

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Election special

- The Tory lie machine
- Labour and the environment
- The SDP — pale blue Tories
- The ugly face of capitalism
- The left and the election
- The issues on 11 June
- Plus lots more.

VOTE

LABOUR



IF Thatcher wins this election, the pin-stripe-suited jobs and conmen who run the Stock Exchange, the banks and the insurance companies will feel like dancing and cheering in the streets.

It will be their victory. They will say it is a licence for the Tories and the rich to continue to run Britain as a private estate where an increasingly large number of the non-rich are turned into super-exploited paupers — into strangers, aliens and beggars in their own land.

They will say it is a licence for them to bring in more anti-union laws on top of those already on the statute books, whose existence makes Britain's trade union laws the most undemocratic in Western Europe already.

They will treat it as a licence for them to push ahead with the creation of a two-tier health service, under which there will be fine up-to-date care for those who can pay and an increasingly decrepit NHS for the rest of us.

They will accelerate the creation of a two-tier education system in which the creation of fee-paying elitist schools of all sorts will be paid for by a drastic

Kick out the Tories!

fall in the standards of education offered to those who can't pay.

The list of what the Tories want to do with a third term is a very long one, and much of this issue of Socialist Organiser is given over to detailing it.

Above all, the Tories will take a third election victory as vindication by the electorate for their dog-eat-dog and devil-take-the-hindmost social philosophy. And they will continue to act on that philosophy until there is very little left of the British society most of us grew up in.

Only Labour can stop the Tories, and only a Labour victory would open the way to a working-class drive to push back and reverse the social barbarism that has been steadily engulfing British society throughout eight long years of Thatcher government.

Vote Labour on 11 June! Go all out to get others to vote Labour on 11 June!

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

Labour and the environment

By Les Hearn

THE LABOUR Party enters the 1987 election with an outstanding socialist environment policy — perhaps the best of any socialist party in the world.

Once in government, there would undoubtedly be problems in getting the policy implemented, as many aspects would bring Labour into head-on confrontation with the needs of capitalism... and reformist parties such as Labour have, to say the least, a poor record in taking on capitalism.

Nevertheless, it is now the duty of serious socialists to use the existence of the environment policy as a weapon in getting Labour re-elected.

Details

Many details of Labour's environment policy have been established thanks to the work of SERA (the Socialist Environment and Resources Association) in the labour movement over the last 14 years. Now SERA has published a campaign guide, *Labour and the Environment**, to help Labour attract the 'green' vote.

The guide, a special issue of *New Ground*, summarises the main environmental issues, the Conservative record, and Labour's alternatives. Its use is not restricted to the General Election campaign. It will also be helpful in local campaigns on environmental issues and for pressuring local councils.

* *Labour and the Environment* is available from SERA, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG. £1 including p&p. Bulk rate (over 5 copies) 50p each.



Energy The Tories have committed Britain to an ever more expensive nuclear industry, slashed some very promising research on alternative energy sources, sold oil and gas to their City friends and undermined the coal industry.

Labour promises to phase out nuclear power *guaranteeing jobs for all nuclear workers*. In particular, Sellafield will be kept open as a centre for 'de-commissioning' (closing down) reactors and 'cleaning-up'.

Coal-fired power stations with acid control devices will be built. A massive expansion of alternative energy research and energy conservation will be initiated. This will mean lots more jobs with new skills, something Labour's employment spokespeople might remember.

Public health The Tories have allowed acid rain to continue unchecked, harming trees, fish, buildings and *people* in Britain as well as in Scandinavia.

Aerosols continue to destroy the ozone layer that keeps harmful ultra-violet rays in check. Chemicals and sewage continue to pollute drinking water and bathing beaches.

The beach at New Brighton in Wallasey was described a few years back as having 'faecal solids' (turds!) and other unsavoury things on it. Over half of Britain's beaches are similarly polluted as the sewers continue to crack and collapse.

Food The Tories allow a couple of thousand untested additives to be put in our food and resist calls for proper food labelling. They have suppressed and ignored critical reports on the nation's feeding habits. They have privatised school and hospital meals services, abolishing nutrition standards in schools in 1980.

Labour promises to reverse these trends. Local parties might like to follow the initiative of the Haringey School Meals Project that has involved meals workers, teachers, parents and pupils in deciding what food to provide. The result — two-thirds of pupils now take school meals.

Local initiatives This is a growth area where local Labour Parties can take the lead.

In Lambeth, the Labour council has appointed an Environmental Education Officer who has encouraged schools to set up acid rain monitoring projects and who got one school to reclaim derelict land on a large estate, turning it into a mini nature reserve.

Also in Lambeth but against the council, local residents and Labour activists combined to oppose the felling of a small group of mature trees to build a doctor's surgery while other sites existed.

Economics If Labour can be criticised, it is in its failure to integrate its environmental policies with its economic policies. Here, the message seems to be production for its own sake without regard to the purposes of that production or its impact on the environment. And yet there are a wealth of socially-useful jobs which could be introduced as a result of Labour's environmental policies.

Women Here, too, Labour has not fully recognised the special environmental problems of women, such as restricted access to transport and decent housing.

Campaigning The guide contains a directory of environmental groups and organisations that Labour activists can contact for information or cooperation in local campaigns.

Information from *New Ground*.



Photo: Lanre Fehintola (IFL)

Mouldy Greens

THE VOTERS OF Islington South and Finsbury already have an MP committed to defending and improving the environment.

Chris Smith (for it is he) is Vice-President of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association and won by just 363 votes in 1983. By an interesting coincidence, that is about the size of the vote that a Green Party candidate can expect.

Now the Green Party regard themselves as the rightful custodians of the environmental conscience in Britain, and they have bitterly denounced the other parties recently for stealing their clothes. But how justified is this accusation?

The Greens see environmental problems as caused by 'industrialism', rather than capitalism. Their rhetoric has been SDP-like in attacking "the old-fashioned politics of class conflict". They believe that the days of "full employment" are over and they place an "emphasis on small business and cooperatives, on part-time and casual work, on self-employment and com-

munity projects".

There is no recognition that these are often more exploitative of workers. They have no idea that state power will be required to tackle private interests that threaten the public good.

In short, their politics amount to a wet moralism, a "wouldn't it be nice"ism. There is little similarity between this and socialist environmentalism.

This does not prevent the Greens from acting as 'spoilers', and this seems to be their role in Islington South and Finsbury, whether intended or not. Here, they are putting forward a candidate, one Peter Powell, formerly a deselected right-wing Labour councillor.

If he achieves a vote of a few hundred, his reward may be to see the replacement of a genuine environmental voice by George Cunningham of the SDP.

Labour's stand on the issues

'LABOUR and the Environment' should put paid to the idea that 'environment' means protecting butterflies and badgers.

The 36 pages of this campaigning guide cover most aspects of where and how we live.

Countryside/agriculture The Tories have presided over an intensification of chemical agriculture, with pesticides, hormones and fertilisers polluting food and drinking water and poisoning farm workers.

Destruction of the hedges at the rate of one mile per daylight hour wrecks wildlife habitats and increases erosion of the precious top soil. Woodland and wetland sites of Special Scientific Interest have been destroyed without hindrance by the toothless conservation laws.

Farmers are paid money to 'compensate' them for *not* destroying wildlife habitats so that they can grow more food for the EEC food mountains.

Labour promises to reverse all of this, creating jobs in agriculture, researching non-chemical methods of agriculture, protecting 'green belts',

banning blood sports and introducing a general right of public access to the countryside.

Cities The Tories have encouraged inner-city desolation (including destruction of urban wildlife refuges) and abolished authorities like the GLC trying to do something about it. Labour promises to introduce democratic control of planning.

Transport As well as forcing fare increases and selling off profitable bus routes to their friends, the Tories have forced more freight onto the roads in bigger and bigger lorries. Increased lorry and car traffic has resulted in misery for millions of people subjected to noise, fumes, lead poisoning and air pollution by night and day. Freedom of mobility has been restricted particularly for those with little access to private transport — the old and young, the poor and women.

Labour promises to encourage bus and rail transport, outlaw the heaviest lorries, ban lorries from towns at night, cut out lead in petrol and introduce an integrated freight policy involving road, rail and water services.

Labour  THE ONLY PARTY PROMISING THE EARTH

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

Tory lie machine

By Jim Denham

Margaret Thatcher quite often lets slip an indication that she rather likes the idea of a one-party state. Her biggest gaff of the election campaign has been that remark about "going on and on". And despite all the Cold War rhetoric of the last couple of weeks, she clearly hit it off in a big way with Gorbachev during her regal progress through Russia in April.

One party states, of course, must have a totally subjugated press that acts as no more than the Party's mouthpiece.

At times during the election campaign a Muscovite visitor might have been forgiven for thinking that the one advantage the British people have over the Russians in this respect is that whereas they have only Pravda we have a choice of Tory Party mouthpieces competing only to outdo each other in craven loyalty to the Party Line and vicious smears against anyone with the temerity to oppose the Party and its Glorious Leader.

Unofficial Commissar of Information (read "Propaganda") is, of course, Rupert Murdoch, whose Sun and News of the World were once described by The Leader herself as a "conduit" to the masses. "Conduit", I understand, means "drain" or "gutter", which is traditionally where those two publications make their home. In the course of the election campaign they have moved from the gutter to the sewer.

The only surprise was that the first big smear of the campaign was against David Steel rather than a Labour Party figure.

But even that was part of the official policy of portraying the Alliance as the serious threat and Labour as an anachronistic spent force.

Since Labour's comeback in the polls, Murdoch's rags have turned their fire on the likes of Peter Mendelson, the Walworth Road publicity chief (Gay Shock Horror!) and Roy Hattersley (Friendly to women other than his wife and mother and appears on the electoral register twice!).

Reading the Murdoch scab sheets provides a salutary sense of proportion for those of us used to slugging off Kinnockite hacks like Mendelson and right wing bon viveurs like Hattersley.

The Express and Mail like to present themselves as a little more respectable than the Dirty Digger's downmarket toilet tissues. They only lie about Labour's policies, not the private lives of its leaders. The Ex-



press has rediscovered Ken Livingstone, well known Bolshevik with a secret plan to oust Kinnock from the Labour leadership and lead an armed insurrection after the election.

The Mail, along with the Telegraph and Murdoch's Times has obeyed Central Office instructions and made "defence" the Big Issue, with Kinnock allegedly hauling up the white flag to about-to-invade Russian hordes and at best calling on Captain Mainwaring and Corporal Jones to cosh Red Army tank drivers over the head with broomsticks.

Actually had Kinnock said what he was accused of (he didn't) and were there indeed a Russian threat (there isn't), he would not have been so far from the truth, though the Afghans might prove a better model than Dad's Army and Armalites would be more useful than broom handles.

What the Mail, Telegraph and Times never mention, of course, is the certain outcome of any use — by anyone — of nuclear weapons. Or the fact that Thatcher (by her own admission, on Russian TV) is positively in favour of nuclear weapons. She thinks they are A Good Thing. Even the Yuppies who read the Mail or the retired Home Counties colonels who favour the Telegraph might blanch a little at that.

Then there are the minority of papers not tied hand and foot to the Party Line. Most of these — the Guardian, Independent and Financial Times and Today — merely reflect that section of ruling class thought that believes full blown Thatcherism has served its purpose and now needs to be tempered by a deal with the Alliance.

What they certainly don't want is a Labour victory. Even the radical chic Guardian has waded in against unilateral nuclear disarmament, albeit in more measured tones than the others. ("It must mean that, saving some amazing change in human nature, future generations will see their homes and families devastated again, even in Europe.")

Only the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror and the struggling News On Sunday stand four-square for a Labour victory.

Socialists have been very critical of Kinnock's glossy presidential-style campaign and the way he has backed off from Labour's more radical policies. But his concern not to play into the hands of such a hostile press is quite understandable. The election has demonstrated — if there was ever any doubt — that we have neither a 'free' press nor an honest one. It's time the labour movement gave some thought as to what to do about it.

Where we stand

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

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

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

We stand:
For full equality for women, and

social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls. For equality for lesbians and gays. For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion. For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

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

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
01-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone, Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony.
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd (TU).
Published by Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
Printed by East End Offset (TU), London E2.
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser.

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

GRAFFITI

City threatens a bloodbath

Whoever else may be unsure about which side to be on in the election, the City millionaires are definite.

Even slight gains for Labour in the opinion polls have sent share prices slumping. On one occasion a false rumour of Labour gaining in the polls had the same effect.

One City man assured the press that these market movements did not mean that the City thought that Labour would actually win. If they did think Labour would win, he said, the results would be much more drastic.

Shareholders would sell up en masse, and put the proceeds as quickly as possible into foreign currency.



Another money-man told the Financial Times: "There would be a bloodbath".

Their quarrels and ours

Any dissent within the Labour Party immediately gets the full glare of media coverage. But the Tories and the Alliance get treated more gently.

The overlap and interaction between the Tories' right wing and fascist groups has had little publicity. Few papers featured the National Front's recommendation to its supporters to vote Alliance in some constituencies.

And two other disputes within the Alliance had stayed in the small print.

In Islington South, where Labour had only a 363 majority over the Alliance in 1983, the Young Liberals are supporting Labour's Chris Smith against the hard-right SDP Alliance candidate George Cunningham.

Islington had a very large batch of SDP defectors in 1981 — all three local Labour MPs, and a majority of the borough's Labour councillors — and Islington SDP has cultivated a right-wing populist anti-gay, anti-

union rhetoric in campaigning against the Labour council.

Even this was not enough for one of their most prominent councillors, Bill Bayliss — he had to be expelled by the SDP, and soon ended up in a fascist group.

The Alliance also has problems with another ex-Labour right-winger, Neville Sandelson, formerly MP for Hayes and Harlington, who while remaining a member of the SDP has called on all voters to back the Tories.

The defectors

All across the country, fates have been very mixed for Labour people who defected to the SDP. As David Owen has steered the party to a position to the right of the Tories on some issues, some have dropped out, some have gone further right still, and some have been eclipsed.

Shirley Williams — the best-known of the Gang of Four when they stabbed Labour in the back in 1981 — is one of those eclipsed. Another one, and perhaps a more surprising case, is William Rodgers.

Rodgers has long been one of Labour's right-wingers. He was Hugh Gaitskell's hatchet man against unilateralism in the early 1960s. Just the sort of figure to prosper in the



SDP, you would think.

But while Shirley Williams at least has a winnable seat to contest in this election, Rodgers is fighting a safe Tory seat in Milton Keynes — doing the sort of work that the big parties usually give to ambitious young men and women as a trial before they get a chance at winnable seats.

Since the SDP are no fanatics of openness and internal democracy, it is impossible to say what has made Rodgers fall from favour. Perhaps a remark he made to a journalist from the 'Independent' gave a clue.

The journalist, looking round disdainfully at the rather bland-looking townscape of Milton Keynes, a planned New Town, asked "What is the point of all this?"

Rodgers answered curtly: "It allowed a lot of people to have better homes than they would otherwise have had. What other point does it need to have?" Not the sort of response that would gain favour in David Owen's market-economics SDP.

Maybe Rodgers once had a Labour conscience of sorts and it is still stirring sufficiently to put him in the SDP doghouse.

"WHO has gained most from eight years of Thatcherism? The answer is unambiguously the better off".

That's no socialist speaking, but the big-business magazine *The Economist*. It points out that the total tax rate for the low-paid (including national insurance contributions) has gone up since 1979, while those on five times average pay (£58,000-plus a year) have had tax cuts worth at least £5,000 a year.

In fact, there has been worse: increases in indirect taxes like VAT have also hit the worse-off more than the well-off.



The pale-blue SDP Tories

By Paddy Dollard

MAYBE I'M imagining it, but one of the sickest-looking things on TV these days is Shirley Williams.

Remember Shirley? The neighbourly-seeming Labour right-winger it was hard to dislike, she used to have respect-worthy gut instincts.

The Tory press still hasn't forgiven Williams for going to help on the Grunwick picket line in 1977. When she was a government minister, she stood on the line with the striking Asian women workers and their supporters, identifying herself with those who every day faced savage violence from hundreds of thuggish cops sent to protect the right of employer George Ward to sack workers who joined a trade union.

Williams was one of the 'Gang of Four' former Labour ministers who formed the SDP in 1981. At first they claimed to continue the traditions of the 'old' Labour Party against the 'new', allegedly left-dominated, Labour Party.

But look at them now! Under the leadership of upstart former Labour foreign secretary David Owen, the SDP is to the right of the Tories on many key issues.

They are even more hostile to the unions than the Tories are. They want to make all strikes illegal unless the dispute has first gone to arbitration, thus tying the hands of workers who might want to take immediate action against some outrage inflicted on them by the employer. Even after arbitration, they want to make pre-strike postal ballots compulsory.

As well as this, they want to bring in incomes policy to limit wage rises to whatever the government is prepared to allow.

And they support all the anti-union laws that the Tories have made so far. If the SDP of today had its way, what Shirley Williams did at Grunwick in 1977 would be illegal!

It is quite a feat in 1987 Britain to be even more murderously antagonistic to organised labour than the Tories are, but Owen's second-string Tories have managed it.

It is only one example of the rightward stampede of Labour's former right wing. On defence they are ultra cold-warriors. Having been Foreign Secretary seems to have gone to the head of Owen. Like the sergeant-major allowed to sit in on the officers' briefing sessions, the strutting little doctor's mind has been

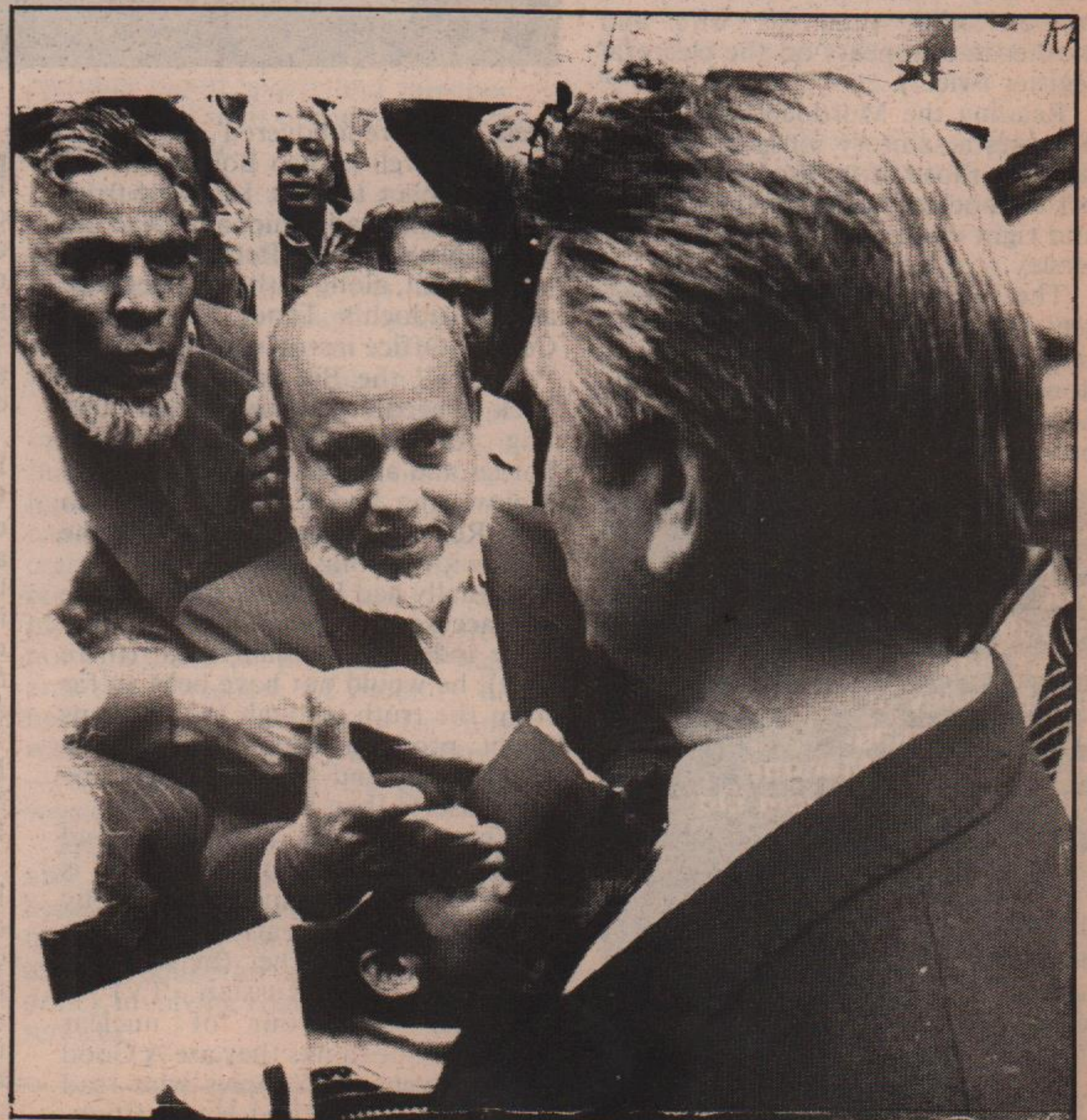
Party' emerged as full-blown fascists. Certainly Owen continues to drift to the right.

This week the arrogant little pig disdainfully walked through a crowd of East End Bengalis protesting at blatantly racist evictions by the Alliance-controlled Tower Hamlets council. Owen wouldn't even listen to what they had to say.

He has said openly in the election campaign that he would back a coalition with the Tories but not with Labour, which is not 'sound' on defence.

If the SDP fails to make the 'breakthrough' they hoped for, then it won't be too long before Owen joins the Tories, perhaps at first in a coalition arrangement.

The sooner the better! Shame on poor old Shirley and what remains of the SDP left. On the other hand, you can't say they haven't asked for it.



Picket of daily Alliance press conference by Tower Hamlets Asians facing eviction by a Liberal council. The council leader is a local Alliance candidate for Parliament. SDP leader David Owen faces questions.

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

The ugly face of capitalism

First as farce, then as tragedy...The first age of 'you've never had it so good' and 'I'm all right, Jack' was the late '50s and early '60s.

The Tories were in office for 13 years. Labour right-wingers said that socialism was dead and tried to get the Labour Party to drop Clause 4.

Capitalism was indeed booming, though rather more sluggishly in Britain than abroad. Unemployment was low. Wages were rising. The Welfare State seemed to be an accepted principle, if only as an underpinning to an economy still dominated by profit.

That Tory era collapsed in 1963-4, when a scandal about a liaison between War Minister John Profumo and Christine Keeler expanded to unveil a little world in which aristocrats and top Tories rubbed shoulders with shady businessmen like the slum landlord Peter Rachman.

20-odd turbulent years later, Margaret Thatcher is singing the same song of 'property-owning democracy' and 'people's capitalism', but to a different tune. Instead of the sugary melodies of consensus, we have the harsh discords of the unrestrained free market — everyone for themselves, and the devil take the hindmost.

The equilibrium of post-war capitalism has broken down; capitalism is restructuring itself, rapidly, drastically, and in the only way it knows, through crises; and the capitalists are no longer willing to pay for the padding of union rights and welfare services on the sharp edges of

By Colin Foster

their system.

The US shows us where Thatcherism is going. There, unions have always been relatively weak; there is no comprehensive Welfare State; and private enterprise has freer rein.

US capitalism has been able to grow fast, at times, and make many millionaires. But thousands of people still live in sordid shacks and slums, right next to luxurious mansions; the streets of the major cities are full of destitute, homeless people (after two years of unemployment, you lose all welfare benefits); the murder rate in major cities is five times as high as in Northern Ireland; no worker has any real job security; and when you are seriously ill, if you don't have money or adequate insurance, you just die.

Takeovers

A small-scale example of the results of 'deregulation' and free-market policies is the US airline industry. A few years ago almost all government regulations were removed from the industry. Fares did fall.

But there has been a frantic series of takeovers, so that air services are now almost entirely dominated by five big firms. They are well placed to push fares up again.

The workers have suffered. Texas Air, the biggest airline, dealt with the unions when it



Photo: John Harris

bought up Continental Airlines by declaring the company bankrupt, scrapping all union agreements, sitting out a long strike, and reopening the airline as non-union. Recently it bought Eastern Airlines, and there it delivered an ultimatum to the workers halving their wages.

Travellers have also suffered: it's not uncommon to find a dozen services claiming to leave or arrive at the same time at air-

ports which have only a few runways. No-one knows who will win the scramble to get the slot.

The US has long had a much bigger proportion of people owning a few shares than Britain. About 20% of the adult population own some shares, as against a maximum estimate of 17% in Britain now. (It was 5% three years ago).

But 43% of the shares in the US are owned by just 0.5% of the

population. The great majority of shareholders are not 'capitalists' at all. Business remains entirely dominated by a wealthy minority.

'People's capitalism' in Britain is equally farcical. Of the seven million shareholders who own some shares, 4.1 million own shares in only one company. Most of them put a few hundred pounds in British Telecom or the TSB for the sake of short- or medium-term cash gain.

To be a serious operator on the Stock Exchange you need to spread your investment over at least 20 different companies, so experts reckon. On that criterion only three million people in Britain have enough money to be sensible shareholders. 33 million did not even have enough cash to buy a minimum shareholding in British Telecom.

2.1 million people bought shares in British Telecom when it was sold off in November 1985. Each of them made an immediate gain of 50p per share — or £1.5 billion for the whole sell-off.

Many sold straight away to get the cash. By the end of 1986 less than 1.6 million individuals held shares in Telecom.

Of all Telecom's shares, 49.8% are held by the government, 36.8% by banks, insurance companies, etc., 0.9% by Telecom employees and 12.6% by individuals, rich or not-so-rich.

There is no shareholders' democracy here. The whole Tory policy is nothing more than a device to make the rich richer, the poor poorer, and the whole fabric of life more harsh and ruthless.

Woman in a "man's job"

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Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

The issues

THE TORIES have made great play of some comments by Neil Kinnock which they took as advocating a defence policy based on guerilla resistance to any military occupation.

But what is the Tories' defence policy? Do they intend to use Britain's nuclear weapons? In that case they intend to contribute to a holocaust where *no-one* will survive. You can't win a nuclear war!

The Tories denounced Kinnock for even considering the possibility of military occupation and resistance. He was defeatist, they said, and didn't understand how horrible military occupation is. (The Tories should know about that, after the British Empire's long history of holding colonies by force, and the experience of the Northern Ireland Catholic communities over the last 18 years!)

Civil liberties

Martin Thomas takes a look at some of the key campaigning issues in next week's election.

But the Tories should be denounced much more for considering *nuclear war* a possible option. However horrible a military occupation and the struggle to resist it, it cannot be worse than the destruction of all human civilisation.

A strong democratic citizens' army or people's militia *can* be an effective

deterrent to invaders. The prospect of mass armed popular resistance has deterred the giant power of the US from invading tiny Nicaragua.

Nuclear deterrence is based on a delicate balance of bluff and counter-bluff. And it could break down at any time.

Former US president Richard Nixon revealed in July 1985 that he had seriously considered using nuclear weapons *four times* while in office: during the Vietnam war, in the Bangladesh war of 1971, when there were border clashes between the USSR and China, and during the Middle East war of 1973.

Margaret Thatcher has said that she, too, would be prepared to press the button to wipe out millions of people.

Either nuclear weapons are intended to be used, in which case they are a standing threat to wipe us all out — an odd sort of 'defence'. Or they are not for use, in which case they are an expensive and risky waste of money.

In truth Britain's nuclear weapons have nothing to do with defence. Their only purpose is to enable the ruling class of this country to pose as a big power in international diplomacy.

And the cost both of nuclear and of conventional weapons is enormous. The Tories now spend £25 a week for each family of four on the military machine. The Trident programme will cost as much as 500 new hospitals or 300,000 council houses.

The Tories' whole international policy reflects both their arrogance and their devil-take-the-hindmost philosophy. They are Ronald Reagan's most secure ally. They are the loudest voice internationally against measures to penalise South Africa's apartheid regime.

They have cut Britain's aid budget by an average 6% a year in real terms, so that 'aid' from the Third World to the City in interest payments is now about five times as much as aid from Britain to the Third World. And the Tories played a leading role in persuading the EEC to freeze food aid to Africa in 1986.

IN 1980, 58% of all managers got free private health insurance. By 1985 it was 71%.

Private medicine is booming, while the NHS is under terrible strain. The Tories claim to have increased spending on the Health Service, and in crude figures that is true.

But a study from the independent Kings Fund Institute, published on 1 June, concludes that in real terms the NHS is worse off. There are more old people. Improved medical technology means that some patients can be kept alive (expensively) who before would have died (cheaply). So to keep the same standard of care requires

Labour's

Britain will win



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Strengthening the state — taking away liberties

MILITARY spending went up 30% in real terms between 1978-9 and 1985-6, and spending on police, prisons, courts etc by 41%.

However heavy the hand of the state, it cannot keep a lid on the tensions and vices bred by Tory economics. Between 1979 and 1986 crimes of violence against the person increased by 32%, robberies by 140%. The police's clear-up rates went down. In London the police clear up less than 17% of reported thefts.

The police have become more and more trigger-happy. In 1983 it was revealed that police were carrying guns 15 times a day in London alone. Since then five people have been shot and killed or seriously injured by police 'by mistake'.

The police are increasingly a law unto themselves. When Manchester Police Authority instructed their Chief Constable to get rid of his plastic bullets, he simply evaded the decision by continuing to hold the bullets — "on loan from the Metropolitan Police".

The Police Act gives the police huge stop-and-search powers. The Public Order Act extends the powers of the police to pick up whom they wish from demonstrations and pickets. All marches require seven days' notice to the police. The police can set the time, place and maximum numbers for any march or picket.

New catch-all offences of 'disorderly conduct' (carrying a £400 fine) and 'violent disorder' (carrying a five-year jail sentence) have been created.

The secret police, MI5, have been exposed as tapping the phones of peace campaigners and trade unionists, vetting people who apply for BBC jobs, and conspiring against the last Labour government.

And what do the Tories do? Tighten the screws, batten down the hatches. The government has prosecuted civil servants Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall for revealing information which embarrassed the Tories.

It has tried to stop ex-spy Peter Wright from publishing its memoirs. When the BBC made a TV series on 'The Secret Society', the Tories sent in the police to raid BBC offices and seize the films.

Civil liberties are under attack from the Tories, and a re-elected Tory government promises worse. They will introduce laws effectively to ban from TV anything that Mary Whitehouse finds offensive.

The Tories' attacks on the trade unions are part of the same drive. They want to take away from workers the right to organise collectively and effectively to win better conditions.

Already the GCHQ workers have lost the right to belong to a trade union, and teachers have lost the right to negotiate their wages and conditions.

The Tories make

UNEMPLOYMENT makes people sick and desperate.

Researchers have estimated that for every 100,000 people who lose their jobs, deaths increase by 5,000, mental hospital admissions by 6,000, and prison intake by 1,900. A separate survey found that workers made redundant and their families had to visit hospital or a doctor 20% more often after they lost their jobs. Divorce increases when people are unemployed.

By October 1986, 1.3 million people had been jobless for over a year. 1.1 million young people (under 25) were unemployed, and 317,000 of them had been out of work for over a

year.

That's according to the official figures, which grossly underestimate the reality. Some 16 different changes in the method of counting unemployment have been made by the Tories since 1979, reducing the official number by over half a million. On the basis of calculation used in 1979, there are now 3.6 million unemployed.

This is much worse than in the 1930s. The highest level of long-term unemployment then was 500,000 in 1933. And proportionately more young people are unemployed now than then. In a place like Handsworth, Birmingham, only 5% of school-leavers get jobs.

All the Tories offer is a promise to force young people onto the YTS cheap-labour scheme, on pain of having their dole cut off. Higher education has been cut by the Tories, so that in 1984 11,000 young people were denied entry to university who would have got in under 1978 conditions.

When a society offers nothing to most young people except compulsory cheap-labour schemes and years on the dole — 40% of YTS 'trainees' get no job at the end of the scheme — then that society is sick and decaying. Young people get demoralised. Many turn to crime: it has long been true that most crime is committed by young men, and so crime increases disproportionately when young men are left idle, poor

more money each year — and more than the Tories will put in.

48,000 people are on waiting lists for urgent treatment, and some stay on those urgent lists for many months.

Over 200 hospitals have been closed under this Tory government. Where new facilities have been built, often they can't be opened because the local health authority does not have the cash to run them.

In the name of efficiency, health services are increasingly concentrated in fewer, bigger hospitals. That means discomfort for some patients who have to travel further for treatment, and life or death for others.

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories



Inner cities

Tory plan to sell off estates

IF THE Tories get their way, they will turn parts of Britain's inner cities into slum ghettos like the depressed black and Hispanic areas of US cities.

Tory policies will not wipe out council housing — quite. What they will do is reduce it to ghettos of the worst housing — the rest will have been sold off, and there will be no money for renovations — tenanted by those who can afford nothing else.

Other social trends — the growing numbers of unemployed, of pensioners, of single parents and of young people living away from their parents — will contribute to this.

By forcing councils to sell houses and flats to tenants cheap, and by handing out millions in tax relief on mortgages, the Tories are encouraging almost everyone with a regular job and a decent wage to buy their own home. Only the 'underclass' will be left in the remaining council housing.

The Tory manifesto promises no more government money for local authority house-building; laws to stop council subsidising rents from rate income (the Tories have already managed to force rents up way above their 1979 levels); and measures to encourage privatisation of council estates.

According to the *News on Sunday* last weekend, "On May 13 [the Tories] brought a new law into force empowering councils to evict tenants who stand in the way of privatisation".

The *News on Sunday* reports that the first test case is likely to be in Westminster, where the Tory council wants to clear two estates, get them renovated by a private developer, and

sell off some of the housing to that developer.

The Tories have already gone a long way along the road they want to follow. Since 1979 a million council homes have been sold off under the Tories' laws.

According to the latest figures (1985), owner-occupiers have increased from 55% of all households to 62%. Council housing is 28%, housing associations 2%, and private renting accounts for about 8%.

The Tories have forced down the number of dwellings built by local authorities from 100,000 a year to

THE TORIES have broken the rule whereby pensions used to be increased each year in line with prices or in line with average earnings, whichever had risen faster. As a result, pensioners have lost out.

The Tories also have long-term plans, under the Fowler Social Security Reviews, to cut pensions still more. On this scheme, by the time today's teenagers retire state pensions will have been cut by 25% below what they would be on the present basis.

The Fowler Reviews also propose to cut social security across the board. Already the Tories have cut £9 billion from social security — and given £13 billion in tax cuts to the well-off.

fewer than 20,000. This is the lowest level of new building since the 1920s (apart from the Second World War). As recently as 1976 councils were building 180,000 houses a year.

It is the best council dwellings that get sold off, of course; and there is less and less money to keep the remainder in good repair.

Already about half of all council tenants have no earned income — they are pensioners or on the dole. In many big-city estates the proportion goes up to 80%. 57% of single-parent families live in council housing, and so do two-thirds of households dependent on supplementary benefit.

The number of people officially homeless is rising rapidly, and in many areas *no-one* from the waiting list now gets council housing. All the vacant flats or houses go to homeless people who have approached the council in desperation.

The Tories also hope to revive private landlordism, which has declined drastically since the 1960s under the pressure of rent-control and tenants'-rights laws. They are building up a pool of people who will be desperate enough to take any housing they can get; and if they win the election they plan to weaken the tenants'-rights laws.

The free market is more ruinous in housing than anywhere else. Left to itself it produces inner cities which combine luxury housing for the rich and overcrowded slums for the poor; the middle class and better-off workers, who cannot afford the luxury of the rich and cannot give landlords the same return as those desperate enough to pay relatively high rents for overcrowded slums, are driven out to desolate suburbs.

That's what a Tory future would look like.

Unemployment

you sick and desperate



resources. Manufacturing investment is lower than in 1979.

Britain's capitalists increasingly make their profits from overseas investments. And they are ready to wait to invest in this country until the Tories have completed their work.

The Tories want to break Britain's traditionally strong labour movement. Mass unemployment, welfare cuts to make unemployment even more miserable, privatisation, and anti-union laws all serve this aim. The Tories want to rule by fear and break our spirit, so that some day profits and production will rise again on the backs of a cowed, obedient workforce.

The Tories' 'successes' are only the other side of the same coin as the squalor and despair in the inner cities. The new jobs that have been created are mostly part-time, casual, or temporary, non-union, and low-paid. Where new factories have started, they are mostly non-union, or have unions crippled by no-strike deals.

Britain's casino economy is flourishing. £100,000 a year — £2000 a week — has become a standard salary for a City whizzkid. But meanwhile misery and decay spreads over the rest of the country.

Only a couple of hundred yards east of the City is Brick Lane, where Bengali families live in rotten housing, harassed by racists and dependent for jobs on low-wage sweatshops. That's Thatcher's Britain.

repair. Civil engineering experts report that Britain suffers "decaying water and sewage services... derelict land... damaged sea defences... gaps in the road network". The official National Economic Development Office estimates that £2 billion is needed for hospital maintenance, and that maintenance work on school buildings is running 40% short of what's needed.

Public transport has been run down and turned over to cowboy profiteers. The Health Service is desperately short of staff and

and demoralised.

All this is a direct result of Tory policy. Profits have boomed under the Tories. The government has drawn £12 billion in revenue from oil alone.

There is plenty of work to be done. But the money goes elsewhere.

The central government controls loans to councils for house-building; it cut the money available by 65% between 1978-9 and 1985-6.

According to civil servants, £19 billion is needed to put local authorities' housing stock in good

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

By John O'Mahony

WHEN THE General Election campaign opened, a gleeful press was predicting that this election would see the eclipse of the Labour Party.

Henceforth the Labour Party, if it survived at all, would hold the position in British politics held for many decades by the Liberal Party, that of a fringe party in Parliament. The party of organised labour was about to be relegated to the Third Division — to the level it was at 70 years ago.

Roy Jenkins reviewed James Callaghan's book of memoirs in one of the Sunday papers, and used the occasion to suggest smugly that Callaghan had been the last-ever Labour prime minister. The Labour traitor Jenkins, who has some standing as a political historian, argued that the near-century of working-class political energies invested in the Labour Party had now ended in an ignominious debacle.

Things don't look like that at all ten days before the election. Labour is plainly the alternative government, and the Alliance campaign so far has been a resounding flop.

That is no small achievement for the Labour Party leadership around Neil Kinnock, and even their political critics inside the Labour Party should recognise the achievement for what it is. A Labour victory in this election will check the victorious march of Thatcherism.

But it would be stupid to pretend that the election has anything directly to do with socialism. The Labour Party is not fighting for a socialist transformation of Britain. It is fighting to end the government of a brutal, hard-faced and stone-hearted party which has inflicted immense misery on million of people, and for a more decent, more humane running of the existing system.

Workers' government

What the working class needs is a *workers' government* — a socialist government which is accountable to the labour movement, which puts the interests of the working class above everything else, and which cuts down capitalism. That is what *Socialist Organiser* wants. We want socialism.

But the working class would benefit greatly and directly from even a limited change of government such as the replacement of the Tories by the present Labour Party. At the very worst, the working class will be better able to defend itself against the new government.

More than that: the defeat of Thatcher and the Tories would revive the self-confidence of millions of workers who are now too disheartened to fight directly for their own interests, millions now overawed by the



If the entire labour movement had backed the heroic miners' strike, then we could have defeated the Tories and turned the tide.

The left and the election

brutal determination of the Tories to beat them down, millions who know that mass unemployment and a relentlessly hostile government are a difficult combination to beat in struggle where only a few, or a few thousand, workers are involved.

At the next stage the newly-mobilised workers might well find the Kinnock government trying to subdue them. But that is the next stage.

A Labour election victory would change the political climate to the advantage of the working class. A vote is the most potent weapon millions of workers are likely to want to use in the period ahead.

This election campaign is being fought as a national debate — but one in which the scales are heavily weighted in favour of the Establishment and its first choice of government, the Tories. The Labour leaders have made great headway against very big odds.

They have done that in part by taking on board many of the assumptions and premises of Thatcherism. They talk about the national interest — as if the working class has a common national interest with those who own and control British industry. Their programme of creating one million jobs in two years is vague, timid, and inadequate. They propose to run the present system more humanely at a time when the dynamics of that ruthless system leave little scope for humane running. The list of criticisms that socialists have to make is a long one.

Not least of them is this: we shouldn't be faced with these limited choices at all. The Alliance and Thatcher need not have been allowed to attain their present level of strength and power. The leaders of the labour movement, both trade unions and Labour Party, should have fought back from day one.

When Thatcher came to power in 1979 and launched her murderous offensive against the working class, unemployment was about a third of what it is today, and industrial militancy was still a great force. A sustained campaign to drive the Tories from office would have roused the majority of the British people, and could have done what the miners did in forcing Edward Heath to an

election in February 1974.

In the three years up to the Falklands War, the Tories were very unpopular in the polls. They would have lost any election.

Dithered

Instead of organising a concerted fight back, the labour movement dithered and dawdled, allowing the bosses, encouraged by the government, to drive millions out of the factories and offices.

On the basis of the demoralisation created by the slump, by Labour's weakness and by the bosses' victories, Thatcher was able to build a spurious popularity out of her shoddy little campaign in the Falklands.

The Thatcherite juggernaut continued to roll. Right-wingers like Callaghan openly sabotaged Labour's 1983 General Election campaign. Those paler-blue Tories, the SDP, thought their time had come. Short-sighted leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions refused to back the miners in 1984-5, and the miners were defeated.

Labour went into this election as the underdog, to take part in a rigged debate many of whose terms of reference were determined by seemingly triumphant Thatcherism.

Things did not have to develop like that. If the policies that *Socialist Organiser* and others argued for after June 1979 had guided the labour movement, the Tories would have been driven out long ago.

But the labour movement has to start from where it is now, and we must stubbornly defend every position, however limited it may be. That is the only way to prepare for future advances.

Socialists should not pretend that we are somewhere other than where we are. Right now Neil Kinnock's Labour Party is the best option the working class has.

Steer right

The serious left therefore has no alternative but to 'steer to the right' in the election campaign — to throw everything we have into securing a

Labour victory, while knowing full well Labour's and Neil Kinnock's limitations and not renouncing our own ideas.

Kinnock and his team are in command in this battle: let's see what they can do. If Labour wins the election, it will be of great benefit to the working class. If not, then it will not be the fault of the serious left.

This is the only honest approach for socialists who want to avoid kidding themselves about the situation we are in and to avoid political fantasies.

The worst crime that the left could commit against the working class in this election would be any act or any refusal to act which would in any way help the Tories or their Alliance understudies, or in any way weaken Labour.

Loonies and Euros

The badly misnamed sect the Revolutionary Communist Party offers a perfect model of what not to do — it is standing candidates against Labour. But in fact these sinister fools are not competing with Labour, still less with the Tories.

They compete with the Monster Raving Loony Party — and at the Greenwich by-election did even that unsuccessfully. This is jokesville.

The Communist Party allowed its widely circulated journal *Marxism Today* to advocate voting SDP/Liberal tactically, while the party itself is standing a dozen or so candidates of its own — including one in Greenwich. The putrid decay and senility of British Stalinism today could not be more clearly expressed!

Socialist Worker

Socialist Worker limply and opportunistically mouths 'Vote Labour' slogans while refusing to throw itself into the campaign to get Labour elected. It is guilty of weakening Labour's campaign by omission, and therefore of helping the Tories.

That is not what *SW* wants, but that is what it does in the real world it operates in (which is not the one it wants to operate in).

They snootily dismiss Labour's 'electoralism' because, they say, elections inevitably involve the left in trying to copy the right and diluting their politics. Thus the most the 'principled socialist' should try to manage is a flaccid 'Vote Labour' and abstract socialist propaganda as usual.

Now it is right, and even essential, to point out the non-socialist character of Labour's election campaign and to argue for socialism. But to concentrate on the limits of Labour's election policies is simply stupid.

To say, as they do, that the key task is to warn workers against a future right-wing Labour government, is not to know what world you are living in, and not to know what item on the agenda the labour movement is now dealing with. It is a case of the story much quoted by Lenin, facing similar political idiocies, about the man who laughed at funerals and cried at weddings.

Now this article, in its own way, warns *SO* readers about a future Labour government... But we have got to get our priorities right.

If workers don't vote Labour, why will it be? Because they find Labour's policies too right-wing? No, overwhelmingly it will be because they find policies like unilateral nuclear disarmament, or Labour's limited commitment to restore union rights, too left-wing. Workers think like that in large part because of Labour's failures in campaigning over the last 8 years; but we can't undo that now.

Against what better alternative do the SWP measure Labour's campaign? Mass industrial action? We're for mass industrial action. But right now that is even more limited than electoral action, if only because it is not happening, and for it to happen a working-class revival is first necessary. (And anyway mass industrial action short of a revolutionary general strike is not an *alternative* to elections).

Fantasies

Labour's election campaign — even on Neil Kinnock's limited politics — is not counterposed to industrial action, or revolutionary working-class action. It is counterposed by the SWP to a *fantasy* of mass industrial action.

And why is the Labour campaign so limited? Because of the outcome so far in the struggle between left and right in the Labour Party over the last 8 years — *from which the sectarians of the SWP stood aside*, as they now stand aside from the General Election.

Socialist Worker wants to be very left-wing; but they agree, from the outside, with the dogma of the right and the soft left, that left-wing politics cannot win elections.

But the left can win elections. If the labour movement had campaigned vigorously, building up to the election, then we could be challenging Thatcher with full-blooded socialist politics.

If the SWP are right, and elections *inevitably* mean moving to the right, then how is the left ever going to win? Can we win socialism without the support of a majority of the working class?

Minority socialism?

The idea of socialism being made by a 'militant minority' over the heads of the working class sometimes seems to be implied in the SWP's opposition on principle to ballots, but it is unlikely that the organisation would argue this. So what then? Socialist democracy will get a majority by a different route, in strike committees and in workers' councils which will replace Parliament.

In other words, in institutions that don't exist yet, which may not exist for a long time, and towards the creation of which we can do little

Turn to page 10

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

WINNIE Smith was an UnGood Citizen. From the start she had never fully mastered MagSpeak, which decreed such words as 'greed', 'racism', and 'cruelty' abolished and replaced with 'Enlightened Self-Interest', 'NationPride', and 'Efficient Resource Use'.

When she had been a cashier in one of the BUPA-Care hospitals, she had quite often felt a pang of remorse when turning away weeping mothers whose children had been run over by Cruise missile transporters, but who did not have sufficient Sterling Vouchers to pay for treatment.

This, officially, made them Undeserving Citizens. But Winnie had still felt sad about it. And she secretly thought it a little 'harsh' (another abolished word, replaced with 'Prudential Management') to expect the over-60s to take part in the Restart scheme and work as Cleansing Operatives in fast-food bars in order to receive their Old Coffin-Dodgers' Sterling Allowance.

But what had caused Winnie to be reported to Central Office as an UnGood Citizen was a thoughtless remark at one of the Enterprise Encouragement interviews, to the effect that she could not see the point of the annual Task Force to Port Stanley Argie-Bash celebration. This had been reported to Margaret's Social Conscience (MSC) central data bank, and naturally passed on to Central Office.

What would a Tory 1994 be like?

By Jim Denham

As a result, Winnie's name went on the Register of Unreconstructed Recalcitrants, who before 11 July 1987 had been called 'socialists'. But that word too had been abolished.

Even before this, Winnie had been regarded with some suspicion, because of her name. She had heard it whispered in one of the Happy Sun-Reader Plebs' Canteens that her parents had named her after the wife of a black man who had caused Her Majesty Margaret's friend Mr Botha lots of trouble in the 1980s.

Poor Mr Botha had been driven out of his own country, and UnGood black people had taken over. Margaret had rescued Mr Botha and made him part of her National Advisory Council (along with Lord Young, Dr Owen, and Mrs Currie), after the temporary suspension of Parliament during to serious infiltration by Recalcitrants.

For this and other reasons, black people had been declared UnGood, and voluntarily repatriated to the Falklands — apart from those who had proved their Good Citizenship by joining the Conservative Party, the armed forces, or the police before 11 July 1987.

Winnie was classified as Voluntarily Not Seeking Work (MSC having abolished the word 'unemployed'), and as the discredited Social Security system had been abolished, she survived by earning Sterling Vouchers through the white economy. She worked for vouchers-in-the-hand, delivering Trident warheads to submarine bases, serving Finger-Lickin' Chicken at Colonel North's, or working as a Blue Coat at one of the Ted Rodgers' Fun-n-Leisure Complexes.

It was while she was delivering a consignment of CS gas and laser guns to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme in Surrey that Winnie first came across the Resistance. As she drove the transporter along the M1, a fleet of battered old Leyland trucks that ought to have been in museums or scrapyards appeared out of nowhere and forced her onto the hard shoulder.

Out of the truck leapt dozens of shabbily-dressed men and women, armed with primitive sawn-off shotguns and armalites. "We're seizing this for the Trolls on strike at McDougall's Superburger bar, Watford", they declared.

A strike? In Watford? Winnie had



heard rumours about such Publicly UnGoodSpirited activities in parts of the country that had not yet been properly liberated from the grip of Recalcitrants — places like the Celtic Zones, for instance. But in Watford everyone was supposed to be happy in their work.

And the Trolls loved Margaret, according to the Sun.

Winnie, of course, joined the Resistance. The Watford strike was crushed eventually, and its leaders 'disappeared', like so many others.

But the struggle continues.

Winnie educated herself by reading books by people with strange foreign-sounding names, and taking part in Resistance discussion circles.

At this moment she is organising the Blue Coats at a Leisure Complex. She knows that one day, sooner or later, she too will probably 'disappear'. But, as she always says, hope lies with the proles. Strength will turn into consciousness, though it might take a thousand years.

● Review

A truly tragic love

Edward Ellis reviews "Prick Up Your Ears".

The death of Joe Orton had an almost fictional quality. Orton was just rising to the peak of his fame, after many years almost penniless and unsuccessful.

By 1967, following big hits with his hilariously funny plays, Orton was the hottest property on the London stage. He was writing the script for a Beatles film. His future seemed set for greater and greater fame and fortune.

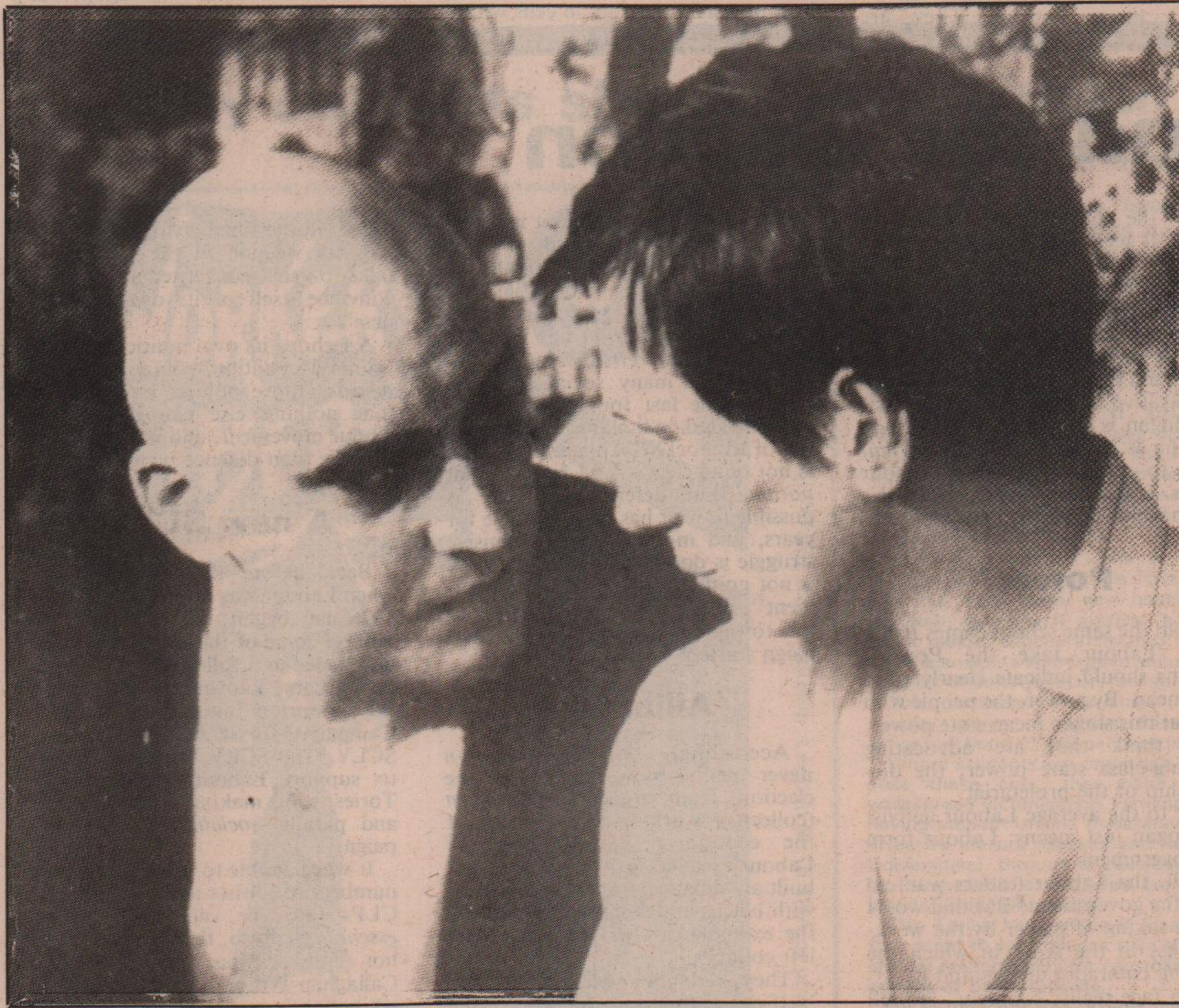
Then one morning in August, 1967, Orton was found in his little flat in north London with his brains bashed out. His gay lover and murderer, Kenneth Halliwell, had also killed himself. It was a tragic end to Orton's brief career.

Halliwell had been his lover for fifteen years, sharing this sordid room and a life together that had included six months in prison for obscenely defacing library books. Why did Halliwell do him in?

John Lahr's excellent biography, 'Prick Up Your Ears' ('ears' is an anagram) gives a fairly cut-and-dried answer, and this film is based very closely on Lahr's account. Halliwell was older than Orton, and for years they had shared the attempts at literary success. But it was Orton who made it. Halliwell became deeply depressed and jealous, lost in Orton's shadow. Orton was loved, applauded, desired; Halliwell was considered by everyone to be an insipid mediocrity.

"You do everything better than I do. You even sleep better than I do," Halliwell moans in Alan Bennett's screenplay. Yet he felt he had taught Orton everything he knew.

His jealousy was also sexual. Despite their long-standing affair, Orton was incorrigibly promiscuous, often seeking satisfaction in public toilets. So in jealousy, envy and despair, Halliwell killed him. In even



Orton and Halliwell

greater despair, he killed himself.

The film of the book includes Lahr himself as a character seeking out evidence of Orton's life — and treating his wife almost as badly as Orton treated Halliwell. (Although the biography is meant to be a joint effort, his wife doesn't do much more than the typing). So Orton's life

is recounted by witnesses.

Gary Oldman (previously Sid Vicious in 'Sid and Nancy') gives a tremendous performance as Orton, and Alfred Molina is convincing in Lahr's version of Halliwell.

Orton here is as charismatic and witty as you would expect him to have been — and as sexually ag-

gressive. Director Stephen Frears has managed once again the tasteful gay sex scenes of his widely acclaimed 'My Beautiful Laundrette'. Once again, also, he has managed to deal with the issue of homosexuality with a sense of humour.

Of course Orton lived and wrote before the passing of the Sexual Of-

fences Act, and the film gives a brilliant feel for homosexual London at that time. Orton's plays are irreverent farces that poke merciless fun at sexual morality. He was a sexual rebel, and the challenging openness of his sexuality in those repressive times gives particular force to both his art and the story of his life.

In early editions of his collected plays, his sexuality was not even mentioned in the learned introduction. The film shows vividly how absurd it is to ignore the central aspect of Orton's life.

As a film, therefore, 'Prick Up Your Ears' is excellent. The relationship between Orton and Halliwell is touchingly affectionate, and with a sense of impending doom about it. Orton's strained relationship with his working class family in Leicester is carried off credibly and sympathetically as well.

My criticism is of Lahr's explanation. In the book, and in the film, Halliwell comes over as pompous and unexceptional, neither physically attractive nor intellectually very inspiring. Orton loves him — but like a pet dog, or perhaps an oafish elder brother. The question arises, why did Orton — so witty, so attractive — stay with him for so long, trapped in an apparently claustrophobic relationship and a certainly claustrophobic room?

The inequality that Lahr portrays in this relationship is very unconvincing. Orton must have felt much more sexually for Halliwell over all those years; and Halliwell cannot have been so one-sidedly dependent on him, his devotion so unrequited. So the film and the book both fail as a "why did it"; they don't really answer the question.

Perhaps it is impossible to answer. For certain, whatever the more precise reason Halliwell killed Orton out of love. And so their story is a truly tragic love story. With such marvellous performances, such a good script and such fine direction, it makes for an excellent film.

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

Sri Lanka

Will India invade Sri Lanka?

INDIA is poised to intervene in the Sri Lanka civil war.

Perhaps India will invade the island on its southern tip and occupy the northern part of the island, inhabited primarily by Tamils.

The open civil war in Sri Lanka is now four years old, but the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict goes back decades. The majority on the island is Sinhalese and Buddhist; the minority Tamil and mostly Hindu. A few miles across the water, the state of Tamil Nadu in southern India dwarfs Sri Lanka and has a population of 50 million people.

This is one of the factors that breeds fear in Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority. It is the main reason why India would feel entitled to intervene to protect Sri Lanka's Tamil minority.

Indian ships are on the way to bring food to Tamils besieged by Sri Lanka government forces who are trying to conquer the Jaffna peninsula. The obvious parallel is with the island of Cyprus, divided between the Greek majority and the Turkish minority. In 1974 the Turkish army invaded, and it is still in occupation of the majority-Turkish area (and of former Greek areas whose people were driven out).

Sri Lanka achieved independence from Britain (as Ceylon) in 1948. It had a secular democratic constitution, and a westernised bourgeois elite made up of both Tamils and Sinhalese.

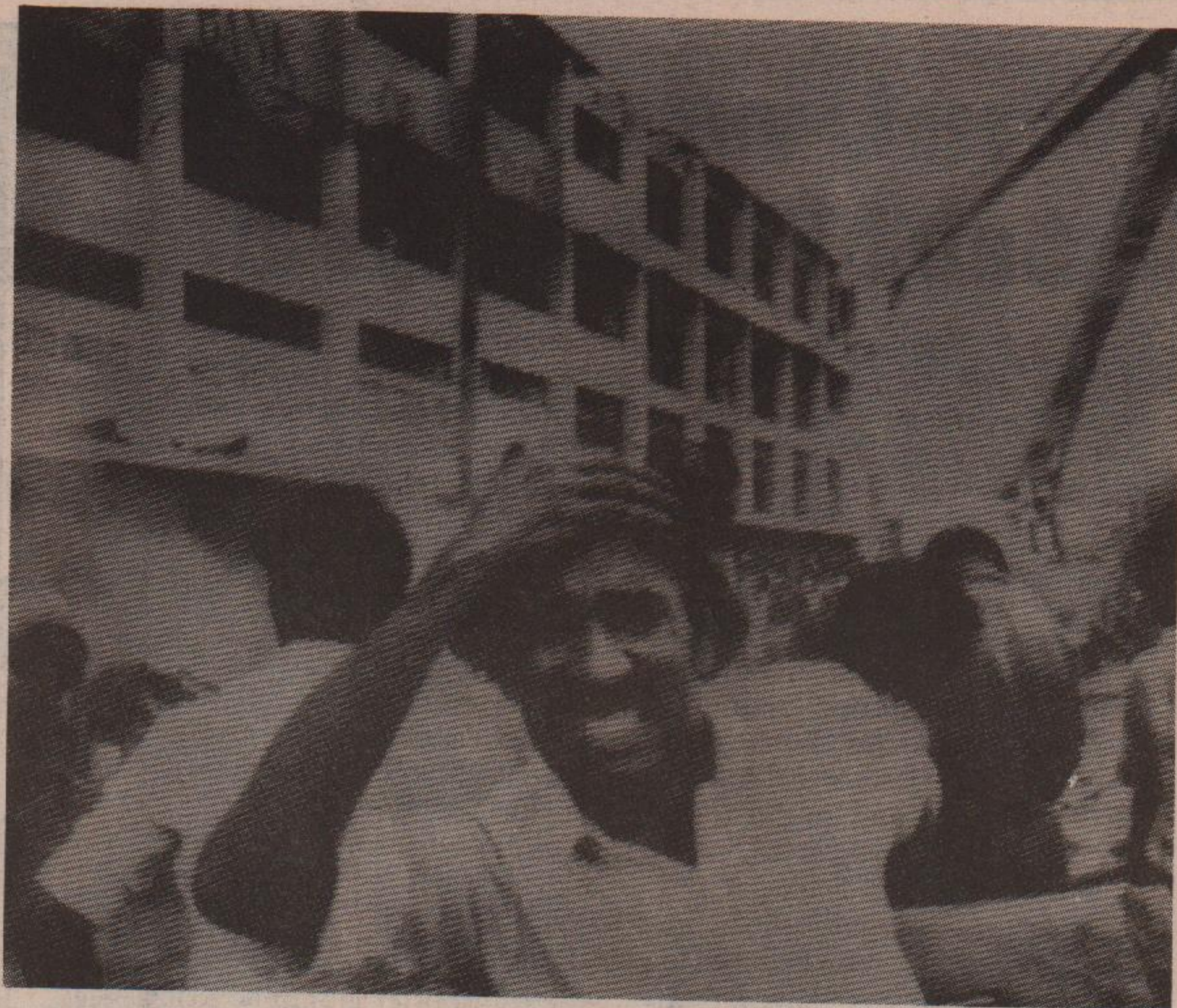
Over the years, however, there was an upsurge of Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism directed against the Tamil Hindus. Beginning as a rural-based cultural revival movement, the Sinhalese chauvinists soon developed demands for social and cultural privileges — that Sinhalese should be the official language, and so on.

The Tamils, some of whom had been

an elite under British rule, became more and more oppressed, and Sri Lanka's labour movement was badly disrupted by the conflict.

Four years ago the killing of some Sinhalese soldiers by 'Tamil Tiger' guerillas led to pogroms and massacres against the Tamils. Since then it has been a matter of tit-for-tat communal conflict, with the horrible massacre of innocent civilians on both sides a frequent occurrence.

The Tamils have the right to an independent state if they want one — and the right to unify the Tamil-majority territory on the island with India if that is what they desire.



Horror in Sri Lanka

Israel

Palestinians detained in Israel

By Bryan Edmands

TODAY IN Israel there are over 4300 Palestinian prisoners detained because of their political beliefs and activities.

Daily these political prisoners are being subjected to increasingly brutal and inhuman treatment by the prison authorities in an attempt to break their spirit of resistance and solidarity, and in order more readily to portray them to the world as common criminals.

However, the prisoners, women and men, held in eleven Israeli prisons, are fighting back — fighting back with the only means left to them, hunger strike. They are

fighting for an end to their miserable daily conditions and for humane treatment.

In their list of demands and their appeal to the world, the prisoners stress the basic human rights issues involved, rather than seeking overt commitments on the Israel/Palestine issue.

The demands, supported by the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the Palestinian Prisoners' Committee, are:

- To put an end to the use of physical violence against individuals and to stop collective punishment;
- To improve medical treatment, and to treat immediately the cases of serious illness;
- To decrease the large numbers of prisoners held together in cells which

are too small;

- To permit visits between prisoners in the prison in order to maintain social contact;

- To allow prisoners 'non-forbidden' books and local magazines;

- To stop the aggravated searches of prisoners, and to return prisoners' belongings;

- To improve the quantity and quality of food and the dining facilities;

- To locate prisoners in prisons nearest to their families;

- Freedom to choose permitted work in prison.

Messages of protest should be sent to the Israel embassy, and letters of support for the prisoners to the Union of Women's Committees, PO Box 324, Ramalla, West Bank, via Israel.

Hero of the Soviet Union!

REMEMBER THE Korean jet which was shot out of the skies by the Russian airforce when it 'violated USSR airspace' in late 1983? Every one of its 269 passengers and crew was killed.

Last week a 19 year old West German, Mathias Rust, won some revenge for those 269 by humiliating the top brass who run the USSR's air defence. He flew a tiny plane from Helsinki to Moscow, working his way unscathed through the radar screens and air force patrols.

When he got to Moscow he circled the Kremlin and then landed just outside its walls. He is now in jail, and may face a ten year sentence for his daring flight.

Rust has not yet had a chance to explain himself publicly. It seems likely that he was either making some political protest, or else acting out of a spirit of adventure and the desire to achieve the seemingly impossible.

This inspiring story shows that even the most massive military and air force system, staffed by people casually willing to commit mass murder like that inflicted on the Korean jet passengers, is not invincible, and that ordinary people are not helpless against it.

A number of top militarists in the USSR have been dismissed for incompetence because they did not manage to shoot down Rust. Perhaps Gorbachev is seizing the chance to chop out dead wood from the top of the armed forces hierarchy so that he can replace them with his supporters.

If Rust is lucky, he may benefit from Gorbachev's current desire to show the West what a benevolent good fellow he is. But people should be free to come and go across frontiers as they like. The labour movement should demand the immediate release of Mathias Rust!

The left and the election

From page 8

now. In the meantime, when workers vote, the exercise is dismissed as inevitably dominated by the pressure of the ruling class.

They escape in their fantasies from the difficulties and pressures the labour movement feels from the ruling class and its agents in the labour movement, into a future world where things will be easier. Meanwhile they fail to do the tasks of today, fail to do what can and must be done now to help the working class develop towards the future the SWP can only appropriate in fantasy. Calling for a Labour government, they do nothing to achieve it.

The politics of the SWP, too, are essentially the politics of jokesville — tempered and diluted by opportunism and a willingness to take into account the attitudes of working-class militants who would never take them seriously against if they didn't call for a Labour vote in this vital confrontation between the political party of the working class and the government of the ruling class.

Militant

Less pernicious in its effects on the election campaign, but no less preposterous, is the approach of *Militant*, which fights for a Labour victory under the slogan *Labour to power on a socialist programme*. It's a good idea, but it has nothing to do with reality.

Labour is not fighting on a socialist programme, nor is it going to. An irreplaceable precondition for Labour to fight for socialism is that the labour movement be renewed

from the bottom up, and that socialists lead the Labour Party. We don't.

Not the least objection to the slogan is that by way of vapid fantasies it obscures the work still to be done by socialists in the labour movement, and reduces socialism to an administrative blueprint. At the worst, the slogan is simply a lie — though the aim is more to console *Militant* than to deceive ordinary Labour voters. It is unworthy of people who say that they are Marxists.

Power?

From the same school comes *Briefing's* 'Labour take the Power!' Slogans should indicate clearly what they mean. By power, the people who put out this slogan mean state power. They think they are advocating working-class state power, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But to the average Labour activist the slogan just means: Labour form the government.

Well, the Labour leaders want to form the government! But that won't be the taking of power by the working class in the sense in which the *Briefing* comrades understand it.

"To face reality squarely... to tell the truth to the masses", that was Trotsky's advice on such matters. It is a lot better than fantasising.

Socialist Action

Socialist Action cannot be faulted on commitment to Labour's campaign. It is essentially right when it explains that: "What is significant

about Labour is not what it is pledged to but what it is based on". We must vote Labour to defend the labour movement and what the movement has won over the decades.

But *Socialist Action* has its share of fantasy. It retrospectively condemns the "many socialists" who "during the last four years... have concentrated on building a 'left to the left of Kinnock'." Apparently — this is not quite clear — *SA* believes that *nothing* but defensive struggle is possible now or has been possible for years, and moreover that defensive struggle is doomed to defeat: "there is not going to be a Labour government", it said on 8 May, throwing in the towel before the election campaign started.

'Alliance'

Accordingly, *Socialist Action* never (neither now, nor before the election) really argues for *socialism* (collective working-class control of the economy). Its criticism of Labour's leaders is that they have not built an 'alliance' (rainbow coalition) with blacks and women by following the example of the GLC and other left councils.

They redefine socialism as the 'self-determination of oppressed groups'. Despite the justice of most of the demands they champion on this basis, it means dissolving 'socialism' into a conglomerate of radical pressure-group politics. This both chops down socialism, and, by disconnecting the particular causes from the general working-class aim, makes it more difficult to win workers' support for those causes.

In any case *SA* doesn't even try

much. Rather than trying to make its pages a weapon in the struggle, it talks to itself, concerned above all to convince itself of its own 'correctness'.

SA chops its own politics down to 'rainbow-coalition' politics; and then justifies those politics on the basis that nothing else can defend the labour movement, and nothing more positive than defence is possible.

A new SCLV?

Back before the 1979 election, when Labour was in power and since 1976 had begun, rather timidly, to pioneer some of the key policies that have since in a full-blooded incarnation become known as Thatcherism, *SO* supporters initiated the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, SCLV. The SCLV organised leftists to support Labour and fight the Tories, while making an independent and parallel *socialist* election campaign.

It was possible to draw fairly large numbers of leftists and a number of CLPs into the campaign. It was essential to do so, for socialists could not endorse the politics of the Callaghan-Wilson government even while fighting to keep out the Tories and put Labour back in.

Today it is impossible to organise such a campaign. The forces don't exist for it. The activists want to line up behind the official campaign, even if they add their own slant here and there. They do not want to give the Tories and the Alliance the chance to use any independent campaign to undermine the official campaign when Labour is challenging the in-

cumbent Tories with alternative and better policies, however limited they are from a socialist point of view.

This time *SO* has put out a pamphlet, *The Case For Labour*, under the SCLV name. We think it is useful propaganda, but that is all: it would be futile and probably counter-productive to try to organise a broad campaign.

Marx

Back in 1864, when Karl Marx wrote the manifesto of the International Workingmen's Association, he described the Acts of the British Parliament (passed with the support of the Tories) which limited the hours that children could work in Victorian factories as a victory for the political economy of the working class.

Marx had no illusions about the limited character of those Acts of Parliament, or about their effectiveness in ending the abuses they tackled. Yet he was right about the tendency.

In the same way, it can be said that in Labour's election campaign Neil Kinnock and his team are confronting Toryism and expressing workers' anger, frustration and desire for at least a series of modifications in the capitalist system. For now they stand against the Tories for the interests of the working class.

When a Labour government begins to act against those interests, we will have to fight it. Right now every serious socialist should use the remaining week of the election period to do everything he or she can to kick out the Tories and put in a Labour government.

Vote Labour, kick out the Tories

Glasgow council attacks stallholders

By Stan Crooke

"It's the pits. The Council wants to move us out and replace us with arty-farty craft stalls and flats for a bunch of snobs. Some of the stallholders have been here all their lives. This time the Council's picked on the wrong people to mix it with."

This is how stallholder Julie Scott summed up her reaction to last week's shock news that Glasgow District Council has plans to shut down the city's famous Paddy's Market, located in a series of railway-arches and a lane off the Clyde waterfront.

The closure of the market fits in with the right-wing-Labour-controlled council's strategy of changing the image — rather than the reality — of Glasgow as a city of poverty, unemployment, and urban deprivation.

Vast tracts of council land and council housing in the city centre have been sold off to private building firms at rock-bottom prices, whilst Glasgow's working class population has been shunted into exile on the city's sprawling peripheral estates.

A "cleaned-up" city centre is now to be put on show as perjured evidence of Glasgow's alleged prosperity. In this Grand Design there is certainly no place for Paddy's Market — the overwhelming majority of whose customers are the unemployed, pensioners and the low-paid, who cannot afford the prices charged elsewhere.

Stallholders

Stallholders are in no doubt as to the thinking behind plans to close the market. "One of the parties involved," explained Michael Taplin, secretary of the market's Action Group, "is Glasgow Action, a group of businessmen sworn to restore the Merchant City to its former glory, with lords and ladies on the pavement, and us left in the flaming muck."

The Council is setting about attempting to close Paddy's Market in its characteristically underhand manner — the first inkling which stallholders had of its intentions was when they were publicised by the local media. Attempts to gain more information have merely resulted in the market's representatives being "shunted from pillar to post", as one of them put it.

But support for the campaign to keep the market open has flooded in from all sides, including the local MP and even some councillors. Michael Taplin described some of the campaigning to date:

"A tenants association of stallholders was set up the day after we heard of the threat of closure, and there are plans to start a Customer Action Group as well. We have produced posters, leaflets, and a petition, with over 5,000 signatures collected in the market in three days.

People cannot afford to lose the market — you have had women from Eaterhouse (a Glasgow council housing estate) making up their own petitions and collecting signatures in the city centre. We have already galvanised support. Now we plan to cast our net wider. A campaign fund and protest marches are also being organised. We are starting to get attention from people with clout."

Keeping Paddy's Market open is vital to the livelihood of its stallholders and customers. The former would be forced out of business by the higher rents charged elsewhere. And the rock-bottom incomes of the latter make them dependent on the market to keep their heads above water.

The threat to the future of Paddy's Market is a sign of how low Glasgow District Council is prepared to sink in its Tory-style marketing of Glasgow as "the Paris of the North". Working-class people in Glasgow need Paddy's Market, not the Council's cheap publicity stunts. For more information about the campaign, contact: Michael Taplin, 041-424 0905.

Students and the election



What you can do

The student vote could be decisive in a number of marginal constituencies. Here is a checklist of last minute activities to make sure your constituency gets out the Labour vote.

Labour students and party activists will have canvassed the Halls of Residence at least once by now. To back that up, the candidate could perhaps give an hour to do brief meetings in the Union or the Halls.

Stalls should be set up to give out

By Jane Ashworth

stickers and leaflets to encourage students to vote and to raise the Labour Party's profile.

If there is not a polling station on campus then arrange mini-buses to take students — especially women — to vote. Many campuses are unsafe for women walking around at night.

In unorganised colleges — those

which don't have a Labour Club or are not affiliated to NUS, then be bold! Set up a stall outside the gates with megaphones, and do a street meeting. Make sure you have plenty of leaflets, stickers and posters with you. Go into the canteen at lunchtime and give out leaflets but be prepared: you might get thrown out.

Finally, don't forget that Further Education colleges are not only colleges for under 18s — there will be many students there who are eligible to vote.

Why students should vote Labour

By Martin Pagel

The last eight years have seen widespread attacks upon students. Continued education has ceased to be available to all who may benefit from it, and is increasingly open only to those who can afford to pay.

Students who are lucky enough to receive financial support have seen their grants devalued by more than 20%. The majority of students, however, do not get any financial assistance at all. Those in the Further Education sector, in particular, are forced to rely upon their parents, or to take discretionary awards from hard-pressed local authorities.

Housing is another area in which students and young people have been attacked. With fewer new houses being built, and much existing housing stock rapidly degenerating into slums, there is an acute shortage of secure, affordable accommodation for rent.

This particularly hits single young people, many of whom have lost almost all hope of independent living.

Where students are organised to oppose these cuts, they have faced widespread victimisation, ranging from having student unions threatened with effective closure (Sussex and Reading Universities), through to individuals being suspended or expelled from colleges (Cardiff University).

The Tories have made it clear that they want to see colleges take an even greater responsibility for controlling the actions of their students.

By introducing free-market competition into education, the Tories have succeeded in ensuring that education remains the privilege of the ruling class. As long as Thatcher is in office, the education system will be forced to prove its economic value. It will be increasingly controlled by industry.

The general election gives students the opportunity to vote for a more open and accessible education system. In the words of NUS, 'don't hope for change, vote for it'. Vote Labour on June 11.

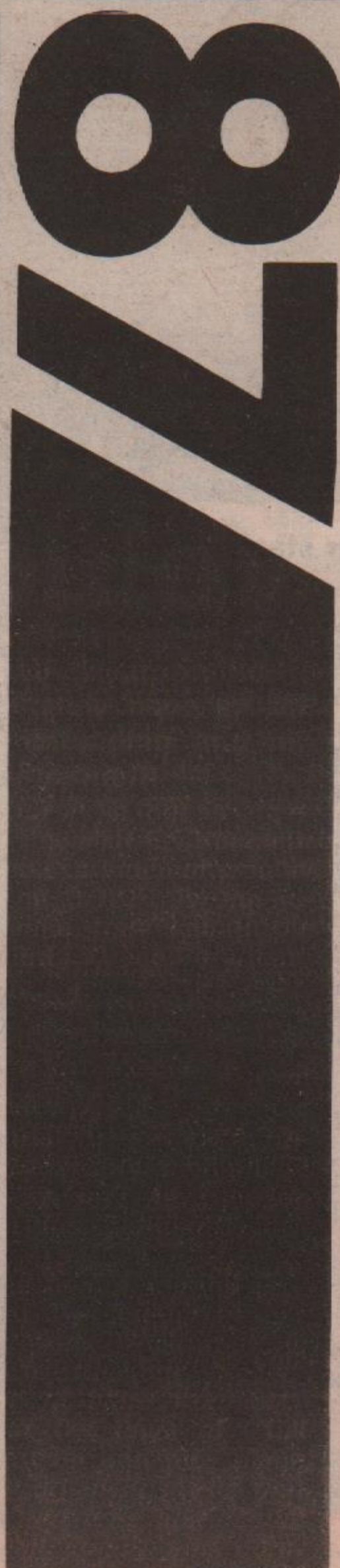
WORKERS' LIBERTY



SUMMER SCHOOL

Manchester

FRIDAY 3 JULY
SATURDAY 4 JULY
SUNDAY 5 JULY



For further details write to: PO Box 823, Peckham, London SE15 4NA or phone (01) 639 7965

WHETTON'S WEEK

The job to be done

IT WILL be difficult to rebuild from the damage that the Tories have done, even in the event of a Labour victory.

There is a massive amount of work to be done, and it is not exactly going to be a smooth ride between workers and a Labour government.

If we contemplate the unthinkable, and the Tories do succeed, then I fear a massive attack on the entire Welfare State — health, education, all the things that people see as major issues. And, of course, they've got to get rid of the front-line defence, which is the trade union movement.

The trade unions are going to come under vicious attack, and we are going to be in for a terrible time.

We need to make sure whichever way the election goes that the trade unions are there to carry on the fight. We shall need them even in the event of a Labour victory, but we shall have to withstand a massive onslaught if the Tories win.

We want lots of things from a Labour government, though you can't be sure that we'll get them. First, the repeal of all repressive trade union legislation and the removal of Cruise missiles and US bases; a massive rebuilding of hospitals and schools; money pumped back into industry in order to pull us back to where we were before the Tories started to dismantle various sectors.

We shall really have to address ourselves to taking over the commanding heights — we shall have to take over the entire running of the country, because we can't effectively tackle the problems that are going to be left unless we've got the freedom to do it, and that means stopping the interference from capitalists, from the international monetarists, and from the multinational companies.

Locally, there are a few differences between the two seats I'm on the border of. I believe that the Labour Party is going to get Sherwood. Newark is a different story. We're putting up a hell of a fight, but whether we can take it from the Tories is an open question.

Looking at it overall, the Tories top the polls, but I am very suspicious of polls. I don't think they reflect opinions, I think they make opinions.

Maggie

But all the same, if you look at the polls, over 50% don't want Maggie Thatcher, and only the interference of traitors like Owen and the rest of the Gang of Four can enable Thatcher to continue to rule.

The Alliance are in the national media headlines, but round here they amount to very little on the ground. People can see that if we're going to get rid of Thatcher, there's only one way to do it, and that's to vote Labour.

The UDM has called on its members not to vote Labour — that is, to vote Tory — but I believe that many rank-and-file UDM members will see that the only way they can protect their industry and their jobs is to vote Labour. Whether the bitterness of the strike is hanging on and will make them not vote, or vote Tory, remains to be seen.

Paul Whetton is the secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Exposed: fascists in the Tories' ranks

By Jim Fraser

The anti-fascist magazine Searchlight has revealed a Tory MP hired professional assassins to kidnap and murder a journalist to stop him exposing the links between this Tory MP and certain Nazi organisations both in Britain and overseas.

The whole thing has been covered up by Thatcher and Tebbit, and the Tory MP has never been brought to justice, nor even subject to any disciplinary action by the party.

Numerous international terrorists of the extreme right have come to Britain in recent years, where they have been safehoused by British Nazis. These people are wanted in their own countries for a vast catalogue of horrific crimes, including assassination, murder and terrorism.

Although the countries where they are wanted are "our partners" in both the European Community and NATO and their governments have repeatedly appealed for their extradition, Thatcher has in all but a tiny minority of cases "been unable" to extradite these Nazi terrorists back to their own country to face justice.

Britain is also the home of a number of wanted Nazi war criminals, but since their presence here recently came to light the Thatcher government has protected them, steadfastly refusing their extradition, and going so far as to rubbish the internationally respected Simon Weisenthal centre which exposed them. One Tory stated we should forget what the Nazis did and concentrate on the "crimes" committed against them.

Not only has the Conservative Party moved far to the right, it has willingly accepted "ex"-Nazis into its ranks and into positions of authority.

Steven Kerr, a leader of the Federation of Conservative Students at Lanchester Polytechnic and editor of their magazine "Blueprint", is a former member of both the National Front and the National Socialist Action Party. Tory councillor Bernard Ward is a former National Front activist in Staffordshire currently under police investigation. Neil Lynn is a former East Anglia British Movement organiser and Cambridge Conservative Association ward Chair.

"Ex"-Fronters dominate some constituency Conservative Associations. The Barking Tory Party has "Ex"-Front supporter Janice Izzard as one of its councillors and Charles Bond, for many years a top man in the NF as its Chair. Questioned about having this leading "Ex"-fascist as Chair, the Barking Tory parliamentary candidate said he was "delighted".

Norman Tebbit has taken no action against fascist infiltration of the Tory Party and when he was pressed by Bryan Gould specifically on the Barking and Dagenham takeover, Tebbit rubbished him.

The next issue of Socialist Organiser will be produced later in the week than usual so that we can cover the election results. No.317 will be printed on Friday 12 June.

No.318 will be printed on Tuesday 23 June.

Margaret Thatcher, life snatcher!

THATCHER and her government of spiteful, narrow-minded, anti-working-class Tories won the General Election of June 1979 and took over at Westminster and Whitehall.

They immediately began to run the country as if they were an alien ruling elite, a foreign occupying power.

For the previous 40 years the dominant Tories had been believers in 'one nation', people who exploited and robbed the British working class (and other working classes too!) and when necessary were ruthless in keeping us down, but nevertheless believed that they had something in common with all the British people.

They thought that the ruling class had some responsibility to those they ruled — *noblesse oblige*. They learned during the '30s and '40s that it was in the enlightened self-interest of the capitalist class to try to make life liveable for the workers — short of getting off our backs! — and they worked to soften class conflict.

None of that for Thatcher. She immediately began to make war on millions of 'her own' people — on trade unionists, on the poor and defenceless.

The international slump offered Thatcher the chance to use mass unemployment to undermine the ability of the working class to fight back — and she took the chance.

The Tories have deliberately kept unemployment higher than any other comparable European state. For them unemployment has been a weapon in the class war, and they have used it mercilessly and remorselessly.

Whole areas of the country have been devastated. The ruling class could not beat the working class in a series of battles covering the two decades before Thatcher came to power. Thatcher seized the chance of the slump to destroy and pauperise large sections of the working class.

The Tories have used the law to grind down the trade unions, and used a semi-militarised police force to enforce the law and smash picket lines.

Thatcher has moved — and will continue to move further if she wins the election — to destroy the Welfare State. The Health Service is being smashed up, and so is the empty pretence of equality in educational opportunity.

To those that have already, more has been given — but from now on in education the lines from Billie Holliday's song will tell us where we are at — "God bless the child who's got his own"; or whose parents have. And to hell with the millions of children - 93% of the total — who have to rely on the state system.

In health it will be according to the lines of another old song: "If life was a thing that money could buy, then the rich would live and the poor would die". That's what Thatcher says, without the if.

Under the reduced 'National Health Service', the rich who can afford to get private treatment will live, and more and more of the poor who can't will suffer and die.

Thatcher has been making war on millions of British working-class people. On 11 June we have a chance to turn the tide against Thatcher by voting the Tories out.

Vote Labour on 11 June!



ONE OF the nastiest little jokes of the election campaign will be played on the British people just before they go to the polls.

Mrs Thatcher will swan off to Europe to meet other great leaders at an international conference. It is all planned, time-tabled and calculated. On the eve of the election Mrs Thatcher will be shown on the TV screens as the international

superstar statesman.

And you wouldn't want to use your miserable little once-in-four-or-five-years vote to force a woman of Mrs Thatcher's international stature into the status of a mere leader of the Opposition, or of a back-bench MP, or even — god save us! — a mere retired OAP.

You would? Well, you are pro-

bably a card-carrying paid-up member of the loony left.

In fact, Mrs Thatcher's most distinctive position in international affairs show her up for what she is — the sorrowful but loyal friend of South Africa, President Reagan's favourite stooge politician, and the backer of Reagan's murderous air raid on Libya.

Butt out, Reagan!

ACCORDING to one school of academic experts on the mental processes of the President of the United States of America, Ronald Reagan doesn't know where Britain is, or what it is.

Others had believed that he thinks it is a floating aircraft and missile carrier.

Last week Reagan proved them all wrong. He does know where Britain is! And he knows it is not a floating US aircraft carrier (as distinct from the sort of US and British missile car-

rier it in fact is).

He knows that an election is about to be held here, and that his good friend Margaret Thatcher may be in trouble. So he let British TV reporters know that he thinks the world of Mrs Thatcher and would be very aggrieved if she were removed and replaced by Neil Kinnock.

Reaganite officials in Washington tried to intervene in the British election by 'leaking' the story that a Labour victory would provoke an immediate rupture between Britain and

the USA. The Tory Sunday Telegraph splashed it on its front page, before it was officially denied.

Neil Kinnock was speaking for the labour movement when he politely told Reagan to butt out.

He was too polite. On the other hand, the good side of Reagan's intervention is that once more British people had a chance to see just how close Mrs Thatcher is to Reagan, who arms fascist-minded murderers of men, women and children in Nicaragua and El Salvador.