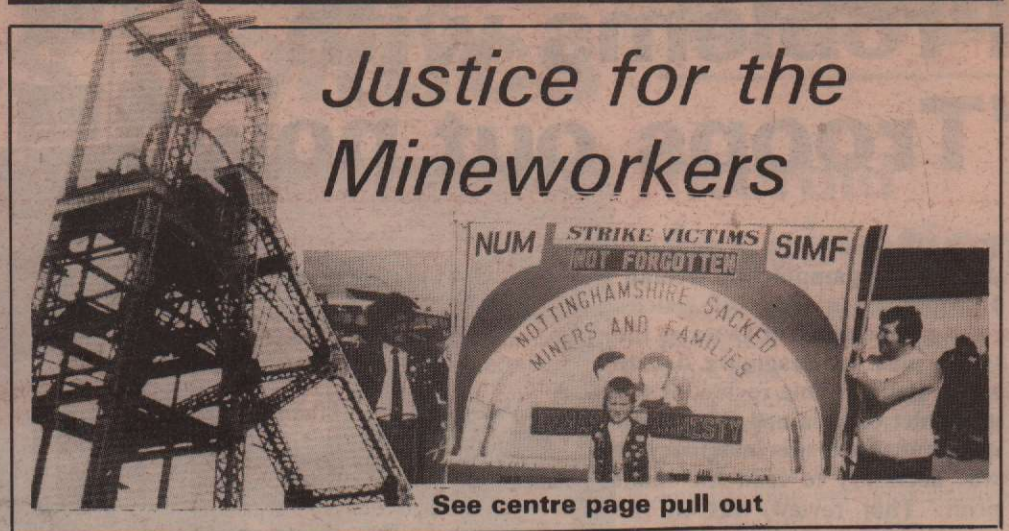


SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

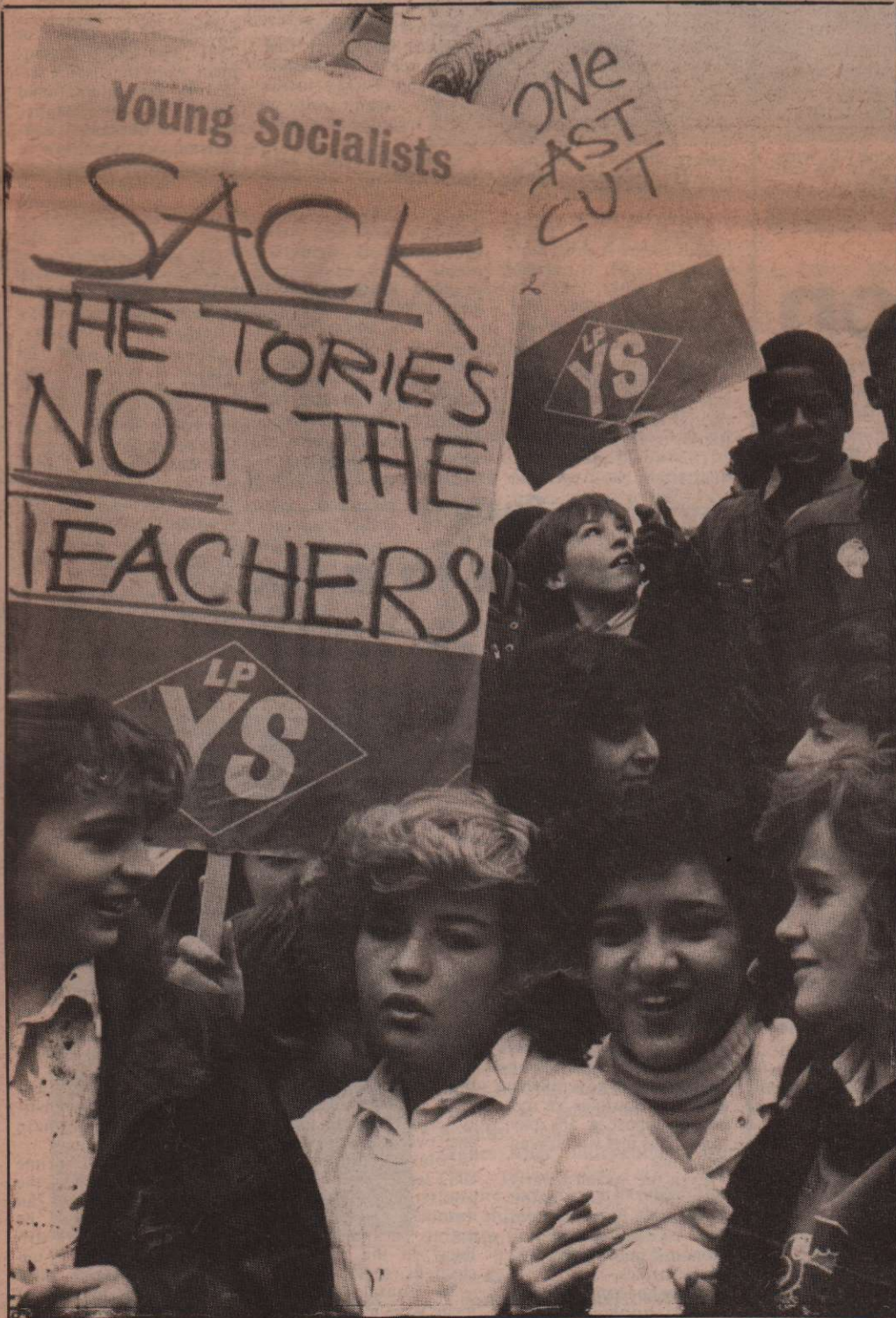
Kick out the Tories in '87!



See centre page pull out

As panic grips Kinnock's team

FIGHT TO WIN!



School students on strike. Photo Monique Blanchet (Report)

THE TORIES are set on an early June election. That's what Thatcher's junket to Moscow and her 'confrontation' with the Japanese is all about — to give her maximum 'exposure' in the run-up to a general election.

That's what Lawson's benign budget was about, too.

The signs are good for the Tories. Opinion polls at the weekend put the Tories in a clear lead. A MORI poll gave them 41% — 12 points ahead of Labour with the Alliance at 29%. A Marplan poll said a four-point lead — but with Labour bottom.

The Tories are now in a confident mood. *But they can and must be beaten.*

Dead-end

A Thatcherite third term would be a disaster for working class people. It would mean more fat profits for the rich, and more unemployment, slum housing, low wages and dead-end lives for the rest of us.

It would mean a new round of attacks on the unions.

Nor is the Alliance an alternative. They are nothing more than soft Tories — if in fact they are soft! We must all make sure that the opinion polls are proved wrong and

a Labour government is elected.

Labour's leaders are acting scared and downhearted, and threatening to ditch still more of Labour's policies in the hope of winning Tory votes. Kinnock went crawling to Washington as if eager to have his face publicly slapped by Thatcher's friends and allies in the White House. This is the wrong course of action for Labour.

Tide

The way to turn the tide and win a Labour vote is to *campaign* to get Thatcher out and convince working class people not to give up. If Labour launches an active, lively, up-front campaign we can recover lost ground and get rid of the Tory government in 1987.

The lesson of Kinnock's campaign so far is that weaseling and running scared before the press is not only disgraceful, but also doesn't work. Labour must change course — before it is too late.

Problems with 'Troops out now'

Recently Socialist Organiser published a pamphlet on Ireland. It contained a series of articles from a wide range of views on the issue, plus an imaginary debate set in Belfast. One review of the pamphlet complained that it was not clear that it was imaginary, it was necessary to read the small print. That review was in the magazine of the Labour Committee on Ireland, 'Labour and Ireland'.

Last weekend in Manchester the LCI held their annual general meeting and I began to understand the reviewer's problem. I had to read carefully to be sure that much of the debate there had been real. Certainly, I wish that some of it had not been.

On the more zany side we had a speaker from something called 'Labour Party Irish Sections', and the ludicrous decision that membership of the Orange Order should be incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. Some of the most militant Scottish miners are Orangeists.

The main discussions, however, were about work in the unions, the general election and troops withdrawal. The central focus for trade union work is to be the 'McBride Principles', which seek to enforce equality of opportunity for Catholics in Northern Ireland by putting pressure on companies who operate there.

As an attempt at reform or in exposing discrimination they may have some use. But as a central focus for trade union work it is hard to imagine them achieving anything significant. Discrimination in Northern Ireland is well documented and the experience of the Fair Employment Agency in

By Patrick Murphy

recent years shows that rank and file trades unionists play a major role in enforcing it.

As an aside, the author of these principles, Sean McBride, is one of the most unprincipled Catholic-chauvinist gob-shites in Irish politics.

It was decided to make a concerted effort to make Ireland a priority in the election but there were few ideas on how to do this. One suggestion was to focus on constituencies with a big Irish electorate; another, with apparently little support, was Labour Party Irish Sections.

Not much was said about British withdrawal, but there seems to be a shift away from the use of that demand in the LCI. It is being replaced, however, by various coded messages meaning the same thing. Many LCI members are groping around for a new way to formulate an increasingly unclear slogan.

Twice in the AGM the problems with this 'troops out now' policy were rather embarrassingly exposed. First, one of the 'McBride Principles' calls for a guarantee that adequate security is given to minority employees on their way to and from work. Who, we asked, would provide this security? The troops? No, it is 'Troops Out'. The UDR? No, they are to be disbanded. The answer given by one comrade was 'the employers'!

Secondly, the AGM passed a policy in favour of calling on the government to disband the UDR. Again we asked who was to do this dangerous job? Well, came the answer, that is a problem for the British government. If we pass the policy at the Labour Party Con-



Unionist rally in Belfast. Photo Derek Speirs.

ference the Labour government will just have to carry it out. And simultaneously withdraw the British army!

This total helplessness in the face of the simplest of questions barely disguised the fact that the policy being voted for would mean not 'Troops Out' but a lot more troops in.

This is all sad because it is important that the issue of Ireland is raised constantly in the Labour Party, and that the arguments for withdrawal are won. And there are many serious people in the LCI who know enough about Ireland to see that much of the discussion was deluded and confused. They are worried about it.

There is no doubt that the Labour Party leadership will win the vote on Ireland at this year's Labour Party conference. What is tragic is that they should have so little difficulty in winning the arguments as well.

Philippines

Aquino's Constitution

The Philippines stage has been recently redecorated; the backdrop removed and it is time for a new set. The ceasefire is over. The negotiators from the NDF have left the Manila Press Club and gone back into hiding along with many underground activists who surfaced for nearly 60 days.

During this time, the military was busy photographing, documenting and analysing intelligence on the urban underground as well as covering various NPA fronts.

The military has been divided over its allegiances since the fall of the dictator but has been desperately waiting for this next act — now that the constitutional referendum is over.

The referendum has been a shot in the arm for Aquino's increasingly right-wing 'democracy'. 80% of eligible voters took part in the referendum and 76% voted 'yes' to Cory Aquino's constitution.

So why, in a country where thousands of peasants are landless, where unemployment runs at 35% and where workers are super-exploited, did the people give Cory such a mandate? The result seems even more surprising in a country with a strong and organised armed resistance.

The vote for the constitution has to be seen as a vote against the militarist and blood-drenched Right — the old Marcos loyalists both inside and outside the military. Aquino has promised to bring the rebel Right in her army under control and the people desperately want to believe her.

Despite the ceasefire, the neo-fascists have been very busy. Rolando Olalia, leader of the May

While thousands of Filipinos took to the streets to dance and sing of one year without Marcos, it is becoming clearer that the song of democracy has many covers sung by different performers. Vassili Manikakis, who visited the Philippines last year, comments.

First Trade Union (KMU) was assassinated. Twenty peasant demonstrators were killed in Manila at the hands of the marines and police.

When workers in the province of Mariveles, home of Bataan Export Processing Zone, organised a general strike (welgan bayan), three more were shot and 30 wounded. Since the ceasefire, over 60 people, including unarmed civilians have been killed. The people want it to stop, and they want action against the putschists who on January 27, in a failed coup d'état, occupied the TV station GMA-7 for three days. The 700 or so who took part in this operation are not isolated. Not surprisingly, a vote against Aquino's constitution was

registered in many military bases.

While the far-right want a continuation of military influence on civilian politics, the Filipino toilers want nothing of the sort. They saw the constitution as a strengthening of their democratic rights — the right to organise, form unions and strike; the right to health care and education; and the right to a Bill of Rights that outlaws torture, solitary confinement and illegal detention.

Most of the left took this position, seeing the new constitution as a 'democratic space' from which to fight for the realisation of fuller democracy, economic and social justice. Within the trade union movement, two views held sway. The national KMU, along with the NDF and CPP, called for a rejection of "the pro-imperialist and anti-masses constitution" and for the "carry(ing) forward of the struggle for national democracy" saying that "only through direct struggles, armed and unarmed, that the people are able to achieve concrete victories." On the local level however, on the island of Negros for instance, the KMU called for a 'critical yes' vote.

Armed with her constitutional victory, Cory has threatened to "un-sheath her sword of war" against the NPA and advocates of class struggle, in defence of her civilian 'democracy'. And if her loyalists use swords, the ultra-right, taking no chances, are well stocked with US-supplied M-16s. The harsh economic realities of the Philippines will mean that a war against the advocates of class struggle will mean a war against the people. Constitution or not, if the Aquino government can't handle it, then the militarists are ready and waiting with their Thai-style military 'democracy'.

WORLD Brief

Aegean conflict

The recent confrontation between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean marks the latest in a long series of conflicts between the two countries in disputes about territorial rights, airspace, international waters and underground drilling rights for oil in the area.

Greece claims 2,000 islands in the Aegean Sea, many of them uninhabited. As a signatory to the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention, which Turkey did not sign, Greece claims the right to extend its six-mile territorial limit around these islands to twelve miles.

This would place three-quarters of the Aegean in

Greek territorial waters.

Greece has not yet tried to enforce a twelve-mile limit, and Turkey insists that any attempt to do so will be regarded as a cause for war.

In 1973 oil deposits were discovered off the northern Greek island of Thassos. Although these deposits are not very substantial, the rights to exploit them have been disputed between Greece and Turkey ever since.

In 1976, when Turkey last sent a ship into the area to conduct seismic tests, the two countries nearly came to war. The United Nations intervened and urged both sides to negotiate a settlement.

These negotiations were

broken off by Greece in 1981. The Greek government wants the dispute settled by the International Court at the Hague, presumably because it considers international law to favour its own position, while the Turks want to settle it by direct negotiations, as recommended by the UN. However the Greek government is refusing to negotiate with Turkey while Turkish troops continue to occupy northern Cyprus.

The recent move by Turkey to resume seismic testing, seemingly in violation of an agreement by the two countries not to take provocative action in the area until the dispute has been resolved, was claimed by the Turks as a preemptive move to prevent Greek plans to themselves begin drilling for oil in the region.

Greece has granted drilling rights to a Canadian oil consortium and the government recently announced plans to nationalise the operation. The reason given was that the government needed to have control over drilling operations in such a sensitive area, thus lending some credence to the Turkish claim that the consortium had been planning to drill in the region, albeit it against the wishes of the Greek government.

Clearly it is not in the interests of workers in either Greece or Turkey that there should be a war over this issue. Unfortunately, however, the political leaders of the two countries, faced with flagging support at home, have used the conflict to try and boost their own popularity, and both seem to have been successful.

While Turkish prime minister and friend of the generals, Turgut Ozal can not be expected to be anything other than a strident nationalist, it is unforgivable for the so-called socialist prime minister of Greece to try and rebuild his popularity on the basis of bellicose nationalist posturings against Turkey.

Spain

Gonzalez in a fix

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday 4 April, a demonstration of workers left Cupid Gardens in Reinosa, Spain, and went to the nearby railway station. Soon they had set up barricades and were doing battle with the Civil Guard, decked out in anti-riot gear. 21 people were injured.

The next day, fighting broke out again. In addition to the anti-riot police, 200 'anti-terrorist' men were in the town, along with eleven armoured cars and two helicopters.

Reinosa is one of the flash-points in the current wave of working class militancy in Spain. The Socialist Party government of Felipe Gonzalez, in trying to impose a 5% pay freeze, has met widespread resistance.

Even the Socialist Party dominated UGT union federation has criticised the government's economic policy and backed the strikes.

As we go to press there is a national hospital workers' strike, and a strike by Metro workers in Madrid, along with the

continuing battle of Asturian miners against pit closures. Students have also been involved in national action against education reforms. As well as opposition to the 5% deep frustration with the inefficient social services has fuelled the workers' action. About 160,000 people are stuck on hospital waiting lists, and the hospitals themselves are so badly equipped and overcrowded that some patients have to sleep in corridors or offices.

Neither of the union federations has provided a clear lead or national focus — and both the UGT and the Communist Party-led Workers' Commissions have backed government austerity measures for the past two years. Now even Nicolas Redondo, the UGT leader, is in open opposition; some UGT members are threatening not to back the Socialist Party in the June local elections.

So Gonzalez's government is in a fix. The big revival of working class activity shows no signs of abating.

Arguing for class politics

Jane Ashworth, business manager of the magazine *Workers' Liberty*, reports on the new issue just out, and available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA for 90p plus 20p post (cheques payable to SO).

The new issue of *Workers' Liberty* magazine carries on the front an epigram from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, writing to August Bebel and other leaders of the German socialist movement in 1879.

"For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggles as the most immediate driving power in history, and, in particular, the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social upheaval; therefore it is impossible for us to ally ourselves with people who want to eliminate this class struggle from the movement... The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself".

The Social-Democratic Party had just been made illegal under Bismark's 'Anti-Socialist Laws', and some of its leaders became nervous about the way the party had conducted "a one-sided struggle for the interests of the industrial workers" and thus "increased the hatred of the bourgeoisie unnecessarily". Marx and Engels, as the quotation shows, replied without equivocation.

In Britain today, and in many other countries, the labour movement has recently suffered setbacks, though less sharp and clear-cut than the Anti-Socialist Law. These setbacks have generated the same dislike for and scepticism about class struggle as infected those German socialists. On the left of the spectrum, the 'retreat from class' is sometimes given a radical gloss by the claim that it is a matter of seeing that race and gender conflicts must have the same status as class struggles.

The left-wing version of the 'retreat from class' is not, however, much better than the standard right-wing version. Conflicts between women and men, or black and white, can be adjusted, equalised, redressed; not even the boldest solution can do more. If the class struggle is put in the same level, then it is reduced to trying to put workers on equal terms with the capitalist class. And indeed

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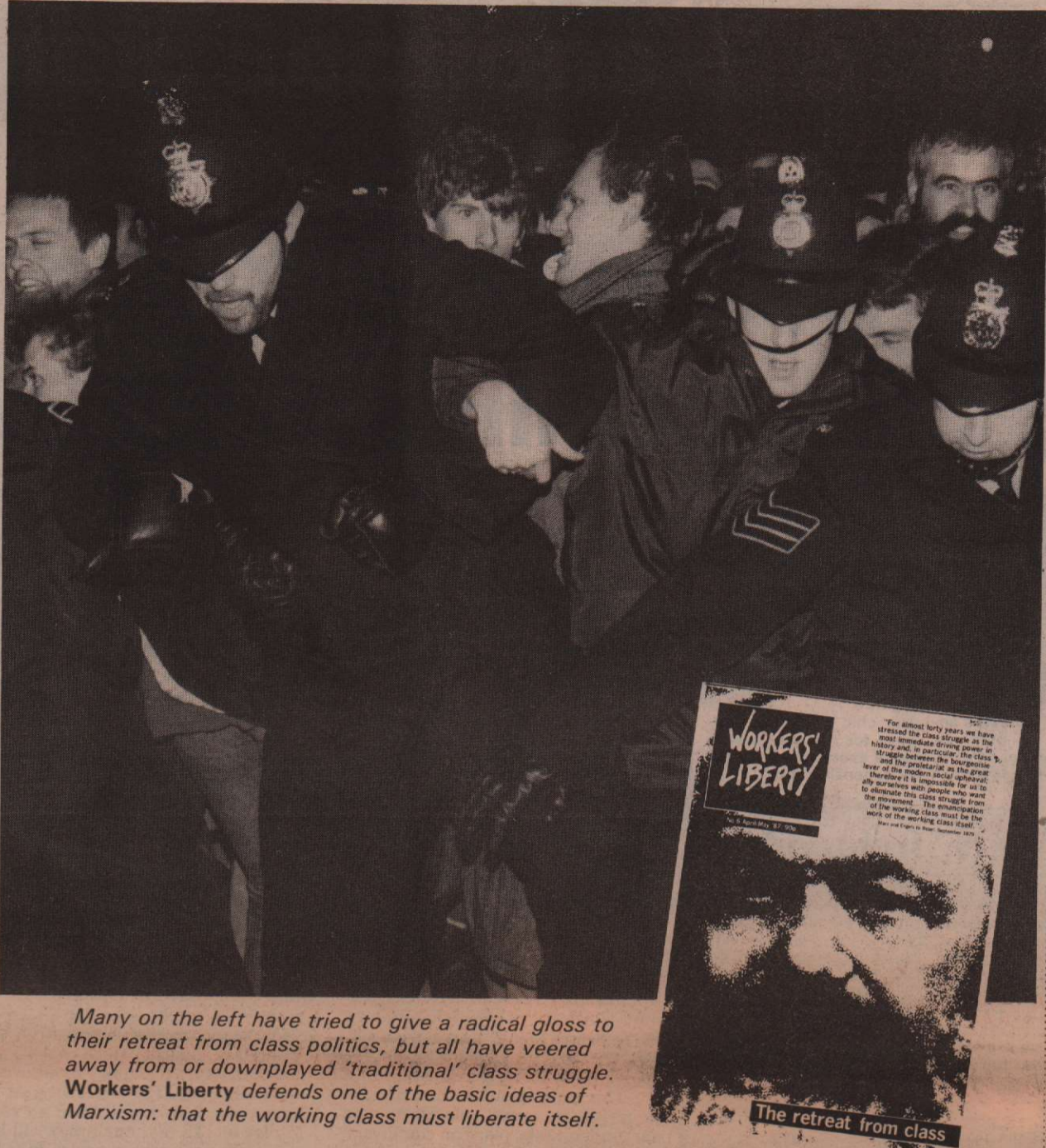
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Sorry! We omitted the author's name on the letter on page 4 last week. It was Bas Hardy.



Many on the left have tried to give a radical gloss to their retreat from class politics, but all have veered away from or downplayed 'traditional' class struggle. *Workers' Liberty* defends one of the basic ideas of Marxism: that the working class must liberate itself.

talk of the seizure of the means of production by the workers, and of public ownership, is considered old hat on much of the left today.

A number of articles in the magazine address its main theme. An editorial surveys the state of the British working class, recognises that defeats have taken a toll, but sees much scope for positive organising and hope for the future. A review of an important recent book by Ellen Meiksins Wood (from the title of which the magazine borrows its cover theme, 'The Retreat from Class'), summarises her arguments against the right-wing neo-Marxists who are now advocating a socialist politics dissociated from class, and argues that many of them strike home against more left-wing tendencies too.

An article gives detailed facts and figures on the rise of industrial capitalism (and thus of an industrial working class) in the Third World over the last 25 or so years. Bob Fine explains why trade unionists in South Africa want a Workers' Charter as well as, or instead of, the ANC's much-mythologised Freedom Charter; and Tom Rigby surveys the "mushrooming growth" of the non-racial trade union movement in South Africa.

A contributor from Australia, Janet Burstall, carefully examines the claim that Nicaragua shows a new populist road to socialism, and argues that independent working class politics are still necessary despite everything positive that can and should be said about the Sandinista revolution. Salman Rushdie's new book on Nicaragua is also reviewed.

Some on the left believe that the best way to get world peace now is to support Mikhail Gorbachev. An editorial argues that "nothing agreed between the superpowers merits the trust and confidence of socialists",

and that the real road to peace lies in the struggle of the working class, East and West.

Controversially, the editorial points out that as long ago as 1939 Leon Trotsky recognised an "element of imperialism" in the Kremlin's international policy. If we apply the same method and concepts as Trotsky to the realities of the past 45 years — and in particular to the USSR's brutal domination of Eastern Europe — we have to conclude that the USSR today is imperialist. It is a different sort of imperialism from that of the US, France or Britain: but then history has had many sorts of imperialism other than modern monopoly capitalism.

Defend

Workers' Liberty is concerned to defend the basic ideas of classical Marxism — against toning down or dilution. But it is equally opposed to wooden dogmatism, or the recital of the words 'socialism' and 'working class' as magic answers to all problems.

A feature on the politics of Northern Ireland argues that viable socialist politics there must include an adequate democratic programme on the relations between Ireland's two communities, Catholic and Protestant. The magazine's openness to debate is signalled by a contribution from Donal Rayner O'Connor Lysaght which criticises *Workers' Liberty* No. 5 on Ireland.

Debate is also represented by an interview with Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy in which Derer goes beyond today's tactical questions of day-to-day Labour Party politics to explain his idea of how the capitalist state will be overthrown. And the magazine contains a lively element of polemic.

Jim Allen's play 'Perdition', about

the Nazi mass murder of the Jews of Hungary in 1944, has become a cause celebre. Allen believes that the play "is the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written...because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state". Jews of many different political stripes have protested that this is an obscene twisting of the facts, using the desperate stratagems of people facing ruthless massacre as evidence to try to smear present-day Israel with part of the guilt for the horrors of Nazism.

Most of the left has rallied to Allen. John O'Mahony in *Workers' Liberty* finds that "Those who have campaigned against the play being produced are wrong in principle and shortsighted in practice", and of course there is much that modern Israel can be criticised for — in its treatment of the Palestinian Arabs. But "it is a pretty vile play". "It is highly improbable that Jim Allen is himself hostile to Jews, but that is not the issue here. He embraces politics which by demonologising Israel are in their logic inescapably hostile to Jews..."

Another polemic uses a review of a book about the Bolsheviks in the Tsarist parliament to examine the British SWP's attitudes to parliament today. And the left's response to AIDS is looked at critically.

The magazine also carries a survey of the recent international wave of student struggles, a discussion of the issue of commemorating 1688, and other reviews.

Workers' Liberty is a magazine which is firmly of the activist, rather than the academic left, but which debates issues rather than blandly reciting a 'line'; one which examines changes in the world and is not frightened of offending left 'public opinion', but bases itself firmly on classical Marxism. Read it!

Morbid fascination

"QUEEN'S cousin locked in madhouse", said Monday's *Sun* front page.

No doubt you know the basic outline by now — two first cousins of the Queen spent 40 years of their lives locked away in a Surrey mental hospital that was once condemned for its lack of sanitation.

Both the sisters have been listed in Burke's Peerage as dead for many years. In fact, one died last year and is buried in a pauper's grave, while the other is still alive in the strict sense of the word.

According to the *Financial Times* on Tuesday, three other cousins of the Queen were also locked up in this hospital in 1941. One has since died and two are still alive.

Not the usual sort of Windsor story, this one. No glamorous gowns or daring flashes of royal knees. No chubby, cheeky royal infants. None of your 'they're just like us, really' jocularities — these royals (or near-royals) are definitely *not* 'just like us'.

The picture of Katherine Bowes-Lyon on the front page of the *Sun* showed a gaunt face with dreadful, staring eyes. The Windsor characteristics were unmistakable.

Buck House, of course, denied a 'cover-up'. Of course they would, wouldn't they? That silly, kind-hearted old soul, the Queen Mum, knew all about it. She never visited her nieces, but sent them the occasional box of licquorice allsorts.

How the phoney entries got into Burke's Peerage remains a mystery. The niece of the Bowes-Lyon sisters, Lady Elizabeth Shakerley, claimed that it was all a mistake.

When Burke's Peerage sent the

By Jim Denham

family the proofs of the sisters' entries, noone noticed that it said they were dead. The whole family is, apparently, 'marvellously vague'.

I was going to write a jokey piece about the Windsors' long history of mental illness, which Tuesday's *Sun* reports in surprising detail: the mad Duke of Clarence (who may or may not have been Jack the Ripper); Prince John, the Queen's uncle, who was kept in isolation at Sandringham until his death aged 14; and, of course, good old George III, who once mistook an oak tree in Hyde Park for the Emperor of Prussia, and shook it warmly by the branch.

But actually I think the whole matter is a little more serious than that. Fleet Street's coverage of the story — not to mention the royals' treatment of their embarrassing relatives — says a lot about the way the mentally handicapped are regarded and treated in this society. They are locked away in frightening establishments and, if not entirely forgotten about, then regarded with a mixture of morbid fascination and horror.

The Queen Mum, of course, is patron of Mencap — the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults. Mencap campaigns against families dumping people on the state.

Meanwhile, Tuesday's *Sun* reported that another mental health charity has put an interesting proposal to the Queen. "We must bring mental health out into the open", said Chris Heginbotham of the organisation MIND. "The Royal Family are like any other family and mental illness can strike them too".

"The Queen should visit Miss Bowes-Lyon and be seen with her. That would show that they appreciate her worth as a human being — regardless of her mental health. The public could have learned from their example".

Somehow I don't think Her Majesty is likely to take up that suggestion.

GRAFFITI

For the man who has it all...

"Private property" wrote Marx "has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it..." Capitalism today is making people so 'stupid and one-sided' that this applies not only to objects but to children.

In the US, William and Elizabeth Stern have just won a court case for custody of a baby against the baby's mother, Mary Beth Whitehead. The Sterns had paid for the baby in a 'surrogate mother' deal, and the judge decided that a deal is a deal. The well-off Sterns had a right to value for money from the working-class Mary Beth.

William Pierce, president of the US National Committee for Adoption, commented aptly: "No matter how it's described, it's baby selling. And once it becomes all right to sell a child who is created on purpose, then it becomes all right to sell



William Stern with his prize a child who is created accidentally. It may not even be too far fetched to imagine the day when the chic Christmas present for the people who have everything is a really expensive baby...



Manchester school student strike against JTS last week

Chink in JTS armour

Your report on JTS fails to provide a deep enough analysis on the weakness of the trade union position — for which the TUC must bear a considerable amount of blame.

Recognition of this weakness is important in considering what kind of campaign should be mounted at the present stage of implementation of JTS.

Correct, certain unions (NATFHE, NALGO, TGWU) have wholly or partially come out against JTS. However, if a close look is taken at how implementation is being organised, it is possible to see that this opposition has, to a maximum extent, been circumvented.

For example, your report's reference to "off the job" training not being guaranteed in JTS is not strictly true. There is a component of training in JTS called "directed training" which is "off the job" training to the degree that it "takes place outside the day to day pressures of a job" (the MSC's own description of it). This training must comprise 300 hours of an overall placement and can, in fact, take place on employers' premises using audio and other materials supplied by e.g. the Open Tech from a computerised network.

Quite obviously, this is a ploy to circumvent NATFHE opposition where it can bite, by providing employers with an avenue out of sending trainees to Colleges of Further Education for their "off the job" element.

In Glasgow, the planning of JTS implementation is going ahead without, as yet, "contracting in" CFEs as providers, evidently on the basis that much "directed training" will occur on employers' premises or by the "flexible" use of training centres which are not CFEs (or more to the point, covered by NATFHE members).

Technically, the MSC can say that it is offering "off the job" training.

Second, NALGO's position of opposition can simply be circumvented by postponing or suspending any "contracting in" of local authorities as JTS providers. In Glasgow, this appears to have happened. NALGO's stand does not have much effect where the MSC can, as in the case of Glasgow, more than fill its placement target (5,500 in 12 months) from the demand of private sector Managing Agents and providers.

What your reporter does not show is that JTS is an example of the MSC at its devious best in containing (and taking the fire out of) labour movement pressure.

The real problem, which again your reporter largely ignores, is the complete preposterousness of the TUC's position on JTS and how this is, in fact, very damaging to trade union perceptions.

Most of the TUC's "points of action", supposedly aimed to "improve JTS," rely upon an effective trade union representation in Area Manpower Boards which will be at the centre of "planning, monitoring and evaluating JTS." In reality, Area Manpower Boards will have no role to play in JTS (although they will be kept informed to keep trades council reps, who are foolish enough to think that such amounts to having power, happy).

What is so absurd about the TUC position is that it is well known, and has been known for quite a while, that AMBs will have only the most peripheral role and yet the TUC still clings to the myth that these bodies will be central. (A major part of any campaign against JTS must be to explode the illusion that the MSC is a neutrally representative body).

The TUC's position has a very damaging impact on those unions in support of it. It both perpetuates the myth that trade unions should wait to primarily exert influence (at some stage) through AMBs and it deflects attention from those points where a trade union campaign can obstruct

JTS but where, at present, JTS is just slipping through. This is action at regional, area or shopfloor level of individual union organisations when such are approached by providers and Managing Agents to lend their support over planned JTS placements.

If the unions are to exert any influence on JTS now (and it must be not only to boycott but also obstruct the policy), the action which needs to be taken should be at those points where Managing Agents are required to obtain the support of appropriate and recognised trade unions for placements in their own companies.

This is a chink in what otherwise seems to be the virtually impregnable armour of the MSC as under MSC policy guidelines, a placement cannot be validated without trade union support being shown.

CHRIS LAMB,
Glasgow Campaign
Against Social
Security Cuts

An appeal for children

George Brooks, a sacked miner from Bevercotes NUM is participating in a sponsored Marathon to the Yorkshire Miners' Gala, in Barnsley, on 20th June. The proceeds from this event will go to help the children of all Nottinghamshire sacked miners to go on holiday this Summer. It is estimated that the total cost of this will be over £4,000. Please give your most generous support for this cause. Thank you.

Contact: Mrs K Lees, 36 Chestnut Drive, New Ollerton, Newark, Notts.

Send letters to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. No more than 300 words, please, or we may have to make cuts.

Workers' links in N. Ireland?

'Thunder and Lightning', 'Proud to be a Prod', and 'Blood and Thunder' are the top three in the 'Loyalist Top Twenty' in April's edition of the Ulster Defence Association newsletter 'Ulster'.

Once again, however, the magazine contains items at odds with its general ultra-right drift

which show the contradictions in working class Orangeism. A column entitled 'Reflections' suggests that "working class organisations" should outflank the professional politicians and "take the task of political and social change directly into their own hands."

Working class discus-

sion groups should be set up in every area. And: "If Protestants begin to feel more comfortable speaking their minds honestly with their own Protestant neighbours, and Catholics likewise, there is nothing to stop any discussion group from inviting speakers from the 'opposite' community to address their group and vice versa.

"I imagine the shock waves caused by such debates wouldn't be the proving that the 'other' side have horns, but rather the very fact both sides have so much in common...Certainly, debate across the community divide will be a more effective weapon for proper social change than any use of force."

It is unlikely that this column reflects more than a small minority in the UDA. But if links could be established between even a tiny minority in the Protestant working class and a counterpart group in the Catholic working class, that would be a great step forward.

The US super-rich

The top 10% in the US own a staggering 72% of the wealth there, leaving only 28% for everyone else. And the super-rich 0.5% own 35% — more than the bottom 90%.

The US is the world's foremost 'shareholder democracy', with a much bigger proportion of the population owning some company shares than in other countries. But 43% of all company shares are owned by that same 0.5% of the population.

Wealth distribution in the US is more unequal

than in other advanced capitalist countries, and becoming more unequal still. The Federal Reserve Board, on whose figures these results are based, has tried to throw doubt on them, but the magazine *Dollars and Sense* reports that "there's no reason to think that the Fed's revision provides a more accurate picture...a completely independent method of estimating wealth concentration produced results basically in line with the original survey results."

Another law for Tory lawyers

Keith Best should thank his lucky stars he is not a miner. Crossing the law, or just being in the wrong place when the police charged into a picket line, could cost him a prison sentence and the loss of his job.

Instead, Keith Best is a lawyer and an MP for the party of Law and Order, the Tories. And the law is gentler and more polite with such people.

Best cheated to get more than his share of the government's hand-out to the well-off when they privatised British Telecom in 1984. The share prices were bound to zoom immediately after the sell-off, so buying BT shares was a no-risk double-your-money game.

Buyers were limited to

800 shares. Best cheated by sending in six applications from four different addresses (it helps to have four different addresses, of course) and using different combinations of his

names.

The form said that buyers could only make one application for shares, but barrister Best says he did not think he was doing anything illegal.

Union rises again

The Tories think that they have seen off Britain's trade unions, and the US Administration, with union memberships falling rapidly there, is probably even more confident.

But the working class is not beaten as easily as that. Less than six years after the US air traffic controllers' union PATCO

was smashed by all its members being fired, a new air traffic controllers' union is organising.

The new union, NATCA, has secured a ballot on union recognition under US law by getting a petition signed by nearly half the workforce. The ballot takes place this month.

Defend Black Sections!

By Payman Rezai

Kinnock and Hattersley have once again decided to attack Black Sections' organisation within the Labour Party.

At the last NEC a motion was passed which threatened disciplinary action against Black Sections activists.

Black Sections was denounced as a 'separatist caucus based on skin-colour'. Black Sections was therefore different from other internal caucuses in the Party and can no longer be tolerated.

The immediate pretext for these at-

RACE AND CLASS

tacks was the recent Black Section conference in Nottingham. At the conference a 'black manifesto' for the election was presented. Like others on the left, Black Sections activists know that the current Labour programme is inadequate and so have drawn up one which makes demands of a future Labour government. On employment policy, for instance, Black Sections call for an American-style 'affirmative action' programme

including quotas of the newly created jobs to black people.

The implications of some of these policies need debate within the party.

What is more probably the cause of the attacks is that the leadership feels that the left will not stand up in the current pre-election campaign to defend Black Sections.

Six black Prospective Parliamentary Candidates have already been selected, including Dianne Abbott, Russell Proffit, and Bernie Grant. The party leadership has already shown its hostility to Black Section involvement in selection of candidates. It is a possibility that expulsion may be proposed.

Any disciplinary action must be vigorously resisted in the Constituency Labour Parties.



Paul Whetton (left) Jimmy Lees (right)

300 miners still sacked!

Paul Whetton, branch secretary of Bevercotes NUM branch, was sacked on 18 February 1986. On 19 February 1987 an Industrial Tribunal unanimously found that he had been unfairly dismissed, and by a majority that this was for trade union activities. Paul is still waiting to hear from the Coal Board about his reinstatement.

Paul Whetton's case, like Mick McGinty's and Geoff Poulter's, was not covered by Coal Board boss Sir Robert Haslam's 'independent review because the case was not "strike related"'.

We need to remember what originally initiated Haslam's review of the cases of the sacked miners: it was an attempt to take the steam out of industrial action that was developing in Yorkshire and Durham, not because of a commitment towards sacked and victimised miners.

The results of the 'review' have now been announced. 135 are to be

**By Paul Whetton
Bevercotes NUM
Branch Secretary**

reemployed, and of those 21 already have their jobs back. Over 300 still remain sacked. The major issue now is what will happen to those hundreds of miners that the Coal Board is condemning to a lifetime on the dole? It is a question that needs to be addressed by the sacked miners themselves, by the NUM, and by the broad trade

union and labour movement. It cannot be brushed under the carpet. We need to show these men that they are not forgotten, and that we are determined as ever to get them their jobs back.

Certain things should be done immediately. We need a commitment from the Labour Party to shove the Justice for Mineworkers Bill through as soon as they form a government. It will not be a difficult thing to do. However, there is a danger of relying entirely on the return of a Labour government, as some Area officials and others are doing.

This special Socialist Organiser pullout is produced to help further the campaign in defence of the sacked miners.

It is fine if we get a Labour government and if that government fulfills its pledges. We have some form of commitment from Neil Kinnock, Stan Orme and others, but are they going to fulfill these promises? We know we will have a battle on our hands to make that happen — but that is something we will cheerfully do.

The fact is we need a Labour government like we have never needed one before, and we will be out there campaigning for one. We need one not just for the sacked miners, but also for rebuilding the mining industry.

But what if we do not get one or there is a hung Parliament? We cannot just throw up our hands and say 'tough luck lads, you are sacked and it looks like it will stay like that'. We need to build some action on the issue.

I hear certain leaders saying the

lads are not ready for it. They are wrong. We have seen the battle the Nottinghamshire miners have put up against tremendous odds to retain their union; we have seen the action taken at pits the length and breadth of the country.

The records show that 28% of all strikes last year were in mining. The Coal Board thought they had got us whipped when the strike was called off, and that they could carry out any sort of programme against us.

There has been a very militant reaction against this type of thinking. Miners are not prepared to lay down and let bosses walk all over them just because we lost the strike. They are prepared to stand up and fight back. And I think there will be a response on the issue of the sacked and victimised miners as long as the question

turn to centre pages

Justice for the Mineworkers

A story of victimisation

There are 29 sacked miners in the Notts coalfield now. Two were reinstated shortly after the strike — they were on small offences like stealing coal. Apart from them nobody else has been reinstated.

The Coal Board will not talk to us, so we are at the mercy of industrial tribunals, in which we have not got much faith. We have won seven, with reinstatement ordered in four. But the Board has not complied.

We thought that Haslam might consider a number of the cases in his 'review'. However, I always thought he was going to be hardline.

He said he was not going to deal with anybody who had been to a tribunal and lost, nor anybody who, in his words, had been "involved in acts of violence". That can mean all things to all men. We have had men done for minor scuffles in clubs or on the street, with no criminal charges. But presumably for Haslam those are incidents with "violence".

In Notts the sackings are part of the Coal Board's strategy to keep the NUM down and the UDM up.

Those who have been dismissed since the dispute — people like Whetton, McGinty and Poulter are men who have been very successful in recruiting to the NUM. It is no coincidence that the three best recruiters, who were branch officials at the pits with the highest recruitment, have been dismissed. It is a calculated manoeuvre by the Board, and this has since been confirmed by the results of Paul Whetton's tribunal.

Then, for those who had been sacked at the end of the strike, we had the excuse that they could not be set on because of the bitter antagonism that existed between them and the majority who had been working. We were told they would not be accepted. But the strike has now been over for two years. We have NUM and UDM men working together and a lot of the bitterness has died away.

We maintain that all the 29 are victimised. But there are examples that really stand out.

We have some pits in the Nottinghamshire coalfield that are geographically in Derbyshire — Bolsover and Cresswell. They are surrounded by Derbyshire pits and during the strike there was a lot of inter-

mingling between the Notts and Derbyshire NUM members. Derbyshire was all out on strike.

There was an incident at Whitwell, a Derbyshire pit. Two scabs had been enticed back by the Board, and they were being brought in by car at night with police escorts from Worksop. They played cards all night in a cabin on the pit top, surrounded by the police — it was part of the Board's strategy to break the strike.

32 men lined the pit lane the scabs had to go through at the end of the shift and put a barricade up. The police car ran into the barricade; the Coal Board van carrying the scabs ran into the back of the police car; and another police car ran into the back of the van! Not a lot of damage was done — in fact, £49 worth to the Coal Board van. The men scattered but two were identified. The Board said they would drop charges against them if they returned to work, which they did.

Evidence

Of the other 30, 27 were from Whitwell and three from Cresswell, a Notts pit. All were charged with unlawful assembly. When it came to court, seven months later, still during the dispute, the two who had been enticed back gave evidence against the others.

However, in this case for once, the judge, Justice Skinner, tried to put a bit of sanity back into it. He stopped the trial and said he thought it wrong that these working miners had to give evidence against their mates, and that he hoped that when the strike was over they would all work together. He appealed to all sides to come to some form of agreement.

There was then a meeting with the lads and barristers where it was agreed that, if they pleaded guilty, they would be given a lenient sentence — in fact, they got community service and a £7 fine. And the Board undertook in court, and put it in writing, that the men would all get

their jobs back when the dispute was over. On that understanding all the 30 men pleaded guilty.

When the dispute finished all the 27 Whitwell men were reinstated immediately, but the three Cresswell miners were refused. They are still dismissed.

The excuse of the Board in Notts was that the written undertaking was given by the Training Officer and not by the manager. But in almost all cases of hiring and firing at the pit the Training Officer is the man delegated to do the job. So it is a pretext to break a clear written agreement, given in court, which is the only reason the men pleaded guilty in the first place.

It was the same employer, the same offence, but three men were segregated out of 30 and not reinstated.

The only correspondence I have had from the Board, when I have written protesting cases like this, is that they are not prepared to consider any sacked miner in Notts for reinstatement. Since then we had Sir Robert Haslam's 'review'. He had our papers for three months and we got nothing.

We support the sacked miners financially, with weekly payments. It is a difficult job — a very expensive item supporting 29 out of a membership of 5,000. But we undertook that we would not betray them, and we are maintaining them.

We have also set up a day release course in conjunction with the Derbyshire union to give them something to do.

Basically there is nothing much more we can do at this stage; it is a question of biding our time. I am amazed at the fortitude they have got. They all want their jobs back at the pit.

My view is that if there is going to be any patching up it will never happen, or even begin to happen with the Board or anyone else, until these lads are all reinstated.

Nationally there used to be a Hardship Fund for the sacked and victimised men, which was tremendous. Initially it was financing 1000 men, which then went down to 500. Payments were running at £20,000 a week — £1 million a year. We were able to maintain that until other unions also ran up against the Trade Union Acts, and like SOGAT got their own members sacked. In fact, the National Hardship Fund has not completely dried up, but there is not enough money coming in to pay out regularly, so it has fallen back on the Areas — it is now their responsibility.

The support we have had from the rank and file of the labour movement as a whole, whatever their political persuasion, has been tremendous. But we still have to recognise the difficulties. People think 'everybody is back at work now', 'the sacked miners have been reinstated' and so on. Our job is to explain what is really happening, so we send sacked miners out to speak at meetings all over the country.

I am not going to blame the rank and file people. The fault is elsewhere. We certainly have not had the support from the leadership, either the TUC or the Labour Party,



Henry Richardson

which we should have had.

Apart from the statements at Labour Party Conference, we have had a personal commitment from Neil Kinnock that he would review all our cases and "reinstat all victimised miners". My own view is that with the return of a Labour government the vast majority will be reinstated, but they will fudge the issue on cases involving serious violence or where miners have gone to jail. He is talking about 'victimised miners' — he could start saying 'what is victimisation, what is not?'. But as long as there is one man still sacked we will still have victimised miners.

I have to admit I do not trust them 100%. I do not think they will break their word as blatantly as they did over the Clay Cross councillors, but I fear that some men will be left out in the cold. We have got to keep the pressure up.

In the Notts coalfield the biggest enemy we face is the Coal Board, not the UDM, the biggest problem we face is non-recognition, not being able to represent our members properly, not being able to negotiate for them.

Once the Coal Board gives us recognition there is no doubt that men will begin to flood back to us. The Coal Board know it; the UDM know it. We have got an undertaking from the Labour Party, which I think they will honour, that they will return to the 1946 Conciliation Agreement, which will give us recognition.

As soon as the breakaway came into existence we recruited about 3500 straight away back into the NUM. Since then we have gone up to about

4900. We have done this despite the Coal Board introducing major cuts in the Notts coalfield. Since the strike 9000 men have left the industry here. On the Coal Board's own figures the working men available for both unions, the UDM and the NUM, is around 21,000. We have 4900, so on that figure the UDM is down to something like 16,000. Remember, anybody who has not chosen to join the NUM is automatically in the UDM.

Out of the 9000 men made redundant the vast majority were UDM members. We have lost 400-500 men since we started recruiting, but we have more than made that up by recruiting new people. We have kept our figure steady at just under 5000; but the UDM has been losing heavily in this coalfield. In addition they are virtually dead in the other coalfields except for South Derbyshire and a few men in Durham. On a generous estimate, that amounts to 2000 members and therefore a national total of less than 20,000.

The original aim of the UDM and the Coal Board was for them to recruit 60,000 members in their first year, by December 1985. After that the UDM was hoping to pick up what they saw as thousands of disillusioned miners — those who had gone back to work when the strike began to crumble towards the end. But their figure of 60,000 by Christmas did not happen. The vast majority of men who went back to work were forced out of hardship and were still loyal to the NUM. So that strategy failed and with it all their projections about numbers of officials and so on. They cannot survive financially on 20,000.

To be realistic, if they had got that 60,000 they might have been able to break the NUM. But they failed, and the NUM has got 85% of the membership nationally. Because of this the Coal Board increasingly sees them as a disadvantage rather than an advantage.

The people who want the UDM there are the government. My fear is that if the Tories get back in they will promote them as hard as they can. The UDM leadership mixes quite openly with the Tories. They are an-

An appeal for children's holiday

Dear Colleagues,

We are hoping, once again, to organise a holiday for our sacked miners children during 1987. You are aware of the financial difficulties all our sacked miners are suffering, and this organised holiday is the only hope our children have of obtaining a holiday this year.

We have received tremendous support from you in the past and although I hesitate to impose on your good offices again, I very much hope that your organisation will be able to assist us.

Now that I have the experience of organising one holiday, I am able to estimate that we will need between £4,500 and £5,000, which would pay for the cost of the holiday and provide a small amount of pocket money for the children.

My very grateful thanks for your support in the past and my hope for your continued support for this holiday.

Yours sincerely,
Kate Lees

All donations to be sent to:
36 Chestnut Drive, New Ollerton,
Newark, Notts.

My two years in jail for fighting for jobs — by miner Terry French
Available from SO, PO Box 823,
London, SE15 4NA. 40p + p&p

Justice for the Mineworkers

300 miners still sacked!

from front page

was put fairly and squarely. Added to that are all the other issues now raising their head. The Wheeler plan; the Margam issue and continental shifts; the lengthening of hours and the scrapping of the 1908 Act. They can all be used by the union to reunite the NUM and again shove it to the forefront in the battle against the Tories.

In Nottinghamshire we are still recruiting to the NUM. At Bevercotes my sacking did have an effect, and recruitment was stopped for a while. That has now changed: they are not flooding back, but coming back in ones and twos. We are recruiting enough to replace those members who are leaving the industry or being made redundant; the UDM is not. They are constantly losing members.

The sacked miners here are well organised. Initially we were faced with the situation that the NUM was not going to be able to give us much help — they had virtually no facilities, unlike the other NUM Areas. The 24 sacked at the end of the strike were therefore faced with having to set up their own organisation and, despite all the difficulties they faced, that is still going. They still meet regularly; they still send people out to get across the message; they still raise funds.

The women are also very active. Last year they managed to raise enough money to send sacked miners and their kids on holiday. If it had not been for people like Kate Lees that would not have happened any other way.

We are still pushing for a national conference of all the sacked miners. We need to discuss how we are going to get back the jobs of *all* the sacked miners. Initially that needs to be done by the sacked miners themselves coming together, talking over their problems, deciding what avenues to explore and which ways to raise the issues; then take that to the national union and ask for their support; then take that to the Labour Party and the trade unions. If the issue of the sacked miners is going to be a main platform then it should be the sacked miners themselves who initiate the process and argue out what needs to be done. Obviously this does not prevent other people with ideas bringing them forward.

Sacked miners are out there, organising. We have got a union to rebuild. There is a commitment from

sacked miners to rebuild that union, and we need that commitment returning to us in the fight to get back our jobs.

It seems to me that we have got the task of (a) within the Notts coalfield rebuilding our union and burying the UDM and (b) rebuilding the shop stewards movement over the length and breadth of the country. Whatever shade of government we get in we are going to have a battle to protect jobs, industries and communities, and the rank and file will be vital to that.

It needs to be organised, motivated and channelled in the right direction. It is not an easy job but we cannot duck the issue. If we do not get that rank and file organisation then we are going to be shat on — and not necessarily by the Tories but by our own leaders in the trade unions and Labour Party. We need to organise not only within industries but across them and across the community.

I hope this is going to happen within the NUM. At one time we had a very good broad left movement within the NUM but the strike has caused a lot of problems. Once we have overcome these problems, like rebuilding the union in Notts, then I hope it will happen again.

I can well understand people today feeling demoralised and depressed. The working class always has had and always will have a fight on its hands. It is no good saying 'sod it, I've had enough' and then sitting back. That is giving in to them, and will only give the other side greater rein to do what the hell they like. But people will not accept the bosses walking all over us.

I certainly think that issues like the sacked and victimised miners are important in order to build other issues around. Many people get depressed; they get sick and tired of banging their heads against a brick wall. We have to build around the issue in order to take the labour movement forward again. There is no way round that. It is the only option we have got.



tagonistic to Labour because they fear that the return of a Labour government will mean that their days will be numbered.

Despite this the response of the Labour leadership has been very disappointing. It was our belief that under the Labour Party's constitution you could not be a member of both the UDM and the Party. But we agreed that, in order to help build bridges, we would lay off trying to expel individual members. We will do that as long as the Labour Party keeps its word about non-recognition.

But we will insist that, if the UDM carry out their threat to field candidates against Labour, then all UDM members should be expelled from the Labour Party. We know we will have difficulties with that.

The Labour Party could have done more as a party. They have been trying to play it cool. They have neither let us down nor given us a lot of assistance.

Some of the Labour Party membership in the county have been the same. They have been embarrassed by the situation and have wanted to ride both horses. The MPs have been disgraceful.

We knew where Concannon stood. He was with the UDM, and he was a bastard. But Haynes and Ashton were trying to ride both horses, instead of deciding which side they were on. We had to make up our mind which side we were on. Our lads could have had an easy ride by joining the breakaway but they did not. They made their commitment, battled during the strike and are battling now. These MPs should have done the same.

The response has been completely different from other MPs, like Dennis Skinner, and members throughout the country. It has been tremendous.

We are battling on. Despite non-recognition and our inability to represent our members except in common law claims, we are holding firm and the UDM is dwindling rapidly. I also now see a chink of light at the end of the road.

Last year the Board only allowed

us to hold our political fund ballot at the 12th hour, when we threatened to take them to court. Last July they refused to let us have ballots for branch officials on Coal Board premises. But this year they have changed. They conceded full facilities to run ballots at the pit head for our NEC and Vice-Presidential elections.

We have also, for the first time in 18 months, received complete check-off lists from the Board. We have wanted this for a long time. We know there are about 700 men who have signed forms to have their money sent to the NUM but whose subscriptions are not being stopped to us. Now that we know who they are we can change that. It is another big breakthrough.

Majority

At Bolsover we now have one colliery in the Nottinghamshire Area that has an NUM majority and there are several pits where we have close to 40%.

During the first 12 months of the breakaway it was absolutely scandalous what the Board did — intimidation against NUM members, segregation, giving them the worst jobs. To a degree that is now beginning to lessen off, and has been since MacGregor went. Locally the situation is improving except where the manager is a hardliner. Our lads are very patient and are prepared to keep chipping away.

I can see that things have changed nationally because, as a member of the NEC, I am on delegations that meet Haslam. One of the absurdities of the present situation is that I can meet the Board nationally, but when I come back to Nottinghamshire I am refused access to even go and talk to a pit manager.

The real change though will happen if we get a Labour government. If we do not and the Tories get back, then everything could be reversed. There is no doubt we will have a hard time.

Since the end of the strike there has been a tremendous run-down in manpower. Hucknall-Babbington and now Newstead have closed. Many

pits have become 'uneconomical'. Out of the 24 pits in Nottinghamshire only 7 are making a profit. If the Board carry on with their programme there are four or five pits here immediately in jeopardy.

If the Tories get back in it will be even worse, because they will privatise the pits and then the privateers will close them. If their strategy is carried through we will be talking about seven pits left in Notts with about 12,000 men, who will be further reduced by the introduction of new technology. If the Labour Party get in and call a halt to it, then my fear is that some of the pits will be seen as 'uneconomic' and closed anyway. Pits like Blidworth and Cresswell are in jeopardy now, as well as Mansfield.

It is no joy to us to say to UDM members we told you so. When we were out on strike we were saying 'never mind your ballots, you have got to fight for your jobs because they are as much in jeopardy as anybody else's'. But the viewpoint of many was 'we're alright Jack, they'll never touch the Notts coalfield, it's the best in the country, it's the safest'. Now it is being proved we were right and they were wrong.

We have won over UDM members. Recently one came into the office on a common law claim. He said to me: 'I'm a worker. I did not strike but I know now that you were right.' We accepted him back into the NUM. We will accept the workers back in. However, a lot of people who are now in the UDM and know we were right are still sitting on the fence and waiting for us to get recognition. You get this at the pit: 'I'll join you when you get a union office' and so on. Our answer is we want them now so that we can get recognition; they have got it the wrong way round. I think that some of the most apathetic are beginning to get worried and seeing that things are happening as we forecast.

The UDM's tack now is that it was all caused by Scargill: it was the strike that caused the closures! Obviously we know this is nonsense and it is Scargill's forecasts that are proving correct.

BACK BENN'S BILL

JUSTICE FOR MINeworkers BILL

A Bill to:

provide for a review of all cases of miners jailed as a result of the 1984-85 dispute in the mining industry, for the reinstatement of miners sacked for activities arising out of the dispute, for the reimbursement of monies confiscated as a result of fines, sequestration and receivership; and for purposes connected therewith.

Whereas during the heroic struggle of all who have been associated with the Miners Strike 1984-85, the National Union of Mineworkers and its membership have been the subject of a concerted and vicious attack by the whole power of the State, including the unprecedented and combined power of the police and the organised use of the judiciary by whom an order of sequestration was imposed and replaced by a receiver appointed to run the affairs of an independent trade union; and whereas a great injustice was inflicted upon the National Union of Mineworkers and its members and the members of other unions who assisted in the campaign to defend pits, jobs and mining communities;

and whereas it is right and proper for these injustices to be rectified and remedied by the State through the enactment of legislation for that purpose:

Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and of the Commons, in the present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

- 1) Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department shall immediately review the cases of all miners jailed as a result of the 1984-85 mining dispute, and of all those who took part in the dispute and were punished for acts done in good faith for the purpose of safeguarding jobs, living standards, services or civil liberties, and following such review the Secretary of State shall grant free pardons wherever appropriate.
- 2) All persons to whom this Act applies shall be required to be offered reinstatement by the National Coal Board or other employer at their place of work, or at an alternative and suitable place of work without any loss of service or benefit.
- 3) Those who on grounds of retirement, health or other reasons are not able or willing to accept reinstatement shall be fully compensated for the financial losses that they have suffered as a result of their dismissal.
- 4) The National Union of Mineworkers and all other unions which were associated with them in the said dispute shall be reimbursed by the Treasury for all those sums confiscated from them as a result of fines or otherwise expenditure and arising out of the appointment of a Receiver of their expenses of a Minister of the Crown incurred in consequence of the provisions of this Act, including any increase attributable to those provisions in sums payable under any other Act shall be defrayed out of money provided by Parliament.
- 5) This Act shall come into force upon the date which the Royal Assent is given.
- 6) This Act may be cited as the Justice for Mineworkers Act 1986.

We urge you to sponsor and support this bill through your organisation.

Justice for the Mineworkers

The NCB wants to stop the NUM recruiting

My victimisation started in February 1986 when I was summoned to the manager's office and told that I would not be allowed to carry NUM literature onto NCB premises. Nor could I bring up the subject of unions in my own time in the canteen. I was told threateningly that the manager would be informed if people gathered around me in the canteen. I felt then that the manager and the NCB were trying to take away my freedom and individual liberty, and I decided to go to an industrial tribunal and complain of harassment.

What NUM literature was I carrying? Recruitment forms! All branch officials and committee men carried forms, and I was the NUM branch delegate.

In fact I had managed to recruit those who had gone to work during the strike. We talked about the strike, and I explained that our differences had to be sorted out because the only way forward for us as miners was by being all together.

That is what the Coal Board wanted to stop.

On 10 October 1986 I was dismissed. Between then and February this year there were no recruits to the NUM. The 360 members at the pit — out of 1000 — were all recruited before then. The same thing happened at Bevercotes when Paul Whetton was sacked. When the Board got rid of a prominent NUM official, men were frightened off. That was the idea.

The Friday I was sacked, 70 night shift men walked out. On the Sunday our branch meeting decided to hold a day of action. A meeting on the Tuesday night decided to hold a 24 hour strike on the Wednesday. That was very successful. About 98% were out on the afternoon shift, the same on the night shift; and about 60% on the day shift. Many UDM members were involved, both at the Tuesday night open meeting and in the strike.

We have to keep looking at ways of recruiting. Everything is built against us. The Coal Board would not allow us to distribute literature or even talk to people in the canteen. But we just have to find ways to overcome it. We have to explain that men will not get sacked on the spot for joining the NUM and that we can represent them in common law cases, or when they are injured. We have to counter the intimidation.

In the past, after men joined the NUM they were given a lecture when they took their completed forms to the administration block — "you will have no representation here and never will, you will have no rights". So even after we were able to convince people to join they were still faced with an interrogation from the administration officer.

We also have signed statements from members who have been to the administration officer two or three times to instruct them to send their

**By Mick McGinty
Branch delegate
Ollerton, Vice
President
Nottinghamshire
Area NUM**

money to the NUM, but we find it is still going to the UDM. We have threatened them with legal action, but they have just turned around and threatened us with taking away the check-off system for the NUM.

We have to keep at it patiently explaining what is happening at the pit. They are bringing private contractors in; there is the 'Doncaster Option'.

The private contractors come from all over the place while there are young people in Ollerton village who cannot get jobs. At Ollerton pit there is a list of 300-400 young people looking for a job, and there is no other work in the area apart from a small hosiery factory employing 200 women.

The 'Doncaster Option' is a bonus system which favours production workers, where the NUM has its main strength. Those who lose out most with it are the pit top and 'out-by' workers, where the UDM gets its main support.

That is the kind of message we need to get across, and one way to do that is through open meetings in places like the Ollerton/Bevercotes Miners' Welfare. Incidentally, that is the reason for the present campaign to remove NUM influence and control over the Welfare. The last thing the Coal Board wants is open meetings with the NUM and UDM members.

Unlike the Spencer union, which was set up after the defeat of 1926, I think the UDM is going to fade away very quickly. One of the reasons is that in the Spencer era, the Nottinghamshire pits were not faced with a programme of pit closures. The UDM are faced with such a challenge and they failed miserably at the first test, the closure of Hucknall-Babbington. They ran away from it.

I do not think it is being optimistic to expect real changes from the next Labour government, including a complete change in Coal Board management from top to bottom. You never know, we might have Mick McGinty and Paul Whetton as Area Industrial Relations Officers. I was in the fortunate position of being part of an NUM delegation that met Stan Orme and Neil Kinnock in the House of Commons and I came away very pleased with their commitment to the coal industry.

The possibility of a Labour government has also led to some changes of attitude by the Board now. Last year if we had talked about the possibility of holding a pit-head ballot for the national vice-president and for the NEC in Nottinghamshire it would have been unbelievable. But in fact we had that in March this year. We got facilities for a notice board for information on the ballot, and an office to hold the ballot in. That is a softening of attitudes.

A record of the strike

Available from SO,
PO Box 823, London
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I'm going to keep on going

I have been to four industrial tribunals since I was sacked during the strike. The last hearing, at the end of January this year, reversed the original verdict of unfair dismissal and decided that I had been fairly dismissed. I was expecting the result but I am going to keep going until I get a decision.

At the end of the strike we had 24 sacked. Two of those then got their jobs back. There are now 29 sacked.

I personally do not think anybody will get their jobs back here. Since Wheeler was transferred from Scotland to become Area Director we have had not one case of reinstatement.

Haslam's statements about the sacked miners are just hot air. I think a Labour government is the only thing we have to look to — at least with them we will get a review of the cases. However, I do not believe we will all get our jobs back, and particularly people like myself who went to prison during the strike. That is wrong because if one man gets his job back then everyone should.

Stan Orme gave us an assurance at last year's NUM conference that we would all get our jobs back but Kinnock has never done that.

The Labour Party is the only chance we sacked miners have got, and Labour branches should make it an issue during the election. About 20 Labour MPs have said they will support Tony Benn's Justice for Mineworkers Bill; we also need support from the parliamentary candidates so they will back it when they get to the House of Commons. We need to convert them now and get a commitment when they are coming round looking for votes.

The sacked miners in Notts are one of the best organised Areas. We meet every two or three weeks. There is not always a great response, but usually ten come. We discuss our problems. We helped when the women organised a Christmas party last year. We help each other. If somebody needs coal and has not got a car, then somebody with a can can help.

On a national level we have been trying for a long time to get a meeting of all the sacked men. In February we

**By Jimmy Lees
Bevercotes NUM
(Sacked Miner)**

got the issue raised in the Nottinghamshire NUM and hopefully it will go to Conference this year.

We want the national meeting so we can get together and remind people we are still here. But it has proved difficult to get people in other Areas interested in the idea. There are also obstacles being put up. When you go to the rallies and speak to individuals, they are all in favour of it, but as soon as you try to do anything it is getting blocked from somewhere.

There has been some demoralisation. One of the sacked lads here has tried to take his own life. But people are also pissed off. You go to these does once every six weeks and there are people there promising you this and that, but when you see the money that goes at the end of the month to the Solidarity Fund it is peanuts. When you hear the promises again you get to the stage when you say "oh, sod it".

Most of the money is now coming from collections at the pit. The big sums we got from other unions just after the strike have now dried up. The issue seems to have been dropped. However, I think it is our own fault if we are not getting the support. The women in Nottinghamshire last year managed to raise over £3000 in about six weeks to pay for a kids' holiday. The support is still there; we just have to get off our arses and go out and look for it. It is as simple as that.

I am more active in the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign than the

Labour Party. The Campaign covers the whole of the East Midlands. About half the Notts NUM branches are affiliated, and so are a number of other unions. There are normally between 20 and 30 delegates at each meeting. We are planning the September rally in Mansfield with the Notts NUM. There is also the national month of action in April, when we are having the Kirkby rally on 12 April.

This year we are aiming to repeat the week's holiday we had last year for the sacked miners and their families at the Derbyshire miners' holiday camp in Skegness. The women raised the money for that last year and will be doing the same this year — through appeals, raffles, and writing all over the country to trades unions and Labour Parties asking for their support.

Although the Ollerton Women's Support Group folded at the end of the strike, Notts Women Against Pit Closures is still active and so is the Welbeck Women's Group. The organisation and fund-raising done by Kate and the other women has been tremendous.

We are still national members of the NUM with voting rights. I think that all the sacked miners who are active in the '24 Club' go regularly to their branch meetings. The '24 club' is the name for the sacked miners' group in Notts, because that was the number sacked at the end of the strike.

For ways to help the sacked miners see the letters page 4

East Midlands Justice for Mineworkers Rally

"Support the Justice for the Mineworkers Bill"
Speakers: Tony Benn MP, Peter Heathfield NUM, Sharon Atkins PPC Nottingham East, Alan Mede PPC Mansfield, Bill Etherington NUM and JMC
Sunday 12 April 7.30, Festival Hall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Notts.



Ken Loach's latest film

Balancing on the Wall

KEN LOACH'S latest film is 'Fatherland'. Loach's work is known for its political content, in dramas like 'Kes' and 'United Kingdom' and documentaries about the steel strike such as 'A question of leadership'.

'Fatherland' is the story of Klaus Dritteman, a politically motivated rock singer in East Germany. He is anti-Stalinist, a socialist who inevitably cannot practice his job as the authorities take away his licence.

His mother is a card-carrying member of the East German Communist Party and his father, who has 'defected' to the West, is a much respected hero in the Left oppositional circles.

Managing to obtain an exit visa, he leaves behind wife and child and crosses over to the West. A West German record company is trying to sign him up. The story is about his experience of freedom in the West: the inevitable decadence of the record industry, peep shows and hypocritical journalists.

By Payman Rezai

He refuses to play the role of the obliging 'dissident', and attacks the system which produces mass unemployment at an all important (for the record company) press conference.

He refuses to criticise the political tyranny of Stalinist East Germany in front of these journalists and a West German minister.

Then the film focuses on the search for his father (who had fought in the Spanish Civil War) and the discovery of an awful truth about him by Klaus. The film in passing makes reference to many political episodes; the role of Stalinism in the Spanish civil War, the American role in rehabilitating Nazis in post-war Germany, and the ironies of political freedom in the West.

However, the film is very slow moving and undramatic. Also the use of rock as a medium of protest is not very well done and there are many cliché-ridden scenes. Altogether slightly disappointing.



on the
Box

Proud of your union

By Tracy Williams

HAVE you ever watched the 'Media Show'? It is presented by Muriel Gray from the Tube. It is a bit like a magazine programme, lots of gloss but not much content.

Anyway, last week they had a very interesting item about trade unions in America. Or rather, how the unions present themselves in the media.

Bleak

If you think about the situation in Britain, and the average person's image of them, it is a pretty bleak picture really. They would appear to be white, male, northern, their members' sole aim is to get away with being lazy and really not wanting a job in the first place, going out on strike over the slightest matter and always ready to have a bash at the police. The media has made the word 'union' seem like a dirty word; almost as if you should be ashamed of being in one.

However across the Atlantic, in the land of 'Freedom and Democracy', the unions were portrayed in a completely different light. For a kick off various unions openly advertise themselves on the box. 'Hi, my name is Wilma, and I work in our local general store. But more than that, I am in the shop workers' union. I am in the union because I am proud of it. Also, what are you going to work on? An egg?! Me, I go to work on my union card, that's all the strength I need.'

Can you imagine the situation here? That is not to say that all the unions in America are the sort of workers' unions that we would like, but at least they spread a positive concept of unionisation. Adverts also showed white women, black women and black men taking an active role in their union. As one black woman said: 'Hi, I'm in the union because it belongs to me and workers like me. Our place is in the workplace and not just the home.'

Suffered

It is obvious to anybody in a union that we have suffered massive setbacks through Tory legislation — legislation that protects the capitalist bosses and weakens the rights of workers. It is also obvious that our unions must become more democratic and accountable, so that the voice of every worker is as strong as the Hammonds and Deans that sell us out. But one thing we need to fight for in the unions is an end to the apologetic approach which is becoming such a feature of typical 'leadership' in Thatcher's Britain.

There is an awful lot wrong with our unions — and they are paying the terrible price under Thatcher for their inadequacies in the years of the boom and maximum trade union strength.

But there is a lot right with them too. They represent basic working class solidarity and the aspiration to human decency. Even the loudest union is better than the best of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system whose public face is now that of the union busters Tebbit and Thatcher.

Be proud to be in your union!

An Irish might-have-been

HISTORY is written by the victors, and so it was after the 26 Counties of Ireland won separation from Britain in 1922 and the remaining six assumed Home Rule under the Westminster Parliament.

Thereafter history in the South was written from the standpoint of the Southern bourgeoisie, and according to the historical outlook of physical-force republicanism. In the North history was written from the triumphant Unionist point of view.

And not only is history written by the victors. What has happened in history seems in retrospect to have happened inevitably. The result is that all the might-have-beens vanish, discredited and often scorned, into the void.

For the 50 years during which Lloyd George's Partition settlement seemed to have led to a stable Ireland, divided into two hostile

By Paddy Dollard

states, there was not much interest in the many might-have-beens of Irish history. To tell the truth, there was not much real history.

There were 'stories agreed upon', encrusted with myth, special pleading and nationalist and Unionist pieties.

It began to change in the '60s, and it changed with a vengeance once the IRA's war provided proof that the 1922 partition had not 'settled' the Irish question. Irish historical research and publishing became a growth industry.

Cooperative

It reminds me of Orson Welles' much-quoted comment that while war-ridden Renaissance Italy produced Michelangelo and Leonardo da

Vinci, 500 years of sleepy peace in Switzerland produced — 'the cuckoo clock'.

The hero of 'Horace Plunkett, Cooperation and Politics' by Trevor West* was a Southern Unionist and a landlord. He founded the cooperative movement which contributed to transforming the lot of Irish farmers by way of self-help.

He was one of those who brought about what must have been one of the strangest conferences in history, that in which representatives of the Irish landlord class and of the peasants met over Christmas 1902 and worked out the terms on which the landlords would agree — after decades of bitter conflict, and centuries of landlord oppression of the farmers — to be bought out by them.

Afterward the British Tory government obligingly organised the finances of the deal. It was enshrined in the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 which broke the back of the old

landlordism in Ireland — by consent.

After the 1916 uprising, which galvanised nationalist Ireland and put the previously marginal physical-force Republicans at the centre of the political stage, Plunkett and others tried (in 1917) to achieve Dominion Home Rule for a united Ireland (the same status as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa).

Conscription

The British government's attempt to introduce conscription to Ireland tipped the balance in favour of Sinn Fein and of complete separation from Britain. In turn that ruled out whatever chance there may have been of reconciliation between Protestant and Catholic Ireland.

Ireland was torn apart. The scene was set for the eruption, after 50 years' oppression of Northern Ireland's Catholics, of the present conflict with its threat of full-scale civil war.

The labour movement in Britain and in Ireland needs to study Irish history — history, not the myths and emotional catchcries of either side — because that is the only way to understand the bitter division in the Irish working class.

The study of the 'might-have-beens' is of great value because what 'has-in-fact-been' for the last 65 years is manifestly unviable, threatening to lead to something worse, and even to a Lebanese level of communal conflict.

It is necessary to take a critical look at how we got into this mess — and at the might-have-beens. West's book is of great value here.

* 'Horace Plunkett, Cooperation and Politics' by Trevor West. Colin Smythe/Catholic University of America Press, £12.95.

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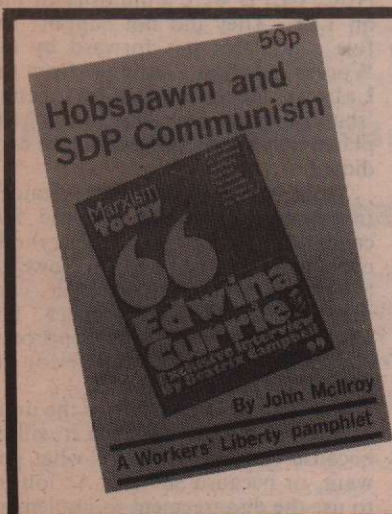
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Black youth and the Labour Party

— a reply to Black Sections

John Bloxam and Mark Osborn reply to Narendra Makanji of Black Sections, who recently argued in the pages of SO that we should support the Black Sections candidate in the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Dear Narendra,

Youth Fightback will be standing a candidate for the LPYS place on the Labour Party National Executive, as our tendency has for the past eleven years.

We do not accept the view that one section of the trade union and labour movement, whatever the special oppression it faces, has the right to dictate what other sections of that movement do or say.

The labour movement needs democracy like a body needs oxygen. Rational debate and discussion, testing ideas in practice — only thus can we decide what is correct, not by who said it.

Are black people the only people with the right to a view on racism and how to fight it? Black people, despite the common experience of racism, disagree politically. There are black socialists and black nationalists. You say that Labour Party Black Section represents black youth; Darcus Howe has written a pamphlet saying the Black Section represents the black petit-bourgeoisie. In South Africa there are disagreements between the 'black consciousness' movement (which you support), the ANC and the 'workerists' in the trade unions. How is colour of skin to determine who is right on such issues?

Socialist Organiser has consistently supported and fought for the right of black people and women to organise separately in both the trade unions and the Party, both as a basic democratic right and because of the role separate organisation can play in fighting against the special oppression and discrimination that black people and women face within our own movement.

We argued this long before Labour Party Black Section was formed, including in the YS against Militant. Socialist Organiser has supported, from the very beginning, the fight for Labour Party Black Sections to have constitutional status within the Party. However, we do not believe that this active support means that we should automatically agree with everything you do or say. Support is not the same as sycophancy; solidarity is not an alternative to dialogue and debate.

Yet Kingsley Abrams said this in the Black Sections Newsletter of Spring 1986: "...although Kingsley's demonstrated he's the true militant candidate in the election with his support for workers in struggle, elements on the Left like Socialist Organiser have snubbed him. They refuse to recognise that solidarity with the oppressed means supporting those people whom groups like Black Sections say best represent them. For predominantly White groups not to do so is racist." (p.11). A number of your leading members have also accused us of being 'racist'.

These are the politics of guilt tripping and irrational demagoguery; they are the opposite of argument, debate and reason. Judged on what we say and do in the class struggle — the real test — it is a slender.

As regards the LPYS NEC place, there seems to be some misunderstanding. We were Militant's candidate in



Newham 7 demonstration photo Carlos Guarita (Reflex)

possibly win the NEC position in 1987.

Last year Kingsley picked up 37 votes, including all the Labour Coordinating Committee's; the Youth Fightback candidate got 10. Militant had enough votes not only to overwhelmingly elect Linda Douglas, but also to clearly win the runner-up position as well. In this situation the reasons for standing are to campaign and to make propaganda.

Youth Fightback will not cost Steve Jamoa a place on the NEC, nor stop Black Sections making propaganda for their candidate. And how can our candidate be against Black Sections when she will clearly state her support for Black Sections' right to Labour Party recognition?

Congratulated

Comrades from Youth Fightback and Socialist Organiser have proved themselves year after year at YS conferences, submitting motions and arguing for pro-Black Sections and anti-racist politics against Militant. Marc Wadsworth even congratulated an SO supporter last year for making the best speech in support of Black Sections.

At the LPYS Summer Camp 1985, for example, we debated Militant on the Black Sections question, and defended the rights of the Liverpool Black Caucus against Militant in a very violent atmosphere. Neither Black Sections nor any of the present supporters of Steve's campaign were there.

We are clearly seen as being the organised, campaigning left opposition to the Militant in the LPYS. And in a conference where few opposition speakers are taken we have a right to make use of the five minutes allotted for the leading speech for the NEC place.

Militant have a thought-out and, in its own way, coherent programme for

working class people. A proportion of working class youth are genuinely attracted to their ideas. If we are to build a movement that can replace the Militant in the LPYS it will have to be built on policies that stand up to debate with the LPYS leadership.

Unfortunately, on central issues of the economy, etc., Steve stands to the right of Militant. Indeed many of his supporters at national conference will be witch-hunters from the LCC — as were Kingsley's last year.

On issues such as women Steve's platform says only one thing: "We support the constitutional demands of Labour Women's Conference." This is one of the issues where the Black Sections programme is wholly inadequate to present as an alternative to Militant.

Your letter mentions the issue of South Africa. We strongly agree that support must be won in Britain for the liberation movement. In particular we have focussed, as socialists, on work with South African trade unionists and socialists.

As you may know, Tom Rigby from Peckham LPYS (a Youth Fightback supporter) was involved in one of the most successful examples of direct links involving a tour of British Plessey factories with a brother from the South African Electrical Workers Union (EAWTU). We are obviously concerned, therefore, that Steve's platform ducks the issue of direct links.

In LPYS terms Steve's demands on the issue of apartheid are unexceptional. However, to be credible against the Militant we must answer questions on 'people's versus workers' sanctions; the ANC; the 'workerists' in the unions, etc. etc. Militant have answers to these questions. We must have too. Youth Fightback is quite clear on these issues. Steve is not.

Moreover, it is not simply a question of politics. To appear credible to

young workers you need to have a record of work on the ground.

Youth Fightback comrades have a record, for instance, on South Africa. We have raised hundreds of pounds for union detainees, EAWTU and Students of Young Azania. Comrades have organised gigs, discos, street meetings, bucket collections as well as a national speaking tour. Youth Fightback have produced posters, leaflets and speakers' notes which help LPYS branches campaign.

It is interesting to compare this level of activity with Black Sections Youth. For most of the last part of 1986 Black Sections Youth have not met; the promises made by Kingsley during last year's Black Sections Youth bid for the NEC place have not been met (e.g. work around racism on the YTS); and Black Sections Youth had only three voting members when your letter was sent. Steve is not representative of black youth.

Suspended

What of the participation of Youth Fightback supporters in Black Sections Youth? The letter does not mention that the voting rules on the Black Sections Youth Committee were recently changed so that all of our comrades were deprived of a vote. Last year, for the 'crime' of not supporting Kingsley Abrams in the YS NEC election, SO supporter Keyvan Lajevardi was suspended from participating in the Black Sections Youth Committee for the duration of the campaign.

The letter says that our comrades should have stood to "give members the opportunity to choose between the politics of two candidates". Which members? The three who had just voted to take away the votes of our three comrades? At the previous meeting the Youth Committee had

voted *not* to stand a candidate in this year's YS NEC elections. Our comrades had put forward two main arguments against the Black Sections Youth Committee putting forward a candidate — insufficient discussion on the political programme, and the fact that the Black Sections Youth had no base or record on the ground in the YS.

Finally, we would like to comment on the situation in Labour Left Liaison, particularly after your representatives walked out of the 9 March meeting because of the issue raised in your letter.

Unity

Our view is that the unity that has been achieved in LLL on campaigning around jointly agreed issues has been valuable. That is why in this dispute on the LPYS SO has adopted *exactly the same* position that the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy did when they were faced with an equivalent situation last year.

On the five women's places on the NEC, CLPD were a minority of one on LLL. They did not support the five candidates put forward by the Women's Action Committee from the Labour Women's Conference 'shadow elections'. For one of the places they supported a different candidate.

What happened? CLPD refrained from vetoing support for the five candidates supported by everybody else, but continued on their own to campaign for their different candidate. Socialist Organiser has adopted exactly the same approach on the issue of the candidate for the YS NEC elections.

If there are any threats to the unity of LLL over the issue then it will be because you decide that is what you want, or because Socialist Action try to use the disagreement to implement the threat they made last year to "drive us out".

Officials in for the kill

By Brian McKenna

LAST Wednesday — April 1 — Jimmy Airlie, Scottish Executive officer of the AEU together with Bill Aitken, Scottish divisional organiser of the union visited the workforce at the occupied Caterpillar plant at Tannockside near Glasgow. They came to urge the workers there to return to work since their occupation was now (allegedly) illegal; no 'April Fool this, for workers now in their 13th week of occupation. The message delivered by Airlie — former hero of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' sit-in — was echoed loudly by other worthy 'supporters' of the Caterpillar workers such as Donald Dewar MP.

Convenor, John Brannan and his shop stewards remained defiant however: "Since the union decided they could no longer officially sup-



Caterpillar workers

port our action, we have been inundated with messages of support from the ordinary people of Scotland". £15,000 continues to be raised each week; this broad support 'at the bottom' will remain long after the broad support at the top has crumbled.

An attempt was made to begin to organise that remaining support at a meeting in Glasgow's McLennan

Galleries on the evening of Monday 6th. The occupation must not be allowed to simply die. A West Scotland Shop Stewards Conference obviously needs to be called.

The STUC should call a one-day strike to rally support — though we could do without the insulting presence of a Tory on the platform this time.

Dillons

Intimidation on the picket line

FOR MONTHS women working at Dillons Newmarket on the Leasowe Estate, Wallasey, faced constant abuse and threats of violence from a thug employed by the manager to stamp out shop-lifting.

He followed customers around the store, giving them dirty looks and 'stamping' on anyone suspected of stealing. Three customers have been hospitalised since Christmas.

The bouncer was told to be 'nice' to the staff, especially those who had recently joined the TGWU.

When on Monday 23 March the bouncer threatened to kill one of the workers "if she so much as looked at him again", fifteen women walked out demanding that he be sacked. The T&G immediately declared the strike official, and a picket was set

By Richard Aplin

up. Next day many people from the estate supported the picketing women. But the bouncer had friends too, nine equally attractive human beings whose idea of jewellery was iron bars, truncheons and knuckledusters.

They attempted to provoke the pickets. Despite a lot of tension and intimidation the picket remained disciplined and peaceful. That was the last that was seen of the extra heavies.

An alternative shop was set up on the picket line so that local people would not have to travel the two miles or so to the nearest shop. Shop steward Kim Murphy described some of the problems:

"Newspapers are a problem. W H

Smiths have warned all local newsagents not to supply us, but we're managing". She went on to say:

"A number of us are single parents, which makes it hard. With this cold, wet weather, and the threats of violence, you've got to be very stupid or very brave".

70mph winds on the first Friday could not drive the women from the picket line, and on Sunday 34 people sat down to a roast dinner outside the shop. One of the strikers commented about a miserable-looking scab sitting behind the till: "I wouldn't be in there for anything".

The following Wednesday there was a meeting between Dillons, ACAS and the T&G, but Dillons refused to sack the bouncer.

The strike continued but feelings were running very low the next day. In an attempt to revive spirits, and show Dillons how far the women were prepared to go, a mass picket was called for the next Saturday. And it forced Dillons to shut up shop at 9am.

On Saturday afternoon Ken Woods, the manager, showed his face for the first time — to plead with the women to return to work! A promise was given that the bouncer would be gone by Monday and any future security guard could be vetted by the union.

On Sunday night 15 women voted to return the following morning. If, however, Woods breaks his promise, the women made it clear that they will be straight out again.

Salford Plastics

Strikers at Salford Plastics (Salplas) are still very determined in the seventh week of their dispute. The 40 TGWU members, plus two AEU and one EETPU are maintaining the 24-hours picket.

The TGWU workers were sacked in a conflict engineered by company boss Barry Chapman (see SO no. 305). Speakers from the dispute are getting to local labour movement and student meetings. Eccles LPYS has set up a support group which is doing street collections. Salplas strikers attended last Friday's demonstration in support of Senior Colman strikers in Sale.

Inside Salplas, the dozen or so scabs are working flat-out (Chapman has already 'sacked' two scabs). Production is very low but some goods are getting out. These are mostly garden hoses going to B&Q, Texas and other major outlets.

All of the strikers have applied to

Lambeth Council

By Ian Swindale

On the casting vote of the Mayor, Labour-controlled Lambeth Council adopted a cuts budget at its Ratemaking Council Meeting on 27 March.

Eight Labour councillors voted against the budget and a further three indicated that they, too, opposed the cuts but had been mandated by the decision of Vauxhall GMC, which had met the previous night and supported the proposed budget.

Even so, council leader Linda Bellos only survived the vote by bringing Councillor Paula Watson, who had given birth only 24 hours previously, to come and vote.

In order to balance the books, the Bellos leadership intend to:

- * Lop £250,000 off the housing repairs budget, although there are currently 27,000 repairs, estimated to cost £7 million, still outstanding.

- * 'Save' an extra £3 million, largely through deferred expenditure, which will lead to a further gradual decline in the conditions of council staff and the services offered in the borough;

- * Add a further £6 million to the £4 million already set aside to allow for recruitment 'slippage'. The Director of Finance has insisted that a special monitoring committee should be set up to ensure that this extra £6 million really is "saved".

Among white collar staff alone Lambeth currently has over 500 vacancies in Social Services (22%) and 250 in Housing (23%).

- * Sell off £¾ million of industrial property owned by the Council.

Bellos has been insisting throughout the period of consultation with local parties and the Local Government Committee that her budget would not include cuts. As the rate-setting meeting approached, however, it became obvious that this promise was being broken and the Local Government Committee rejected the proposed cutbacks in housing repairs.

Attempts by the eight dissenting Labour councillors to remove this element from the budget in the course of the rate-making meeting were stonewalled by the leadership.

In a letter to members of the Labour Group outlining her position on the budget meeting, Linda Bellos wrote: "I do not see so much a Left Right split but instead a white left



Linda Bellos

split. I believe my record indicates that I am not of the white left, but instead of the black left, which represents an entirely different tradition in the Labour Party...I have no intention of lying to black people in Lambeth about what we are doing or plan to do...to make greater provision is in my view to make promises we cannot keep, and know we cannot keep...I am not interested in simply mobilising activists, I want instead the support of the mass of the community for the defence of jobs and services, and I believe we will only gain that support when we improve those services...the people of Lambeth deserve better services than they are currently getting, and the only way to ensure they get them is to spend the money in line with the budget."

The eight councillors who include Steve French, chair of construction services, will be contesting the Labour Group elections on the basis of opposing any cuts. At the same time they are campaigning for support for their stand within the Lambeth Labour Parties.

Lambeth Labour Parties and the town hall trade unions must now immediately come to the defence of the eight councillors and oppose any attempt to expel them from the Labour Group.

The eight councillors are well placed to become the focus of a fight to unite the local Parties in defence of the Manifesto commitments made in last year's borough election, and to unite behind them not only the Lambeth Labour Parties, but also the town hall unions, tenants associations and community groups in the borough, all of whom have a vested interest in holding the Labour Group to the election manifesto promises on which it stood and was elected to office.

Civil service

Action over pay

THREE unions in the Civil Service have this week commenced action in pursuit of their 1987 pay claim. The unions involved are the CPSA (clerical), SCPS (managerial), and NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance).

CPSA members voted by 53,551 to 36,987 to reject the government's offer

of a 4.25% increase. the result would doubtless have been better if the right-wing leadership of the CPSA has recommended a vote for rejection, and campaigned actively for such a vote. Instead they simply put the issue out for ballot without any recommendation, and sat back to see what would happen. They now see the ballot result as vindication for their cowardice, as no-one will "be able to accuse CPSA of trying to brow-beat its membership into rejection" (All Members circular, 3 April). Nor will anyone be able to "accuse" CPSA's leadership of taking its responsibilities seriously!

A six week programme of regional strikes is now underway. This week members in Wales, Manchester and the North West are taking action, next week (13-16 April) Scotland and Northern Ireland will be the regions affected. This period of regional action could serve to build up the union's confidence, as members get the 'feel' of taking strike action (for the first time since 1981, for many). But we must not see this type of action as the end of the road, if the Tories don't concede on our claim. We must consciously build towards an all-out strike — something the government must certainly fear in a pre-election period. And, in the April elections for the National Executive Committee, we must use the present leadership's failure over pay as part of our argument to push the Broad Left's candidates, CPSA urgently needs a change of leadership — almost as much as we need decent living wage! Now is the time to fight for both.

HFW Plastics

Strike against sackings

By Nic Brereton

Sixty-eight workers at HFW Plastics, Gateshead, are on all-out strike following the sacking of nine members of their union, SOGAT.

Nearly all women, the workers have been refused a pay rise for the last four years. This year the company went a step further and imposed a £10 pay cut. HFW have declared that it will no longer recognise SOGAT and has openly put pressure on employees to resign their membership.

Overtime was banned in protest and the nine workers were sacked for refusing to sign a document accepting the revised terms and conditions. The

rest of the workforce immediately came out in solidarity. As one picket told Socialist Organiser, "It's obvious what Jackson (the owner) wants — he wants the union out".

The strike has been made official by SOGAT, and the AEU were decided at the time of writing whether or not to continue crossing the picket lines outside the factory.

Jackson has advertised for scabs in the local press, and bussed them in. But last Friday pickets managed to prevent recruitment interviews with potential scabs at a local hotel, and some supplies have been turned away.

The strikers are appealing for support in their fight for union rights and decent pay. Messages and donations to HFW Plastics (strike appeal fund), c/o SOGAT, 119 Jesmond Road, Newcastle, NE2 1NL.

Hangers

Police attack strikers

Police hacked down Hangers workers' attempt to get publicity during the Boat Race via TV coverage on Saturday 27 March.

Alongside the advertisements for Nissan and Beefeater Gin, the locked-out workers had painted a huge banner in support of their cause. They had got the support of the BBC workers involved.

Despite the consent of Ham-

mersmith and Fulham Council the Met decided that political advertising was not allowed so they cut the ropes.

Hangers workers, supported by Putney Labour Party's trade union action committee, had worked for days to make and put up their banner. Then the police appeared with their knives.

For further information on the dispute or the march, phone the dispute committee, 646 0260.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER



Electioneering in Moscow

What Mrs Thatcher wanted to do in Moscow was to strengthen her position here: that part of it was

By Eric Heffer MP electioneering.

On the other hand I think it quite suited the Russian leadership to play along with her at this stage. They want to be able to say — we have got to have these better relations; we have got to open up the system because the people want it.

The important thing is that Thatcher never gave an inch on the question of defence policy. It was a PR job more than anything else.

Obviously, Gorbachev has his own purposes. The group he represents in the Communist Party leadership in the Soviet Union wants to open things up more — “glasnost”. While that would not mean a democratic society, it could help open the way for those who are fighting for such a society. In that sense it is very important indeed.

The left should say that we welcome any move towards opening up a discussion inside the Soviet Union. We should welcome it, but we should have no illusions that in itself is the answer. That will only come when the people themselves are able to freely organise, and to fight for their democratic rights — and succeed in getting them.

South Africa

Strike wave

Some 6,000 black South African railway workers are on strike over the victimisation of a union militant.

The railworkers' union, the South African Railway and Harbour Workers' Union, has closed down 23 depots. The strike began in the Transvaal but has now spread to other parts of the country. The railway board admits that the strike has paralysed the container and rail distribution networks.

The union's battle comes in the wake of the 10 week-long fight of OK Bazaars shopworkers, organised in the union CCAWUSA. It is another clear indicator of the massive rise in working class militancy inside the country as the workers' movement shakes off the effects of the repression associated with the State of Emergency. The first two months of 1987 have already seen more strike days than any whole year in the first half of the decade.

But the last year has also seen a serious decline in the struggle in the townships — so unlike the situation in June 1986 when the apartheid state faced both a massive generalised urban uprising and a militant workers' movement. Today it can focus attention solely on the workers' movement. The dangers in the situation are therefore very real.

With the May Day “workers' holiday” (i.e. general strike) less than a month away, and white politics in a particularly fractious state in the run-up to the whites-only election on May 6, the workers' movement appears to be in an upward swing.

A very similar pattern developed this time last year — then state president Botha responded by declaring the present State of Emergency. Botha must be considering further measures in the run up to 6 May as his support slips away both to the ultra-right and the so-called ‘liberal left’. The question is whether he is in a strong enough position to launch a full scale assault on the liberation movement?

Viraj Mendis in Sanctuary

By Matthew Davies

THE IDEA of sitting in a church at 4 o'clock in the morning may not be the most welcoming thought, but for many nights now the church of the Ascension in Manchester has been home to Viraj Mendis and his many supporters. The government wants to deport Viraj back to Sri Lanka, where his life is in danger because he supports the rights of the oppressed Tamil minority there.

The church resembles a fortress under seige. There is a round-the-clock watch on the door and at all times there are a dozen or so people helping out with security. The night shift is done by two teams alternately sleeping and patrolling. The hours of the week are shared out amongst supporting individuals and organisations who have all volunteered a set time in the week.

At the same time the church remains open to its members, the daily services continuing alongside the daily campaign meetings.

This security is necessary. There is always the possibility that the police will try to remove Viraj, despite their assurances that they will respect the sanctuary of the church. More immediately there is the threat of the fascists who have already attacked the sanctuary once, knifing a member of the campaign and carving a swastika into the hand of another.

There have been numerous bomb threats and threatening phone calls such as this more restrained one:



The carved-up hand of one of Viraj's supporters

“Your're not going to get away with this you bastards. I'm going to petrol-bomb that f***ing church... you're going to die, we are going to get you Communist bastards, you loony lefties.” Another one ends with, “we are the Anglo-Saxons and we're marching off to war...”

These physical attacks and frightening threats have been accompanied by a string of racist letters in

the local newspapers and emotive editorials in the ‘Sun’ and the ‘Express’ which simply serve to encourage the violence.

Remarks from the Home Office minister, David Waddington have added fuel to the racist fire. He refers to the campaign as being run by “prostitutes and jeering Communists” and he concludes that Viraj only remains in England because of “the misguided protection of a muddle-headed priest”.

It is under these circumstances that the Defence Campaign is organising a National Conference at the Church on April 11&12. Viraj explains the motivation and aims of this conference:

“The intensity of my struggle against deportation has now created a political and physical focus for the struggle against racism. The political forces are lining up. Waddington's remarks, followed by the editorials in the Express and Sun incite and legitimise the fascist vermin and their disgusting attacks. The democratic and progressive forces must line up with the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. A democratically organised and principled response is critical.

“As the elections get closer, the Tory government is increasing the attack on black people. The proposal to use a ferry to intern black people is the most disgusting step they have taken. Now more than ever a strong political force is needed to put pressure on all political parties to turn back this tide of racism. Our conference on the 11&12 April to be held at the Church of the Ascension in Hulme Manchester will attempt to do precisely this. I urge you to make a stand against fascism and racism by coming and contributing to the conference”.

One of the likely outcomes of the conference will be to set in motion a

national network of sanctuary support groups. Viraj's case has already inspired Rajwinder Singh, a 29 year old epileptic and mentally handicapped Sikh, to take sanctuary in a Sikh temple in Bradford, supported by over 80 community organisations.

Sanctuary movements already exist in the USA where there are 335 sanctuaries and in Germany where the former Bishop of Berlin, Kurt Schaf, has declared his church a sanctuary for Kurdish and Lebanese refugees.

While not providing a long term answer to institutionalised state racism such a sanctuary movement in Britain could provide the basis for a new mass campaign against immigration laws and racism in general. It is therefore important that Labour Party and trade union branches send delegates to take part in the conference to provide the labour movement involvement that would be necessary for such a campaign to succeed.

For more information on the conference ring the VMDC on 061-234 3168.



Viraj Mendis

Right target, wrong issue

Harvey Proctor has been in the news a lot lately as the ‘kinky’ Tory MP.

Following allegations that he had ‘spanking sessions’ with young boys, the discovery of a man in underpants at his house, and the confessions of rent boys, even Proctor's constituency Tory Party are having doubts.

‘The Voice’, Britain's leading black newspaper, carried a report last week (1 April) of a black rent boy who had given Proctor his services — but “would never have done business with Proctor if he had known of his extreme right wing views”.

For the real scandal of Harvey Proctor is not his sexual lifestyle: it is that he is a foul, neo-fascist racist who advocates the ‘repatriation’ of black people living in Britain.

What he does in his private life, or who he does it with, is of no public concern, so long as no one is done any harm.

That Proctor is homosexual is no cause for scandal. There is nothing wrong with homosexuality, and no more reason to create a fuss than if Proctor were found to be left-



Proctor handed.

But that Proctor is such an avowed racist is cause for alarm. That he was all but ignored by the popular press when he was putting about his disgusting ideas, but has become a cause celebre because he likes boys, tells us a lot about the press' priorities.

Harvey Proctor should be treated like a leper — but because he is a racist Tory, and for no other reason.