder of Africa and the rise of modern racism.

tion against blacks? Every trade union militant knows that 'unity is strength'.

Regardless of race or nation, the workers of the world have more in common with each other than they do with the employing class of any nation. Yet every day workers allow themselves to be duped by the propaganda of the racials.

## Racist ideology

The slogan which expresses the true interests of the working class, "Workers of the World Unite!", appears on union banners, while at the same time racialism, the ideology of the ruling class, eats like a cancer at the labour movement.

If there is one factor which, more than any other, is responsible for the grip that racialism has on workers, then that factor is imperialism. The wealth of Britain was built on the cruel exploitation of Africa and Asia. In search of profits the British ruling class put in chains and shipped to the West Indies and America as many as 20 million Africans. India was devastated by the British drive for plunder, which ruined the existing structure of agriculture and trade and made famine a permanent feature of Indian life.

In China the British fought bloody wars in order to protect the 'right' to import opium, which the Chinese government had banned.

And yet how could these barbarous acts be justified? Europe and Britain in particular were supposed to be the centres of enlightenment and progress. And yet here was Britain reintroducing slavery, running a massive trade in opium (compare this with all

the humbug about cannabis today) and systematically robbing the resources of countries like India.

Well, the only way it could be justified was by making out that the Indians, Africans and Chinese were inferior. They deserved nothing better than to be pushed around.

Further, they actually *enjoyed* being pushed around. The myth of the happy slave or 'Uncle Tom' was created, together with the loyal Indian who was ever grateful to British rule.

The rape and destruction of those civilisations which existed long before Europeans ever came to Africa and Asia, was presented as the great civilising mission of British rule. In the racist mythology it became "the white man's burden" to educate and enlighten the inferior black man.

This was the way that the ruling class justified their pillage of vast sections of the world. But who did they have to justify it to? Well, perhaps being men of 'conscience' they had to justify it to themselves. But more important they had to justify it to the workers.

After all it was not so long ago that the capitalists had raised the cry of 'freedom' against the feudal lords. Being genuinely interested in freedom themselves, the mass of ordinary people had followed the bourgeoisie and won their freedom for them. Now these same people who led the movement for 'freedom' were systematically robbing the peoples of Africa and Asia of any freedom at all.

The 'free labourer' of Europe might well look suspiciously on any attempt to introduce forced labour in Asia and Africa — how could the idea of the 'free labourer' coexist

with the ideology of slavery? The only way of settling this contradiction was to make out that black people are inferior.

"In general", said the wage master and slave master rolled into one "we are in favour of 'freedom', but in the case of Africans and Asians, who are inferior beings, it is an entirely different matter. These people wouldn't know what to do with their freedom, if they had it. They are a lot better off under my rule".

So racialism came about as an ideology of the ruling class which justified the oppression of what today are known as the underdeveloped countries. And as the British empire expanded, so did the labyrinth of distortions and falsehoods, which permeated through every layer of society.

The working class too became poisoned with the racist myth. 300 years of colonialism and imperialism have imprinted racialism on the consciousness of the working class. That is not to say that the mass of workers go around insulting or attacking black people. But it is the case that many workers hold to a whole mass of misconceptions about black people and it is against this background that the racials such as Enoch Powell operate.

Take a statement that you can hear often enough from any racist — 'Before we went to Africa they were all swinging about in trees'. The racist will blurt it out, but many more workers will actually believe it.

## Plundering Africa

What are the facts? We (Europeans) first went to Africa more than 500 years ago. The Portuguese explorers, who sailed down the West coast of Africa, far from finding men swinging around in trees, in fact found civilisations which they recognised as being similar to their own. The feudal states of West Africa were surprisingly similar to the feudal states of medieval Europe.

The strength of these states is testified to by the fact that for four and a half centuries they remained unconquered by Europeans, who, if they traded in Africa, had to negotiate with the various kings of these states. When Vasco Da Gama went round the Cape of Good Hope and sailed up the Eastern Coast of Africa he found dotted along the coast the city states of the Eastern seaboard. These city states had a history of trade with Asia and even with ancient Greece which went back two thousand years, and Vasco Da Gama reported that the goods he had brought to trade with evoked not the slightest interest.

The 500 years that followed the first contact between Europe and Africa was to see Europe develop out of feudalism to the capitalist stage of today. And what happened to Africa?

By the 19th century the old civilisations of Africa were completely destroyed, so completely in fact, that the European countries were able to colonise the whole of Africa in a flash at the end of the 19th century. For the racist the explanation is that the innate superiority of the Europeans enabled them to develop, while the Africans went backwards.

In fact the answer lies in one word, and that word is slavery.

The wealth of 18th century Britain, which formed the basis for the industrial revolution of the 19th cen-



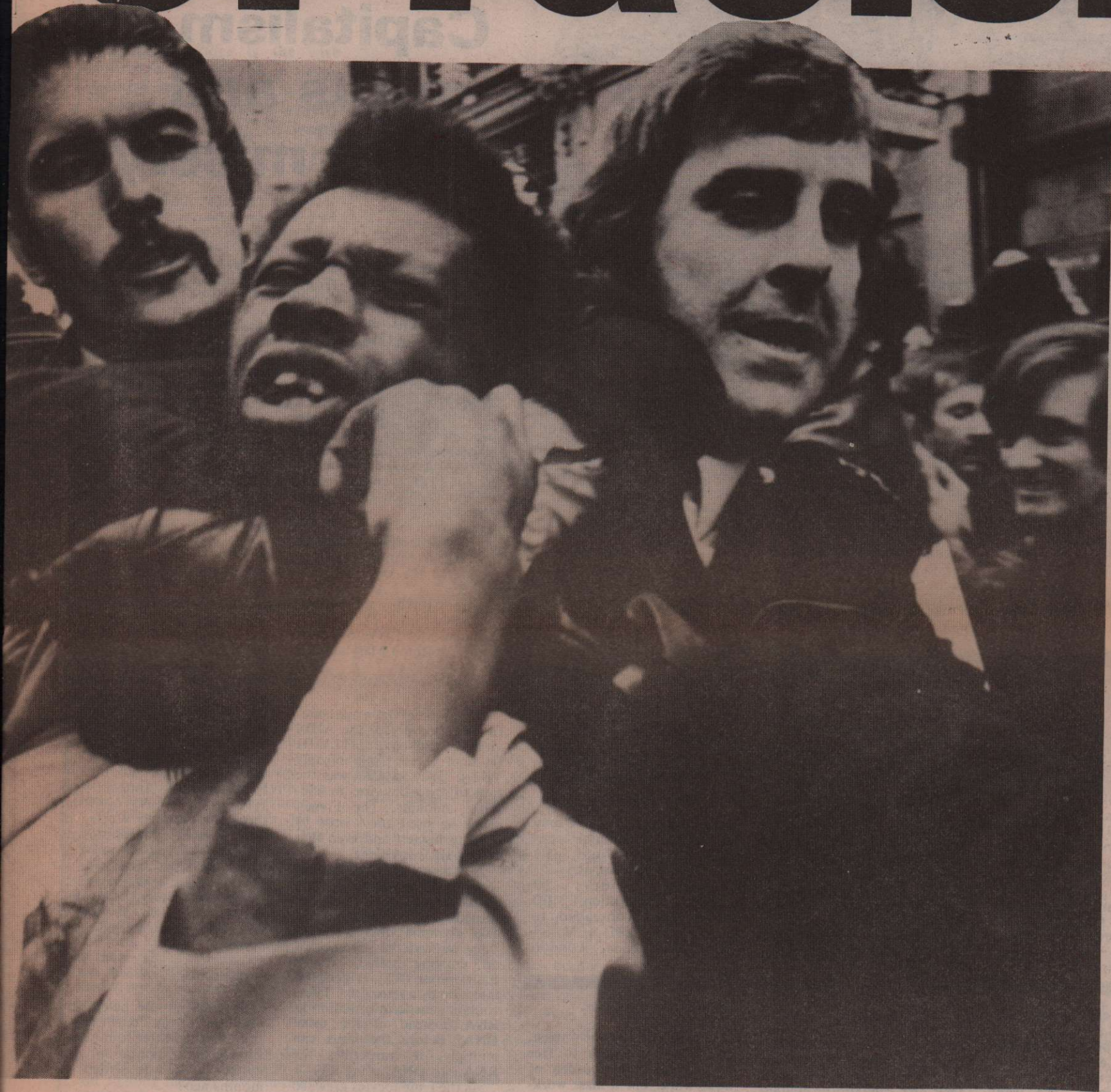
tury, was built on the slave trade. Manufactured goods were taken to Africa and traded for slaves; the slaves were shipped to the West Indies where they were sold to the sugar plantations and the ships returned to England loaded with sugar. The triangular trade raked in immense profits for the manufacturers, the plantation owners and the shippers. There was hardly an element of commercial life in 18th century England which was not in some way connected with the triangular trade, and essential to the whole operation was slavery.

The colonisation of the West Indies presented a glorious opportunity to the British capitalists. There they found masses of fertile land. The only problem was labour. At first, forced white labour was used. These whites were not slaves but in many respects they were little better off. They consisted of indentured servants, criminals who preferred the West Indies to execution, Irishmen who escaped the massacres of Wex-



Stefano Cagnoni, IFL

# of racism



ford and Drogheda or people who simply had the misfortune to be kidnapped.

But the West Indies' thirst for labour could not be quenched by this flow of whites. The colonialists now turned their eyes toward Africa and black slaves.

The exact number of Africans who crossed the Atlantic in chains can only be guessed at. The highest estimate is 50 million. What is certain is the devastating effect that slavery had on African civilisation.

Slavery had existed previously in Africa just as it had existed in Europe. Conquered armies would be taken as slaves and kept by the conquerors, or perhaps traded. But whereas previously local wars would be fought and slaves would be a by-product, now the wars were fought solely for the purpose of capturing and selling slaves.

The economies of the African states now became predominantly concerned with the barbaric human trade. Even those states whose rulers

bravely refused to have anything to do with the trade had to watch out for raids from European states or other African states. Moreover these raiders would be armed with guns, whereas those who refused to trade in slaves could get no guns.

## Profits of slavery

For Europe and in particular Britain, the rewards of the slave trade were massive. Most people know of the saying that Liverpool and Bristol were built with the blood of slaves. What is not recognised is that it was the capital accumulated through the triangular trade that made possible the industrial revolution in this country.

For example Manchester, which became the centre of the industrial revolution, grew up in the 18th century around cotton and, of Manchester's cotton exports, five-sixths went to Africa and the West Indies.

Birmingham in the 18th century was producing between 100,000 and 150,000 guns with Africa as one of its most important customers. It was a common saying that "The price of a Negro is one Birmingham gun".

It would take pages to go through the industries that in one way or another were connected with the triangular trade, but one that must be mentioned is banking. Profiteers from the slave trade and the West Indian plantations very often started up in banking when the slave bonanza was over, and it was this money which helped to finance much of the initial investment required for the industrial revolution. It is sufficient to note that Barclays, William Deacons and Lloyds all had their origin in some aspect of the slave trade.

There could not be a clearer case of the profit and wealth of the British ruling class being directly due to the degradation and misery of the 'underdeveloped' countries. The wealth of 18th century Britain was dependent on the slave trade and the

ideology, law and religion of the British ruling class all reflected this fact. For example, in 1783, the captain of a Liverpool slaver threw overboard the 132 slaves he was carrying because he was short of water. There was a court case to investigate the matter. Not, as you might imagine, to find out whether the captain was guilty of mass murder, but to find out whether the insurance company was liable! The judge ruled "the case of the slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard", and therefore the insurance company was liable.

## A racist legacy

Today, the legacy of Britain's cruel exploitation of the black people of Africa still exists. We have quack psychologists who try to make out that black people are by nature intellectually inferior to whites. We have quack historians who try to

make out that there is no such thing as an African history, independent of European history. Thus Coupland, the author of standard British textbooks on African history, denies the existence of African history before Livingstone.

In similar fashion racist myths are created around all the various different peoples that were exploited by Britain under the flag of the glorious empire. Irishmen, Indians, Africans, Cypriots — all, according to the racialists, have their various characteristics which make them inferior to the master race.

For example, the Chinese, who had an exceptionally strong civilisation which resisted to the last British attempts to colonise China, are presented as being cunning, sly...or, even worse, "unchristian".

Listen to one John Quincy Adams lecturing on the Opium wars: "The moral obligation of commercial intercourse between nations is founded entirely, exclusively, upon the Christian precept to love your neighbour as yourself...But China not being a Christian nation, its inhabitants do not consider themselves bound by the Christian precept, to love their neighbour as themselves...This is a churlish and unsocial system...The fundamental principle of the Chinese Empire is anti-commercial...It is time this enormous outrage upon the rights of human nature, and upon the first principles of the rights of nations, should cease". Get the idea? Those immoral Chinese bastards...they wouldn't buy our opium!

Dr. Johnson said patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. We can say of the ruling class that their last refuge is nationalism and racialism. Whenever there is a crisis in the capitalist system, the ruling class turns to help from the racialists. Just as Hitler made the Jews in Germany the scapegoat for the ills of German capitalism, so we are seeing the British ruling class looking round for a scapegoat. And they have an obvious target.

## Labour supply

After the war there was a shortage of labour in this country. Lavish publicity campaigns were started to get West Indians, Indians and Pakistanis, and Africans to come to Britain, where they would find a land of opportunity. The black people came and were used to do the worst paid and dirtiest jobs. When there was a question of a labour shortage, the ruling class immediately forgot any racial considerations. That arch-racist Duncan Sandys toured Kenya and Uganda appealing to the Asians there not to take up Kenyan and Ugandan citizenship but to keep their British passports. He obviously hoped that they would come to Britain.

But now the capitalist system is in crisis. Now the dole queues stretch out into the street and the ruling class are looking for scapegoats. The racist ideology of British imperialism makes black people in this country the easiest victim.

For class conscious workers there can be only one answer: Defend black people against the racist onslaught, whether it comes from the state or from those backward workers who fall for racist lies. Workers cannot emancipate themselves from the ruling class without shaking off the most poisonous of all ruling-class ideologies — racialism.

# Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM

By Dave Barter

The first leg of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's three part AGM met in Sheffield last Saturday (14th) and decided that CLPD should press ahead, in what could be an election year, with the campaign for a democratic and accountable PLP.

The meeting decided that CLPD's model resolution for Labour's 1987 conference should include demands for decisions of a Labour government to be made by full meetings of the PLP, and for the election of the cabinet by the PLP, rather than, as is usual, by decision of the Labour leader.

CLPD should seek 'suitable candidates' to contest the positions of leader and deputy leader in 1987.

CLPD should campaign against expulsions by way of a campaign to amend clause 2 of the Labour Party constitution so as to establish the democratic right of minorities to organise within the Party.

Not one single person at the Sheffield meeting voted in favour of a motion criticising CLPD's opposition to the Sawyer proposals to behead the LPYS by cutting its age-limit and re-organising its conference.

The meeting reiterated the



Labour candidate Deirdre Wood canvassing in Greenwich

CLPD view that the Sawyer proposals constitute an attack on the left.

The only point of contention at the AGM arose over the issue of left slates for the election of the Labour Party NEC. Since 1979, CLPD has campaigned for the women's section of the NEC to be elected by Labour Women's Conference. More recently the Labour Women's Conference has held "shadow elections" to show who would have been

elected if the Women's Conference had that right. Should the left automatically adopt the results of the shadow election as their own slate for the NEC women's section?

Do the shadow elections just have propaganda value, the left slate being constructed independently? The position that support for the results of the shadow elections is a principle was rejected in favour of the independent construction of the left slate and the view that

"for CLPD, the interests of the working class, and therefore the election of a left wing NEC, must continue to be the overriding consideration."

All these decisions are dependent on the results of the other two AGM meetings in Edinburgh (February 21) and London (February 28).

For AGM details or to join CLPD, contact CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH. (01-458 1501).

## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

### Capitalism, profits and AIDS misery

One feature of capitalism is its ability to profit from human misery...and AIDS is no exception. Share prices of AIDS-related companies are rising with the death rate.

This financial aspect underlies an undignified tussle over who should claim credit for discovering the virus that causes AIDS and developing a test for it. The current court case should enrich several gross of lawyers.

What is no longer disputed is that Luc Montagnier's team at the Pasteur Institute in Paris discovered the virus in 1983, calling it LAV (Lymphadenopathy AIDS-associated Virus). They provided samples of LAV to Robert Gallo's group in Maryland.

A year later, Gallo announced the discovery of the AIDS virus (!) calling it HTLV-III (Human T-cell Lymphotropic Virus). Gallo says he was the first to grow the virus in adequate amounts. The French claim he used *their* virus to develop his test and even that HTLV-III is LAV.

In January 1983, the Pasteur Institute got a sample of lymph gland from a gay man and started growing white blood cells (lymphocytes) from it. They noticed the presence of an enzyme called reverse transcriptase (RT), evidence of infection by a retrovirus. These contain genetic information as RNA, instead of the usual DNA. Before the virus can multiply, it transcribes the RNA into DNA, using RT.

As the lymphocytes grew, so did the amount of RT but then it started falling. The lymphocytes were dying, showing how AIDS destroys the immune system.

The French published their results in May 1983 in the US journal, *Science*, but they were ignored. Simultaneously, Gallo's group published three articles in *Science* claiming that HTLV-I, a retro-virus causing leukaemia, also caused AIDS. Later, Gallo had to admit that HTLV-I had nothing to do with AIDS but when he published his "discovery" of the AIDS virus a year later, he insisted it was related to HTLV-I, calling it HTLV-III. This was despite the French having shown that the two viruses were quite unlike.

Leading world virologists agreed with this and have renamed the virus HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Gallo still calls it HTLV-III.

This might appear merely an unworthy desire to keep the

kudos, but it seems to conceal something more sinister.

In 1984-5, Gallo's and Montagnier's groups analysed the genetic material (RNA) of the virus. They were almost identical, differing only by 1.8%. Now, the AIDS virus evolves very fast as RT is a rather "unfaithful" copier of RNA, introducing lots of "errors". This explains why it is so difficult to develop a vaccine against it.

Here, then, is the problem for Gallo. It is extremely unlikely that two samples of AIDS-virus differ by only 1.8% — unless one was descended from the other. Most scientists now believe that HTLV-III is "son of" LAV. This means: either Gallo's samples became contaminated with LAV — embarrassingly sloppy technique, or one of the Americans deliberately used LAV, a theft which led directly to developing a test for AIDS infection which has already earned millions of dollars in royalties.

Gallo has no convincing answer to the accusation, confirmed many times, that HTLV-III and LAV are from the same source. Worse, in Gallo's article, the photos of HTLV-III turned out to be of LAV! So what, you ask, if Gallo hijacks Montagnier's LAV, finds a way of growing it, calls it his own, develops a test for it, patents it, and earns millions?

So what, if the patent application for the French test is still unsettled after four years, while Gallo's application, submitted later, was settled 18 months ago?

So what, if Gallo's test throws up large numbers of "false positives", people who are told they have AIDS infection when they don't?

So what, if the search for a vaccine, a cure or whatever was held back for a year???

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

"We are here until Mandela is free". March to Trafalgar Square. Saturday 14 March. Assemble 1.00 p.m., Whittington Park, N19. (Holloway Road, south of Archway tube). March leaves 2.30 p.m.

Debate: The Way Forward in Ireland. 25 February, 7.30pm. Bradford University. John O'Mahony (Editor, Socialist Organiser) and Mick Hume (Irish Freedom Movement).

"Hear AZAPO Speak". Friends Meeting House, 52 St Martin's Lane, London WC2. Friday 6 March. 7.30 p.m.

Labour Party Black Sections. AGM, Saturday 14 March, in Nottingham. For further details contact Narendra Makanji, 41 Darwin Road, London N22 (01-889 7734).

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign (South East Region) miners' benefit: Wembley Conference Centre, 7.30pm, Sunday 1 March.

National Justice for the Miners Campaign. Sacked miners benefit concert, Sheffield City Hall, Thursday 5 March at 7.00 p.m. Tickets: £5 from Barnsley NUM office. Tom Robinson, Alan Hull, Mal Finch, Speakers: Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner.

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy regional conferences: Sheffield, 14 February; Edinburgh, 21 February; London, 28 February. Registration £3.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged, to Danny Nicol, CLPD AGM, 54 Southwood Lane, London N6.

## WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight

to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrat's and management's privileges.

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

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand: 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.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

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.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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# Clint Eastwood tries to lick America into shape

Belinda Weaver reviews *Heartbreak Ridge*

*Heartbreak Ridge* is the wish fulfilment fantasy of a disappointed man. The man is Clint Eastwood, so the fantasy is pretty inflated. Yet for all its length (two long, long hours), it's a petty, pathetic film.

Clint plays an ageing gunnery sergeant, Tom 'Gunny' Highway. He's a boozier and a brawler who often lands in jail. This hasn't done his army career any good. He got transferred from his old platoon into a tame office job, and he's bitter. He dearly wants to get back to the action.

Gunny at first seems to be a parody, and the film itself almost tips over into parody of the broadest kind. Yet we're meant to take it straight, and it's so tasteless that you can't laugh — you just feel disgusted.

Gunny isn't just a drunk and a brawler; he's also a foul mouthed homophobe. He's obsessed with anal sex, and with homosexuality. Every threat he utters concerns what he means to shove up somebody's arse. He's a nut. Yet Eastwood presents this crazy obsessive as the epitome of maleness, as a throwback to when men were men. Gunny is plastered with bravery medals to underline his heroism.

Gunny may be grey-haired and ageing, but he's presented as the toughest thing going. Not once, not twice, but three times we have to endure the sight of Clint beating younger adversaries twice his size and strength.

Transferred back to his old platoon, Gunny finds things have changed. The new Major is a rule-book, red-tape type from military academy, who hasn't had the 'privilege' of combat. He despises Clint's type, and hints that Clint is old and washed up.

But Clint sets him straight. He is given a small patrol to organise. This recon patrol is supposed to form the vanguard of an attack but, as Gunny discovers, the men are demoralised and slack, and have been the butt of jokes.

Till now, Gunny sets out to make real men, i.e. replicas of himself, out of them. The group are presented as lazy no-hopers, and surprise, surprise, they're mostly black or Hispanic, i.e. Gunny's ideas of degenerates. But Gunny believes he can turn even these 'ladies' into fighting men.

If ever there was a movie cliché, the turning of a sloppy bunch into real fighting men by discipline and strictness is one of them. The picture really sags at this point. Gunny is so gung ho that he seems pathetic. And the men laugh at him. They don't just knuckle under either. They plan to have him beaten up. When this fails, they give in, but they still jeer at him. He doesn't break their spirits.

The patrol improve to the point of beating the Major's group. But the



Tom 'Gunny' Highway finds the Great Wall of China

Major doesn't play fair. He's a spoilsport. Even when the chance of a real war comes along, he's still trying to tie Gunny up in red tape.

Real war is what Gunny yearns for after 'a tie in Korea and a loss in Vietnam'. And the US invasion of Grenada comes along in answer to Gunny's prayers. Gunny has been a true commie-hater all through, so it comes as a surprise when the invasion is presented merely as an outing to rescue stranded Americans, rather than a beating for the commies.

## Grenada

The fact that the Americans in Grenada had to be rescued after and because the US had invaded is completely ignored. It's as if Eastwood was too embarrassed to admit what the US was up to in Grenada.

But for all that, he presents the combat in Grenada with gusto. His group slay every commie in their

path, and since these all turn out to be Cuban soldiers, this makes Gunny happy. Only one or two Grenadians appear, as civilians. These are shown being marched off at gunpoint by US troops.

Gunny's men supposedly prove their worth as men. Yet when they get into trouble, they call in an air strike, and lie low till the choppers have blasted the daylight out of the enemy before emerging. They take a hill, but they have so annihilated the enemy by superior fire power that it's a victory of technology, not of men over men.

Rambo was a fantasy of using superior technology to refight and win Vietnam. This film is supposed to be reality, and it just looks silly. The glee Gunny feels is embarrassing. It's as if the US was so desperate to assert itself that it had to trumpet its victory over tiny Grenada as proof of its invincibility. It's like a human treading on a flea and saying, 'I beat you'. The odds are hardly equal.

But to Gunny, it proves his men are men, and he can retire happy, knowing his tradition will be carried on.

## Army

Yes, it's as bad as that, and worse, too. The film shows Gunny trying to win back his ex-wife. He buries himself in 'Vogue' and other women's magazines to try to understand where he went wrong. When he spouts some of this drivel, she bursts out laughing, incredulous. She tells him she left because he wasn't what she wanted and that, for him, the army always came first, anyway. This would seem to be proved when he leaves her flat on the dance floor to rush back to the platoon when the

red alert is called. But no. She's waiting for him at the end, waving her little flag.

Gunny has to be presented as invincible, even with women, and even when the logic of the film points the opposite way. As for the scene where a waitress eyes Gunny, licking her lips in anticipation — well!

Mouth and eyes are distant memories for Gunny — all he has left are slits through which he spits insults and shoots contemptuous glances. The film shows that cursing and insults thrive in the Marines' hierarchical system — the Major insults Gunny, Gunny insults his men. It's a vile and oppressive system.

Gunny's voice is curiously strangled. He issues his threats and commands in a hoarse, grating whisper. This is hilarious in combat, as it's unthinkable that he could be heard. But belief has to be firmly suspended anyway.

Gunny is meant to represent America as Eastwood wants it to be — strong and masculine against the 'degeneracy' of commies, gays, blacks and hippies. He's keeping the torch alight, and passing it on. He's trying to send Reagan a message to do the same.

Eastwood obviously feels his toughness is diminishing with age, and that his appeal to women is too. So he's made this film to prove that he hasn't lost his grip. But he protests too much.

He protests his straightness too much too. If you want to present yourself as heterosexuality incarnate, then you shouldn't force your platoon to train barechested (for no good reason) or suck so contentedly on a huge phallic-looking Cuban cigar. It just might plant a few doubts in people's minds!

on the

**Box**

## Orange and ordinary

Mick Ackersley reviews 'The Steelchest, Nail in the Boot, and the Barking Dog' Channel 4 TV

WHAT IS your mental image when you hear or read the words 'Protestant working class'?

Blinkered, bible-thumping bigots, who may call themselves British but live in the 17th century — not our sort of people at all?

The Protestant community gets a very bad press in Britain. The recent Daily Express poll on attitudes to Ireland [see *Press Gang*] found that 55% of those questioned believed that Provisional Republican leader Gerry Adams MP is a 'force for evil', but a full 70% think the same of Ian Paisley.

## Bigots

There is much justice in the impatience that British people feel with the political and religious bigotry of Northern Ireland's Protestants — though in fact it is much more recently than the 17th century that people like Paisley have played leading roles in mainstream British politics, during the religious uproar around the 1902 Education Act, for example.

There is less justice in the left's attitude to the Protestant workers. Bigots they are, and supremacists too, most of them. But, like the Northern Ireland Catholics, they are victims of the unholy mess that Britain and the Irish bourgeoisie (green, orange, and green-white-and-orange) made when they so messily partitioned Ireland in 1922, failing utterly to establish a framework within which Ireland's Protestant minority and Catholic majority could live peacefully together.

It is nonsense to see the Protestant workers as akin to the grossly privileged whites of South Africa. Northern Ireland's Protestant workers live in slums and are exploited. Their main privilege has been a better chance of a job in an economy which suffered mass unemployment even in the boom years.

## Ordinary

'The Steelchest, Nail in the Boot, and the Barking Dog' (the title is made up of the nicknames of shipbuilders) was a very valuable documentary precisely because it depicted the *ordinariness* of the Protestant workers in the Belfast shipyards. The people interviewed could have been workers at Cammell Lairds, Liverpool, or the defunct Glasgow shipyards — or dockers in London, Liverpool, or Southampton.

The film avoided any discussion of the social framework, or of the Catholic-Protestant relationship. But it was something that needed doing to present the Protestant workers at the shipyard as what they are — *our people*, ordinary working people who struggle against poverty, high accident rates, and the fatigue of grinding labour.

The film should be shown at left-wing gatherings where Ireland is being discussed. The political background, and the relationship of the Protestant workers to the Catholic community, can be filled in. But this film fills in another side of the picture in Northern Ireland — the one that is usually absent from British left-wing discussion.



Right, right, right, right

# Women and socialism

## Jane Ashworth replies to an article that appeared in last week's SO

Sarah Mann's article "Femocracy or Feminism" in the last SO (302) is hard to reply to, partly because she attributes to SSiN positions which we do not hold in order to knock them down, and partly because Sarah seems to think that we are attacking all women involved in politics.

We attacked a thin layer of activists on the left, amongst other things. We attacked them because they claim to speak for all women; now along comes Sarah Mann to claim — no, to take it for granted without spelling the claim out — that everything we say about a thin layer of "Femocrats" is ipso facto an attack on all women. No it isn't.

Nor are we attacking all women who call themselves feminists — not by a long way. Instead we are attacking a particular method and a series of beliefs that are developing in the National Union of Students. We say that this development is to the detriment of the struggle against sexism and for women's liberation and equality in the here and now and that it is also detrimental to the struggle for socialism.

### Misogynist

Before trying to answer Sarah's points in detail I would like to take issue with the labelling of me as a misogynist. I would resent it, if it didn't make such a change from the usual abuse. Never before have I been called a self-hater. Usually, the insults are the opposite — too big-headed and pushy to be a proper woman. But there you go, it never has been easy for a woman to say what she thinks without her sexual identity and psychological welfare being called into question.

But the meat of her argument is more important than the throw-away insults.

### Autonomy

Sarah says SSiN doesn't support women's autonomy. Yes we do! At the last NUS conference in December 1986, we proposed the constitutional autonomy of the women's conference, positive discrimination in the NUS Executive elections, the right of the women's conference to submit its policy for debate at full conference and to table one debate for discussion at the NUS Easter conferences.

It would have been more straightforward for Sarah to have explained that SSiN was against the women's conference electing the women's officer of NUS because of incumbent accountability problems. The women's officer will be a member of the NEC. This body is genuinely accountable; it is elected at Easter and its Report and Plan (which explains how the Executive intends to implement mandates) are discussed in some detail at the December conference.

For the women's officer to be elected by and accountable to the women's conference but to be carrying out the mandates of both that conference and full conference is absurd. It is likely that the full conference and the women's conference will have conflicting mandates both on women and other subjects.

Everyone knows this is a worry. To ignore the big problem and see the issue only as a token and symbol for the fight for women's advancement



Photo: John Harris.

Women against Pit Closures march through Birmingham.

would be to be completely irresponsible and not only to the NUS. The resultant chaos and conflicts would do the cause of women no good at all.

One solution to get around the problem was that the full conference decisions on women would go to the women's conference in the form of the Report and Plan for acceptance. Nothing was proposed about conflicting mandates in other political areas — unless reading between the lines of the successful motion reveals a tight interpretation of the statement that the women's conference shall only discuss matters of specific concern or special interest to women. SSiN could not tolerate that. We believe that the full conference must be able to run its own women's campaign and that there must also be the autonomous campaign too. To keep the channels of accountability clear we proposed the women's officer be elected by full conference.

It is quite reasonable for people to object, to say that it is better for the women's committee to have a sabbatical — even though she couldn't really take part in full Execs — than to have men voting for the women's officer. That is a legitimate position. But to accuse SSiN of taking our position because it would better the chances of our candidate for the position is unreasonable. And it is stupid if Sarah looks at the figures for the last election of the women's committee — elected by the women's conference — when Michele Carlisle of SSiN topped the poll.

### Caricature

Sarah's method of caricaturing SSiN continues for the rest of the article. She quotes me as saying "Objective arguments don't matter much either. It is impossible to win. The rules of their game forbid debate...there is no doubt that some women cry 'sexist' when politically challenged."

But she then goes on to explain that what I am really saying is that "women haven't got the political expertise to argue their own case. But rather than fade into the background (after all, that would be a wholly passive act of behaviour!) they rant

and rave at men, winning their arguments only on the grounds of making the male sex feel guilty". And from there she launches forth to tell us that most meetings are male dominated and accuses SSiN of not knowing it!

This is odd. Does she think that SSiN says women *should* fade into the background? And if not, why mention it? But really that has very little to do with anything. Is Sarah saying that we are wrong and no women hide behind sexism to avoid political debate? Or is she saying that it doesn't matter because women are oppressed? I don't know what Sarah means but I could do without the lecture about how some men treat outspoken women.

### Twist

Another appalling twist is her argument concerning sexual harassment. She amalgamates my arguments with those of the Tories and tells us that most women are frightened of revealing cases of harassment and accuses SSiN of laying the blame for sexual harassment at women's feet.

I don't know how she arrives at such a position. We don't accuse women of causing sexual harassment. We have circulated model guidelines on dealing with sexual harassment to many colleges because NUS hasn't done it. But again, Sarah should stick to the point. Either I am lying and no woman has claimed sexual harassment to score points or she must say that if I am right and it has happened, whether or not she condones it.

Sarah must also reply to the second substantial point I made: that there is a body of opinion which says that men are guilty of sexual harassment because the woman says so. Does Sarah think that this is true and if so where is her critique of the arguments the left have always used regarding court cases. In particularly the position that habeas corpus is progressive and that special provision must be made for women so that they have a fair trial on an equal basis to the accused — not one where the judgement is pre-determined by sexist assumptions.

Another strange attribution to



Jane Ashworth

SSiN is the claim that we don't think the issues of rape and abortion are relevant to middle class women or that working class men do not have power over working class women. You have no reason to think that. Please look at our model motions for NUS conference which say precisely that they do, and please remember that Michele Carlisle is the NAC student organiser.

Sarah refuses to address the real point I was making — that a new current, a variation of radical feminism, is developing. This current puts 'experience' above political argument. It is assumed that a political strategy flows out of one's own oppression. Obviously only a woman can explain how her oppression feels but equally obviously anyone can have an understanding of the political nature of women's oppression and how to end it.

### Strategy

No strategy flows automatically from personal experience. That experience has to be understood and interpreted — a process which requires an interface with the outside world and with its conflicting and competing ideologies. The end product of analysing personal experience has been filtered. The woman chooses which interpretation she prefers. Some are right and some are wrong. Nothing is a pure feminism.

Attempts to claim women's experience directly leads to this or that position rules out debate and

therefore democracy. Believing this 'truth' means all those who disagree are necessarily sexists — or not willing to give up their male power and listen to women.

The theoretical underpinnings of femocracy are hard to locate but much is rooted in radical feminism. The central argument is that men are the enemy. The old phrase that the personal is political has been twisted. From its original liberating insight it has come to mean that the political is person, i.e. the power relationships in the outside world are necessarily the case within individual relationships.

The task then becomes to create political blocs to compete for power and lifestyles which are free from presumed power and concomitant oppression.

### Consequences

But this is wrong. The consequences are dire — it could lead to the Americanisation of British politics. We need to build a working class consciousness which is aware of sexism, which fights for the whole class and the oppressed who are not proletarian. Implicit in that is the acceptance of the need for autonomy to win that fight, to change our movement, to make it genuinely habitable for women.

It is true, and Sarah Mann admits it, that socialism is the only society in which women's liberation will potentially be realised. But she seeks to balance (and counter) that truth with another one: there will be no socialism without women's liberation. Absolutely right, Sarah!

So we have to integrate and coordinate the working class (men and women) struggle for socialism with an ongoing struggle for women's liberation — a struggle which sometimes parallels and sometimes intermeshes with the general class struggle. Neither struggle should be conducted in such a way as to rule out the irreplaceable linking up of the two.

### Unity

Both the day-to-day class struggle now and the winning of socialism require female-male working class unity. Men can and will be won to fight for women's equality (which also means special positive discrimination methods here and now).

The antics we describe as 'Femocracy' can only work against both female-male unity in the broad class struggle and against male-female unity in the fight against women's oppression. That's the issue, Sarah.

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# Caterpillar: issues behind the occupation

**The occupation of the Caterpillar factory in Uddingston, Lanarkshire is now entering its sixth week.**

The occupation is based on a 24-hour rota, with workers (mainly AEU members) turning up one day in three.

Caterpillar workers have already achieved initial success in their appeal for blacking of Caterpillar components. Dockers at the Greenock container terminal (itself threatened with closure) have agreed to refuse to handle Caterpillar cargoes, as well as raising money for the occupation.

In Brussels last week, Scottish workers met workers from Caterpillar plants in Leicester and France and Belgium, to appeal to them not to handle any of the work normally done in Uddingston. Shop stewards

also plan to address a meeting of seaport authority shop stewards being held in Liverpool on 25 February, to ask them to follow the lead of the Greenock dockers and not handle Caterpillar cargoes.

£1,000 a week is being collected in levies from workers at Govan Shipbuilders and the Ravenscraig Steelworks. But with workers not having received any wages since the end of January, there is still a pressing need for more financial support.

The occupation did suffer a setback last week when meetings of TASS members and ASTMS members on the Wednesday, and of APEX members on the Friday rejected official recommendations to continue to support the occupation and instead voted to pull out of it. But many of the minority who opposed this decision are continuing to

**By Stan Crooke**

back the occupation. And in the case of the TASS meeting, the vote was extremely close — just 36 to 32.

The factory had a high rate of productivity and a strike-free record, but Caterpillar bosses opted for closure for no other reason than that the size of the workforce matched their target for cutbacks in their workforce internationally.

So much for the myth that working hard and not going on strike will guarantee you job security!

Closure of the plant would cost 1,221 jobs directly, and another 2,000 jobs in component and related industries.

The actions taken by the Caterpillar workers in opposition to management's decision to close the

plant have struck a blow at many of the sacred cows of capitalism.

They have defied capitalist property "rights" by seizing the plant. They have challenged the bosses' "right" to manage by restarting the assembly lines themselves and they have overturned the idea of production for profit rather than need by handing over the first tractor produced to Band Aid for use in Ethiopia. And they have broken down the capitalist division of labour — typists are learning to drive tractors, shopfloor workers are learning to type, and welders are learning to use computers.

Unfortunately, such revolutionary activity is not linked up with a thought-out strategy for maintaining workers' control, but takes place within the framework of the idea of trying to find another buyer for the

plant — the total job flexibility, for example, is an attempt to demonstrate how good a workforce any new buyer for the plant would acquire.

The demand for nationalisation under workers' control and management should be raised. But, given the intransigence of the government which the workers face, such a demand should be complemented by the demand that Labour-controlled local authorities in the area provide open-ended subsidies to finance the plant's operations until then.

Interim subsidies from local authorities would prevent a repeat of the "workers' cooperatives" of the late seventies, when the workers running them found themselves imposing wage cuts and job losses because of the pressure of the capitalist market.

## CUTS SIT-IN

### Ancoats hospital

Early on Sunday 1 February, protesters arrived at Ancoats Hospital, Manchester. The Casualty Department was to close. Appeals and petitions had failed, so the protesters — NUPE and COHSE workers and local people — decided to stay.

North Manchester Health Authority decided to close the department (without consulting the unions) and proposes that emergencies go instead to the nearest casualty unit — three miles away. Ambulance crews have

**By Paul Woolley**

already warned that longer journeys will put lives at risk.

The sit-in has won great support from workers at Ancoats and other Manchester hospitals who have held lightning strikes in support.

Send donations and messages of support to Ancoats Casualty Sit-in, Ancoats Hospital, Old Mill St, Manchester 4. Cheques payable to Ancoats Hospital Action Group.

### 'The leadership was pathetic'

In a good turn-out of 260 members in a branch of 330, we voted three-to-one to reject BT's offer.

We were half expecting some kind of provocation from local management when we went back to work, but they have been very nice to us. We can't help wondering if it isn't just a 'honeymoon' period before they start hammering us.

Each local management seems to have been given some leeway in relation to their own workforce. In some areas it has been possible to obtain assurances which were not obtained

## TELECOM STRIKE

**By Richard Moore, Chair, London Met South NCU Branch.**

coming out again in support of other branches who have faced problems with their management when they went back to work.

It is important to keep our members aware that something could break out at any moment. Now, with the experience of the strike, we won't be afraid to come out again. Before

the strike it would have been seen as taking a leap into the unknown.

Everyone I have spoken to thinks that the leadership we were given by the union was pathetic. I've never seen such a determination to change the NEC. We can't get rid of Golding because he has only recently been elected for a five year term, but we can shackle him by electing a new NEC that doesn't agree with him. We will be balloting in April and the new NEC will take over just before the conference in June.

## 'SOCIALIST' LIVERPOOL

### NALGO strikes against job cuts

**Pete Cresswell, Liverpool City Council NALGO Branch Secretary, spoke to John Bloxam.**

About 1000 members are out on strike pending a ballot result. The action follows a decision by the City Council to close down the community work teams because, they say, the Urban Aid Funding "ran out".

We do not believe they applied for it to be renewed, and, in any case, it would only cost them £48,000 to keep the workers on for a full year.

The City Council offered the NALGO members redeployment as social workers on increased pay, but they refused, because they value the services they are providing. They were told that they would be sacked for "gross misconduct".

The Council dropped the "gross misconduct" charge, but then took them off pay.

We walked out without a ballot, after a show of hands at a mass meeting. The 'socialist' City Council then threatened us with an injunction because we had not yet had a ballot!

I think most NALGO members despise the City Council leadership, largely because they are so two-faced. If they said publicly what they say privately — look, we've got no money, it's difficult, we can't get any money out of the government — you could accept that to some extent. No-one would like it very much and there would still be disputes about it.

#### Admit

But they do not do that. Around the city they say: "We are not making cuts, we are defending jobs and services". We know for sure that 700 jobs have gone in the last year but they won't admit it.

They talk about saving old people from the cold. They had a conference last Friday on hypothermia. But the fact is that one of the principal responsibilities of the community work teams is organising volunteers to assist old people in the cold. They are closing that service down and yet they boast how much they are helping old people!

We asked people to walk out of the hypothermia conference in solidarity and a number did so, including one of the platform speakers, Lol Duffy.

I think it is the hypocrisy that sticks in people's throats.

Our members have no confidence in the Liberals. Two weeks ago there was an overwhelming majority in a ballot against cooperation with anything the Liberals might do against us.

One of the other principal disputes at the moment is at the treasury, where 120 in the Housing Benefit Section have been out for ten days following an attack on a number of staff and members of the public. They are asking that screens be fitted.

There has also been a major dispute between Ian Lowes' GMBU branch and the City Council over privatisation. The workers occupied a municipal building and the council hired private contractors to break the doors down to get in.

We had some contact with them over that. But the threatened all-out strike did not materialise because the Labour Group made promises that "they would do their best".

Not all the past breaches between the unions have been healed, but the situation isn't as bad as it was.

The GMBU "council loyalists" are very much a small minority, and I think a lot of them are disillusioned but can't admit it.

### Labour students' conference carved up

**By Jane Ashworth**

**NOLS conference is only a week away. Unfortunately, many important debates, critical to the future of Labour Students, will not be taking place.**

Prioritising women, lesbians and gays, Students for a Labour Victory, racism, the Middle East, and the critical debate over the rights of Further Education students to join NOLS will not be held, and neither will there be the much-needed discussion about Labour Party democracy.

It is now custom and practice for Labour Clubs to be excluded from the Conference either on spurious grounds or because the rules set out are so complicated that many clubs, particularly the most active, cannot meet them.

This year is no exception. Problems began at the start of the year when too few membership cards were sent out to Clubs. Sheffield Polytechnic, for instance, were only sent ten when their first meeting was attended by over 100 students. North Staffs Polytechnic were sent only 60 and when a further 60 were sent the original 60 were cancelled by the NOLS office. From this bad start to the year, matters have proceeded to get worse.

According to the NOLS constitution, the National Office has to be informed of any meetings taking NOLS business. A form is sent out for clubs to fill in telling

NOLS the dates of meetings which would select delegates to conference, propose motions and take amendments. It is then not possible to change those dates without agreement from the NOLS Office.

Essex University have been ruled out because they changed the date of the delegate selection meeting. They had to change it because another clause in the NOLS constitution says that four days' written notice has to be given to all members of business meetings and they

**SSiN**

had not done so. Unfortunately Essex were not able to get through to the NOLS office on the phone to tell them about the change of date, so they have been ruled out.

More sinister is the ruling out of Newcastle Polytechnic and North Staffs Polytechnic.

At Newcastle everything went according to the book. But the NOLS office have still ruled them out, saying that they did change the meeting dates.

At North Staffs the story is more convoluted. Two delegates were selected. The second delegate subsequently was told by his course tutor not to go to the conference and to do some work. He therefore resigned from the delegation and the Club decided that the runner-up should go in his place. Before agreeing this procedure, Jill Mountford rang Sally Morgan, the Labour Party student

organiser, who said it would be OK.

The next the Club heard was that both delegates had been ruled out! Jill then rang Sally again who said she would re-check but *anyway* her club may be ruled out because on the form which told NOLS dates of meetings Jill had only written AGM and elections instead of AGM and NOLS elections.

It would appear that the NOLS office have a vendetta against North Staffs Polytechnic. How else can it be explained that the Office suddenly assumes that AGMs don't always take elections and therefore someone writing 'AGM and elections' does not mean elections on top of the standard AGM business?

Another Club which has been treated badly is Sheffield Polytechnic. They say they have only received four items of mail from NOLS in a couple of years! They never received the delegate forms and so rang up and were told to send in details anyway. They did that. A few days before the deadline the correct forms arrived at the Poly — too late to be returned to NOLS. The delegation was therefore ruled out.

These are only some of the dubious practices that have come to light so far. The NOLS Independent Monitoring Committee is putting together a more complete report.

The backdrop to this year's carving up is the fact that senior "Democratic Left" members around the country are telling stories about how close the conference will be. 130 to 128 was one figure being put about. Be that true or not, it doesn't

to justify a return to work. There was no drift back to work, although members were beginning to feel the pinch.

Although British Telecom can't extend our work hours by what they wanted, they still want to vary the working day.

The Broad Left is calling on members to stand firm and defend the nine-day fortnight. We are also campaigning for unity between clerical and engineering sections, to merge them into one union. The Clerical Section Executive stupidly want to maintain their own autonomy.

The engineering group wanted a joint pay committee, but this was rejected by clerical. BT were able to divide us up.

Motions need to go to both conferences.

### Defend 9-day fortnight!

**Ricky Houston (Edinburgh External NCU)**

**The Internal Branch executive made no recommendation, and the branch accepted the deal 9 to 1. In the External branch, we recommended rejection and were narrowly defeated, 216 to 211.**

Immediately afterwards, a vote of no confidence in John Golding, calling for his resignation, was carried unanimously.

BT will now use prolonged compulsory overtime to clear the backlog of faults after the strike. In some areas, management have put workers on a five-day week, scrapping the nine-day fortnight.

There were not enough concessions

to justify a return to work. There was no drift back to work, although members were beginning to feel the pinch.

Although British Telecom can't extend our work hours by what they wanted, they still want to vary the working day.

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matter now. The number of opposition delegates ruled out makes the result of the Conference a foregone conclusion. And Labour Students face one more year of a corrupt and stagnant leadership.

The problems with membership cards and contradictory advice coming from the NOLS office are compounded by the refusal of the office to give out information. The NC — which has met only twice this year — has not been given a list of affiliated clubs, nor details of their membership figures.

Also, the procedure for Clubs to appeal against being ruled out has not been made available either. No-one is admitting who is on the appeals committee nor who selected them.

One of the auditors of NOLS, a SSiN supporter, has been effectively refused access to the books, despite repeated phone calls and a registered letter. Constitutionally, the auditor must sign the books. Last year the same obstructions were put in the way and the accounts were never signed. But that didn't bother the Democratic Left. They voted against letting the auditor even make a statement to conference. It looks like the conference will be a complete shambles — once again.

**GBH — IT'S A CRIME National meeting Sunday 22 February at 11 a.m. UCL, Gower Street. All welcome Ring Rachel, 387 3611**

## Shopworkers against the state

**"The rationale seems to be: block workers' demands at all costs, protect bosses' profits and interests and smash the union."**

That is how the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has described the strategy of management in the nine-week long dispute

involving 11,000 workers at OK Bazaars stores in South Africa.

The workers are on strike demanding a R450 monthly minimum wage (equivalent to about £150) and an across the board increase of R160 a month, backdated to last April.

The strikers' union, the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (CCAWUSA), has also demanded that OK Bazaars grant the same conditions and rights to workers in the 'homelands' as in the cities.

This is because 'homeland governments' and employers are often even more anti-union than their South African counterparts.

CCAWUSA say that many workers are earning well below the R256 average level that they have calculated OK pay their workers.

Even those workers who earn much more than that, such as Doris Mokena on R350, find it impossible to make ends meet. As Doris put it: "Saving is out of the question. I live from hand to mouth and sometimes have to see my children go to bed on half-empty stomachs."

Meanwhile OK made profits of 12.9 million rand last year.

### 'Liberal'

CCAWUSA has hit out against the hypocrisy of the 'liberal' bosses who run OK:

"Tony Bloom whose company owns S.A. Breweries and therefore controls OK Bazaars, is prepared to hold discussions with the ANC in Lusaka on our country's future, yet his company has no qualms about using police against workers on strike."

CCAWUSA has decided to seek the support of other unions in its battle. As a result half the companies listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange could face working class solidarity action.

A meeting of several hundred shop stewards from 54 companies who have links with OK Bazaars through the corporate giant Anglo-America have promised solidarity action to back up CCAWUSA.

Members of the Food and Allied Workers Union have already stopped deliveries to OK in solidarity with the strikers.

The dispute should be seen as a test case.

Over the last year CCAWUSA has been at the top of the league table in terms of percentage wage increases won. As a result big employers are looking for a defeat of the OK strikers to blunt working class militancy.

A defeat for CCAWUSA's wages fight would also be a blow to COSATU, which has declared 1987 "The year of consolidation and decisive action", and planned a nationally coordinated campaign for a living wage.

The strikers are facing severe repression. As one source put it: "The things that were done in CCAWUSA's last big strike at Pick'n Pay (e.g. occupations, pickets) would now get you ten years' imprisonment."

As a result, international solidarity for the strikers is vital. Representatives of CCAWUSA are touring Europe and America to raise support. Send donations/messages of support to CCAWUSA, 2nd Floor, Khotso House, de Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa.

### THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE

# Bosses' hit-list exposed!

By Jim Denham

Thousands of people in Britain today stand no chance of ever finding a job because they are blacklisted. Their names are on secret files which they cannot see themselves but which are available to any prospective employer who wants to check up on them and is willing to pay a relatively small fee.

Blacklisting has long been a known fact of life for trade unionists, especially in the construction and engineering industries. But for people outside of those industries such claims have usually sounded too much like paranoia on the part of trade union activists, to be taken seriously.

Monday's World in Action programme investigated the Economic League, a nationwide organisation which compiles lists of "undesirables" for the perusal of potential employers.

The programme proved that the blacklist does indeed exist, and hundreds of employers — large and small — regularly consult it and deny employment to otherwise suitable applicants, as a result.

The main organisation, whose name most gets mentioned in stories about blacklisting is the Economic League. World in Action approached the Economic League for an interview, but the League declined to cooperate. So the programme makers masqueraded as businessmen planning to build a hotel in Harrogate, and made contact with the League's North East officer, Alan Harvey. He gave them an ex-directory number to ring, and a secret code to quote if they want to have job applicants checked up on.

The World in Action team had found three volunteers, willing to



How many NCU strikers have been blacklisted? Photo: Ian Swindale

have their names used in the experiment. All three of them had repeatedly been turned down for jobs, despite being well qualified. None of them had ever been members of any left wing political organisations (not even the Labour Party!) or ever been active trade unionists.

### Labourer

The first was a labourer that the Economic League had listed as an active Communist Party member. The TV reporters recorded their conversation with the League and played it back to the labourer. "It's a load of crap," he said. "I've never even voted in my life."

The second was a scaffolder of whom Harvey said "he was recruited to the CP at the same time as the first bloke...we know he's in the CP."

The scaffolder, hearing this, replied "I'm more interested in football. Politics is a no-no! I don't usually vote, and when I do I have to be dragged out."

All five members of his family had applied for jobs at Findus Frozen Foods. Only the daughter, who had applied under her married name, had been accepted, despite the fact that Findus were known to have large numbers of vacancies.

The third "guinea pig" was a former industrial relations manager, Ken Mullier, who knew about the Economic League as a result of his work in management. He had cooperated with World in Action in making the film. As a result he too was blacklisted:

"He doesn't represent the best interests of the company," came Harvey's voice over the phone: "I

wouldn't want him involved in any company of mine."

Another victim of the blacklist is Melvin Barton, a skilled worker who could not find work. "No-one wants to know," he said dejectedly.

The Economic League had him down as a "militant". In fact he was a long-standing member of the Conservative Party. The Economic League were "absolutely certain" that their information on him was accurate.

The Economic League denied having any links with the police or Special Branch. But their North East organiser Alan Harvey was a little more candid: "there is a lot of analogy between us...They're not unfriendly back...but don't repeat this outside this room...it's illegal...if you want a quote on a number plate, credit worthiness, criminal record...we can contact the police and their press cutting service."

Harvey quoted a price of £150 for a "special investigation".

The names of employers who have recently made use of the papers rolled across the screen — including many household names. Harvey said "we never recommend whether or not a person should be taken on. We just give the facts." But his own earlier account marked this as a lie.

The World in Action investigation was about people with no record of political activity or industrial militancy, who have for one reason or another fallen foul of the blacklist. It did not touch on the hundreds — most probably thousands — of people who were or are activists or members of left wing organisations who have been blacklisted over the years.

These are simply people who have dared to challenge the bosses to fight for a better deal for their workmates. They are now marked men and women. We have a duty to stand by them. Labour must outlaw outfits like the Economic League and reinstate victimised trade unionists.

## Fightback in the pits

The Coal Board in South Wales announced recently that it was prepared to go ahead with a £90 million super-pit at Margam, employing 800 men and producing one million tonnes of coal a year, on condition that the NUM accepted a change in the working week from five to six days.

In Bevercotes we have seen it already, the ultimate nightmare. Years ago we were the 'super-pit' and had continental shifts, which included regular weekend working. It was a disaster, and we kicked it out after a magnificent fight.

The Welsh miners should find out about that experience and I would be more than willing to tell them about it.

Of course, if the conditions went



through it would be the thin end of the wedge for every pit throughout the country. It would be a disaster for the miners and for the industry. Instead we should be looking to implement the miners' objective of a four day working week.

I'm pleased that the NUM leadership are standing firm against the six-day proposal for Margam. The Executive are refusing to consider anything but a reduction in the working week.

The recent action by Selby miners to resist attacks on their earnings has

shown that the myth that certain NUM leaders are circulating about the members' unwillingness to fight is totally unfounded. Miners will always resist attacks on their conditions and living standards and it is a warning to management that the union is regaining its confidence.

The decision by the rank and file NCU members to return to work was a tragedy. They stood up and showed that they weren't prepared to be dictated to by their employer, though prior to this they had been considered moderates.

But they unfortunately placed themselves in the hands of the Executive, who sold them out.

I'm sure the NCU rank and file learnt many lessons in that period.

Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

OK CARES FOR PROFIT NOT PEOPLE!



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Strikers' poster