

N209

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West



**Stop the military campaign!**  
**An open letter to Gerry Adams**  
**See page 3**

**Including 8-page Women's Fightback**

# Free this jailed trade unionist!



Vladimir Klebanov

Vladimir Klebanov is forcibly held in a soviet mental institution, being pumped with drugs which could eventually kill him. His associate, Alexei Nikitin died in captivity two years ago.

Klebanov's crime? He fought for workers' rights against his Stalinist rulers; he attempted to organise a free trade union.

Klebanov was a Ukrainian miner, working in the Donbass coalfield. During the 1950s he began to take up health and safety issues on behalf of his comrades in the mines. His attempts were constantly frustrated by the officials of the state-run labour fronts masquerading as trade unions in the Soviet Union.

Klebanov kept up his crusade, with the support of his fellow workers, but the mine management became increasingly alarmed and sacked him in 1964.

He was blacklisted, and spent three years unemployed, which in the Soviet Union means enormous hardship.

His activities drew the attention of

**By Lynn Ferguson**

the KGB and Klebanov was incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals for short periods in 1964 and 1967.

In 1968 Klebanov was taken on again in the mines, but this time in an administrative job. But the KGB continued to visit him, attempting to bully him into giving up his struggle for

workers' rights.

Over time Klebanov made links with dissident workers from other branches of Soviet industry, and in 1978 founded an independent trade union, the Free Trade Union Association. Its founding statement defined its aims: to fight for trade unions independent of the state, and run by the workers themselves; to secure for soviet workers the right to strike.

The KGB moved in, and arrested Klebanov and other leading members of the FTUA, again putting them in psychiatric hospitals.

On their release, a few months later, they arranged a press conference with representatives of the western media in Moscow, to gain publicity for their cause. Travelling to this press conference Klebanov was again picked up by the KGB, and taken to yet another psychiatric hospital. He has been there ever since.

No-one knows how many political prisoners are held in Soviet mental institutions. We do know it has been a favourite tool of the bureaucracy to grind down and demoralise those

Contact the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15. Comrades are asked to send delegates from affiliated organisations to Campaign meetings. All organisations which sponsored the Solidarity Conference are invited to affiliate to the Campaign at no extra charge. We ask for further affiliations: Labour Parties, trade union branches - £10. Wards, Women's Sections, Black Sections, and student Labour Clubs - £5. LPYS branches - £1.



Just part of the audience of over 300 who attended the 7 November conference in Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc. For a full report on the conference, see pages 4 and 5. Photo: Ian Swindale.

who dare to fight against the regime.

When Klebanov's case first became known in Britain, NUM members wrote to Arthur Scargill asking what he intended to do in the way of solidarity. Scargill refused to discuss the matter.

Scargill's attitude is common to many in the British labour movement who see the Soviet Union as some sort of 'socialism' and regard people

like Klebanov as traitors.

Now is the time to turn the tide. Last Saturday's successful conference on "Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc" was a start.

We must mount a campaign throughout the labour movement to convince people of their duty of solidarity with oppressed workers

**Turn to page 2**

**WOMAN'S EYE**



By Cathy Turner, Wallasey YS

**MY FIRST STRIKE**

Since I have got involved in politics, all it's ever been is past strikes, struggles and strain. I only ever saw workers crossing picket lines and not making them strong and successful.

Well last week was my first time on a picket line, and everything was like a fairy tale strike.

At Stone Manganese Marine Ltd.,

in Wallasey, three TGWU security guards were unfairly sacked. This was done by their own shop steward! Stone Manganese Marine employed six security guards. However the shop steward negotiated a dirty deal with the boss, behind the workers' backs. This rotten contract involved taking on three security guards, as a small business and the other three workers to be thrown

away like rubbish. On the whole site there are 150 AEU members and 40 non-unionised workers, in small firms. On Monday 2 November, the three sacked security guards, with help from unemployed activists from all over Merseyside, mounted a picket, explaining the dirty dealings of the so-called shop steward, (who by now had left the union). Before work, the

workers gathered and had a meeting and decided not to cross the picket line. This was successful because out of 200 workers, barely a handful crossed the picket line. The following day, the picket was still in full force and again the workers stuck together and refused to cross the picket line. By Tuesday night, the boss could not take any more and had crumbled. He ripped up the old security guards' dirty deal, re-employed the three sacked workers and forced the three scabs to join the TGWU. Who said solidarity is dead?

**Nukes and nurture**

Remember those ads in the glossy magazines a few months ago? You know the ones — "Come and visit Sellafield" — with a little ticket attached, entitling you to a trip around the plant.

Not my cup of tea, but apparently it was very successful. People flocked in their thousands to take in the delights of one of Cumbria's most famous landmarks. It makes a change from a day trip to Blackpool, I suppose.

Well, the nuclear industry has embarked on a new advertising campaign, especially for us ladies. A full-page portrait of a happy healthy child carries the headline "Does he have a future without it?" — nuclear power, that is.

The nuclear industry, you see, has just completed a survey which shows that two-thirds of women are opposed to nuclear power, as against one-third of men. So they are prepared to spend £300,000 to change our minds.

The advertising campaign is based on a neat little theory too. A certain Dr. Tom Margerison, the director of the Nuclear Energy Information Group, pontificates: "I think the difference between the opinions of men and women is related to the poor education women have in science subjects. It makes them more susceptible to scare stories..."

Oh, I see, we poor, ill-educated nitwits just don't understand. If we'd done physics A level all would be well. As it is, we're obviously prey to all those old wives' tales about high levels of radiation leading to cancer, and that maybe plutonium dust in your Hoover bag isn't the best thing since 'Shake and Vac'. Silly us.

You'd expect, then, that BNFL et al would give us lots of scientific and technical information about the 'benefits' of nuclear power. But no. According to Dr. Margerison we "need reassurance". Hence the twee pictures of bonny babies — the only things we're really interested in, after all.

Funnily enough, this view of women isn't that different from that of many feminists who would be against nuclear power.

These modern-day matriarchs would have it that all such technology is 'male', and totally opposed to the 'female' world of nurturing, being in touch with the elemental rhythms of the earth, and such twaddle. Women, according to the logic, have a fundamental interest in preserving the world from the ravages of patriarchal technology.

Not being a web-spinning type myself, I find all this a little hard to swallow, and just as reactionary as Dr. Tom's ruminations. Women have throughout history been excluded from the world of science and technological advance.

I find this no cause for celebration, nor do I wish in desperation to search for some sort of alternative women's knowledge based on myths about mediaeval witches.

Both the mystical feminists and the likes of Dr. Margerison have one thing in common — that science is "male knowledge".

I don't know why more women than men are opposed to nuclear power. Possibly it is partly to do with women's involvement in childcare, and their feeling of responsibility for their children's future.

Not because we're stupid, or because our wombs rule our minds, but because for centuries that has been our role. We're fighting to end all that, and mystical back-to-the-earth strands of feminism don't help. And as for patronising comments from nuclear power boffins — no thanks!

**YOUTH FIGHTBACK CONFERENCE**

Saturday 28-Sunday 29 November, at the Royal Institution, Liverpool.

- Debates
  - Accommodation
  - Creche.
- Employed £3, students £2, school students/unemployed £1.  
Contact: Mark, 01-639 7967.

**Thatcher and Reagan fall out over crash**

By Martin Thomas

The strain is showing. Last Thursday, 5th, Margaret Thatcher and Nigel Lawson made polite but unmistakable attacks on Ronald Reagan's US government.

They broke the usual Thatcher-Reagan common front and criticised the US government's failure to control its huge budget deficit.

For the last four years or so British capitalists have been eagerly coining profits from the boom in US demand which the Reagan government's big spending has helped to promote. But capitalism isn't about gratitude. That boom came to a drastic end on 19 October, and now capitalists across the world are squabbling about who's going to bear the brunt.

The British government, and most other big capitalist states, want the US to raise taxes and cut government spending. This will cause a downturn in the US economy, but they hope it will be a limited one.

The big-business magazine the Economist spelled out the Tories' thinking more bluntly: "Every day that passes without some credible action to reduce America's budget deficit adds to the pressure on the dollar (i.e. the loss of value of the dollar relative to other sorts of money, like deutschmarks and yen). Foreigners are shouting that they will not cover America's savings-investment gap by lending more of their own savings (i.e. in the present rickety state of Wall Street, they will not invest in the US). Without a cut in the budget deficit, the gap will therefore have to be closed by something that reduces American investment. It is called a slump".

Without a limited, government-controlled downturn now, they fear there will be a big, uncontrolled slump later. If the worst came to the worst, British, Dutch, Japanese,

Saudi, Mexican and Argentine capitalists could all simultaneously decide that the dollar was losing value so badly that they wanted to sell the thousands of billions of dollars that they hold and buy deutschmarks or yen instead. The dollar would go the way of Israel's or Lebanon's or Argentina's money, becoming almost worthless. Dollars would become just pretty green bits of paper, and the whole present system of international trade, which is based on the dollar being the one sort of money that everyone in the world will accept, from Australia to Zaire, would collapse.

By letting the dollar's value go down slowly now, the big capitalist governments hope to avoid it going down fast later, and wholesale economic disaster following. Then they want the US government to raise taxes and cut spending so as to stabilise the dollar at a new level.

But even if Reagan delivers this programme, it is based on not much more than bluff. A cut in US government spending, and tax increases, may convince investors to stop selling dollars. But it may not. And it will not automatically cut the US's yawning gap between imports and exports. The downturn it causes in the US may be limited and controlled — or it may not.

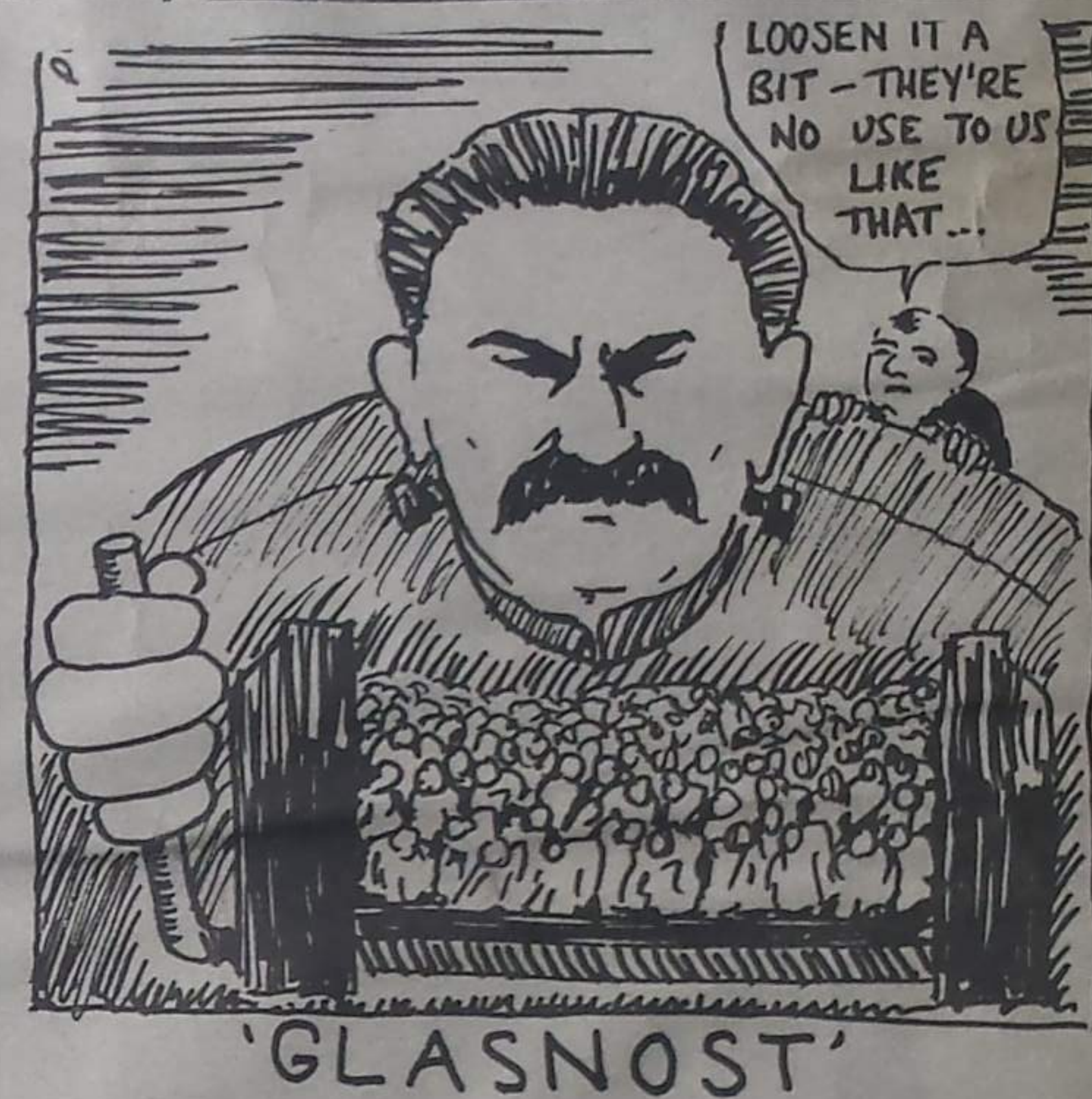
What the big capitalist governments are doing now is only a few degrees more rational than praying for rain. And the system of production for profit which they are trying to keep on course is as crazy and irrational as a system of farming based on prayer.

**Free this jailed trade unionist**

From front page

both east and west.

Supporters of Vladimir Klebanov will be picketing the Soviet Embassy on Wednesday 25 November. All labour movement organisations should support this picket and show



South Africa

**After Mbeki, Mandela?**

In what was widely perceived as a test case for the release of Nelson Mandela, ANC leader Govan Mbeki, jailed since 1964, was set free from South Africa's Robben Island prison last week.

Perhaps surprisingly, temperatures were cool in the black townships. One of the apartheid regime's fears in any release of Mandela has been that his return to the townships could be a catalyst for an uncontrollable revolt — it has been compared in its likely effects to that of Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran in 1979.

The low-key reception given Mbeki has fuelled speculation that Botha could be planning Mandela's release in the near future.

Mbeki was jailed at the same time as Mandela and Walter Sisulu in 1964 following the famous Rivonia trials. Unlike them, Mbeki and his family are closely and openly identified with the South African Communist Party.

Why should Botha make this trial run for Mandela? Today the township struggle is at a low ebb, having been successfully contained and — for the time being at least — defeated. If Botha is to free Nelson Mandela, he will want to do so on his own terms. The last time there were rumours of Mandela's impending release was at the time of the Eminent Persons' Group in Spring 1986. But at that time the anti-apartheid struggle was at its peak, and it was too risky a prospect. Instead, Botha reimposed the State of Emergency.

Mbeki has called for an end to bloodshed in Natal, where rivalry between radical groups and Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement is intense. There has been speculation that Mbeki's project is to bring about a truce.

Possibly the gesture of Mbeki's release is directed more at Buthelezi and his like than at the ANC. Buthelezi always calls for the release of Mandela and other leaders as a precondition for negotiations. Botha has held out a hand to Buthelezi.

**Pamphlet causes ructions**

The new SSiN pamphlet 'A stitch in time — the decline of Labour Students' is causing ructions amongst the Democratic Left who control the National Organisation of Labour Students.

Copies of the pamphlet have been snatched from sellers and ripped up, and according to an article in the Times Higher Education Supplement, the Labour Party is considering referring the pamphlet to their lawyers.

This will put the NOLS leadership in a quandary. They condemned Militant for bringing the courts into labour movement disputes. But they have a bigger problem. Any legal case would allow us to actually see the files: the same files they have kept

**SSiN**

hidden from even NOLS NC members.

To further perplex the Democratic Left and to reveal the desperate state of NOLS, only 50 Labour Students attended last weekend's Get Left event. Get Left was supposed to be the highpoint of the first term for Labour Students!

The NOLS national committee were informed that Get Left was going to be big. They were expecting 150 which in itself is hardly 'big' — 150 students attended the SSiN Annual General Meeting.

Available from Socialist Students in NOLS, 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15

that we won't scab on our brothers and sisters in the Stalinist states.

And the first meeting of the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc will take place on Saturday 5 December in London. Be on the picket, support the campaign, and show solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Stalinist states.

CARDIFF SO MEETING  
'Which way forward for Labour?'

7.30 pm, Monday 16 November at May St. Institute, Cathays

NALGO NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION  
Against Deportations and Racist Immigration Law  
Assemble Finsbury Park, London, 12 noon, Saturday 14 November 1987

Speakers:  
Diane Abbott MP; Tony Banks MP; Harry Cohen MP; Max Madden MP; plus Marion Gaima (NALGO) and Sorn Raj (NUJ) who both face deportation.

**FREE VLADIMIR KLEBANOV**  
Free Trade Unionist  
DEMONSTRATE  
At the Soviet Embassy  
Wed 25 November  
18 Kensington Palace Gardens  
1.30 to 3.00



# Stop the military campaign!

An open letter to Gerry Adams

You have said publicly that you deeply regret the slaughter and havoc caused by the Provisional IRA bomb in Enniskillen last Sunday.

I'm sure you do. Not only have you slaughtered and maimed innocent Irish people attending a religious service, you have also dealt a grievous blow to the cause you want to serve — Irish unity.

Before the Provisional IRA admitted responsibility, there were grounds for suspecting that the bomb might have been the work of your enemies, the British state. That's the measure of the discredit you have brought on yourselves, and, inevitably, on your avowed cause.

Nor will it do much good with decent people in Ireland or Britain to express regret and sorrow. You offer the explanation — in fact, the excuse — that the British Army accidentally set off the bomb your movement planted, which you intended to explode when members of the military were passing.

Even if that is true, it hardly exculpates you. Even if the bomb had exploded accordingly to your schedule, there must have been a very big chance that it would have killed civilians too. Every thinking person in Ireland and Britain will know that. They will find your excuses hypocritical and obscene.

'The politics of the last atrocity' rules in Ireland — the pendulum swings against whichever side — yours, or the British and Unionist — has done the latest exceptionally horrible deed. But there are deeds that stand out and are long remembered. I suspect that this will be one of them.

You don't have to be religious to find it peculiarly horrible and unpardonable to explode a murderous bomb in a crowd of Protestants holding a religious service in memory of the Protestant and Catholic dead of the two Great Wars. It is also, and you must in some part of your mind know it, Mr Adams, an act which is in flat and absolute contradiction to the root idea of Republicanism — the equality of the different segments of the Irish people, 'Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter', to use Wolfe Tone's phrase.

It was a grossly and explicitly sectarian act. Mr Adams, neither you nor the movement you speak for takes seriously the sentiment expressed in the declaration of the Republic read out by Patrick Pearse at the Dublin Post Office on Easter Monday 1916, the commitment to "treat all the children of the nation equally". You talk vaguely about socialism, but you function as Catholic sectarians.

You have neither acknowledged nor apologised for the Catholic sectarian side of Sunday's massacre — though that is the side of it which will be most in the minds of Ireland's



Protestant community, and especially of Protestants in areas of Northern Ireland where Catholics are in the majority, as they are in Fermanagh.

I wrote above of your 'avowed' cause because what this carnage brings out most clearly of all is how sharply what you do contradicts what you want to achieve. The constitutional nationalist John Hume was right to describe the Enniskillen slaughter as a 'sectarian provocation'. You say you want a united Ireland — and you commit a sectarian atrocity like this against the community without whose consent there will never be a united Ireland!

Whatever you want to do or think you do, Mr Adams, your movement does not work for a united Ireland. The entire logic of your military campaign points not towards a united Ireland but towards bloody repartition by way of sectarian civil war — a war made up of such acts as Enniskillen.

Even if you gain your immediate objective, British withdrawal, through your military campaign, that will only be the first step towards the tragedy of sectarian civil war — out of which *can only* come repartition.

Irish nationalists like Eamonn De Valera abjured violence against the Protestants as a means of uniting Ireland because they knew it could not work. They knew that the most it could achieve would be to shift the border east and north, incorporating some of the Six Counties territory into the Republic. The 16 year long war which your movement has waged proves that they were right on that. What was wrong about their approach was their social and political programme, not the lack of gunfire.

Doing what is necessary to defend Catholic communities in Northern Ireland against attacks by Orange bigots or British forces is one thing. Trying to unite Ireland by guerilla

## EDITORIAL

war against the British Army — and, *in fact*, against the Northern Ireland Protestant community — is another.

It is a war you cannot win. It is a misconceived war. Its objective — Irish unity — cannot be won by war. It can only be won if the consent of the Irish minority is won.

Your war is premised on a number of radical misunderstandings and self-hypnotising ideological lies.

It is not 'British imperialism' that keeps Ireland divided. Fundamentally, it is the refusal of the Protestant-Unionist Irish minority, who are the majority in north-east Ulster, to accept the status of a permanent minority in a Catholic state.

If Britain withdraws without a political settlement — that is, before the Catholic and Protestant sections of the people of Northern Ireland and of Ireland as a whole have worked out a *modus vivendi*, a way of living together — then what will follow will not be self-determination for the people of Ireland as a whole, but *Protestant self-determination*. Deprived of the British state, which they see as their own, they will not submit to Catholic rule. The Protestants will assert their own identity and work for their own self-determination against the Catholic majority. And they have the strength to achieve it.

What will inevitably follow from that is Catholic-Protestant civil war. The Catholics could not win that war: they are a minority in Northern Ireland, and the people of the South will not rally to a Catholic crusade to crush the compact and well-armed Protestant community. No Wolfe Tone Republican would want the Catholics to win, because if they did win, the united Ireland that would result would have one million Protestants at least as alienated and hostile as are the half-million Catholics imprisoned by Partition against their will within the Six Counties state. But the Catholics would not win, and sectarian civil war — after much slaughter on both sides, of the sort we see now in Sri Lanka would lead to a new partition.

These are the fundamental realities of Irish political life, Mr Adams. For at least 100 years Irish political life has been dominated by the contradiction between the Irish majority's demand for unity and its demand for independence. The resistance of the minority — aided, for reasons which have varied over the years, by the British ruling class — has made it impossible to have both independence and unity *even after the initial British resistance*, for Imperial military reasons, to any form of Irish independence, had vanished, as it did decades ago. The barrier to Irish unity lies within Ireland, Mr Adams.

The Northern Ireland unit is undemocratic and unviable, and Ireland should be united. But Ireland will be united by a political movement which has a programme capable of uniting its communities — and, in the first place, the workers of the two communities.

An effective Republican movement should be fighting sectarianism in all forms, advocating a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area, and striving to unite workers in struggles for jobs, wages and conditions. It should ruthlessly reject all green-nationalist rhetoric and all provocative actions that divide workers. We cannot unite Ireland without uniting Irish people. James Connolly was right when he wrote: 'Ireland without her people means nothing to me'.

The last way to break down the barriers to Irish unity is by way of a military campaign. Your military campaign — conceived and justified as a campaign against British imperialism and its local agents — has raised and strengthened those barriers massively.

Yours is a war waged in the name of the Irish people, but actually based only on the Six Counties Catholic minority — and even on a minority of that minority. Your support in the rest of Ireland is miniscule. In a 26 Counties poll last week, 44% believed that your people should be extradited to stand trial in Northern Ireland, as against 34% who thought they should not.

Your chances of winning over the Northern Ireland majority are nil. In fact you don't try. Everything your movement has done over many years is proof that you have no interest in trying. You base yourselves on one community only, in both your political aims — a unitary all-Ireland state, which would inevitably be Catholic-dominated — and your methods — a guerilla war against the British state and against the Protestant community.

Against the Protestant community? Yes, Mr Adams, there is no other way to describe it, whether we are talking about what happened in Enniskillen or about the killing of Protestant workers earlier this year after they had been labelled as 'military targets' for doing jobs somehow related to maintaining the army or police.

The slaughter of the innocents in Enniskillen will convince many of Sinn Fein's erstwhile supporters that the Provisional IRA's war has landed your movement — and all of Northern Ireland's society — in a bloody dead-end. It should convince the socialists within Sinn Fein that the military campaign needs to be called off now.

No good can come of this campaign. There is nothing revolutionary about militarism-on-principle. Even if this campaign should succeed in forcing the British to withdraw — and it won't do that — then it will not unite Ireland, but bloodily redivide it... forever.

Enough is enough!

John O'Mahony,  
Editor, Socialist Organiser.

**NEXT WEEK:**  
A special pamphlet issue of Socialist Organiser — '1917: How the Workers Made a Revolution'.

This special issue will run for two weeks, and the next issue of Socialist Organiser after it will be on 4 December.

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# My first Labour conference

By Elizabeth Travers

I attended my first Labour Party Conference in Brighton this year. As a working class woman I found it very intimidating and confusing. I thought at first this was partly because I was not very well versed in Labour Party procedure, but as the week went on I found others — both men and women — as confused as I was.

But I did learn a few things and that's what it is all about. I learned if you want to hear good, socialist debates, go to fringe meetings, not the conference floor: it saves a lot of disappointment. The conference is not a good platform for working class or socialist views and, last but not least, the whole thing is stage managed to give the impression that only the NEC (National Executive Committee) knows what's best for Labour Party members.

I also learned that when working class people are determined enough they can, and do, get their views heard. So I therefore came away at the end of the week renewed in my convictions that we must and can fight for socialism.

On the whole, over the week there were some good debates spoiled only by the long and boring speeches from the platform. The same old things, by the same old people, telling us what we already knew, instead of giving us a good socialist policy to go back to our local parties and campaign around.

I myself became involved with some women who were trying to get the standing orders committee to give them time on the agenda to clear up two confusing motions on the issue of one woman on every short list. The two motions were conflicting and those on the floor were also confused about what they were voting for. But, as usual, the union block votes went with the NEC and the motions were passed without debate or clarification.

Standing orders kept us waiting, sent us away to come back later, could not find the tape of the particular item, and generally kept shunting us back and forth in the hope, I'm sure, that we would get fed up



Photo: Martin Shakeshaft

and go away.

Well, we did not go away. Some of the women had worked long and hard on this particular item and were not willing to wait another year to have the matter clarified and perhaps have to stand around again for days waiting to get some debate on the issue.

We organised as many women as possible to approach the platform after lunch and to demand time on the agenda. After some time — and a lot of argument — we were given time to put our point of view and also given a meeting with Joyce Gould at the end of the day. This meeting was a waste of time as it was used to slap our wrists for daring to question the methods of the NEC, and we were told to wait until next conference to clear up the matter.

This, needless to say, did not meet with great approval from the women and it was decided to gather and approach the platform again next mor-

ning as all other channels were closed to us. We did this and took over the MPs' seats to show that we did not intend to go away without some debate. We were at last given an appointment for a few women to meet a couple of NEC members.

This, at first, was also used as a wrist-slapping exercise but by now the women had had enough and made it plain that they were no longer going to be given the run around. They made it clear they wanted the NEC to do something about the whole mess. In the end John Evans, a member of the NEC gave us his telephone number at the House of Commons and his assurance that he would help in any way he could if we sent him a draft of a proposal to put to next year's conference as what was now needed was a constitutional amendment. It was not enough, but at least it gave us some satisfaction and we could go back to our CLPs and work towards it.

I'm writing about this because it proves two things: one, if you are really determined you can get something done and, two, that there are no rules when you are fighting for fundamental rights. The sad fact is that much of what we had to do to be heard could have been avoided if the Labour Party truly believed in equal rights for all. It is enough that women have to fight sexism and chauvinism every minute of every day in their lives. Surely we shouldn't

have to do it inside a 'socialist' party as well.

Perhaps the members of the Labour Party hierarchy should remember these famous words when talking of their fight on behalf of the working class (and we are still here in great numbers):

"The history of the struggle of the working women for better conditions of labour and for a more decent life is the history of the struggle of the proletariat for its liberation".

## An alternative to Just 17

Women's Fightback spoke to Jo, Justine and Rebecca from "Shocking Pink II", a magazine for young women, that has recently been re-launched. The original Shocking Pink was last produced three years ago.

first. When people came along with something we just let them put it in. Justine: We shouldn't just become another Just 17 and we shouldn't compromise on our politics. Jo: So many people have moved to the right. We don't want to.

But an awful lot of young women do read Just 17. Don't you think you try and relate to these women?

Rebecca: We try not to put people off. For instance we could have put something on the front cover about the article on Lesbianism. We didn't because we thought that would put people off.

Justine: Just 17 is political in a way. It had an article on school students recently.

Jo: The cartoon on the inside cover (about being chatted-up and so on). All these things have happened to young women at some point.

Justine: One of my friends at college, who didn't think of herself as a feminist, said that cartoon showed how unfair life was, and she said it changed her life.

Jo: Young women don't just think about boys and fashion. They also have to think about whether their father is raping them every day or whether they are going to get a job or not. We try and write about those things.

Why did you decide to re-launch Shocking Pink?

Jo (a founder member of the collective): We wanted to produce an alternative magazine for young women. We found out there had been Shocking Pink and decided to do it. Louise (the other founder member of the collective) put some adverts in Spare Rib and Just 17. It was a disaster. We got lots of letters, but because we didn't tell people what it was about they thought it would be just another Just 17. One mum wrote to Just 17 when she saw Shocking Pink, saying how awful it was and she got us banned!

What sort of magazine do you aim to be?

Jo: The old Shocking Pink was a lot more into sexuality and issues like that. We want to be a lot more political.

Rebecca: Left politics!

Jo: We had no editorial policy at

## Work A woman's place

By Penny Newell

In London there are growing numbers of "Fights Back" groups. They have been formed because we know that Labour councillors alone cannot stop the attacks on local government.

They never have had that power, even when more of them had the will to fight for local control of council money during the ratecapping crisis a couple of years ago. Then it was the support of trade unions, community groups, tenants groups they asked for. They recognised that they were just the elected mouthpiece for people in their area who would be affected by cuts in services. Their manifestos said so.

Now most Labour councillors have turned away from those groups who supported them. They talk of 'new realism', which means closing down day centres, nurseries, swimming pools, libraries, and starving black and women's groups of money so that they are forced to shut down.

Anyone with a bit of common sense can see that this is not the way forward. The ruling class are fighting a class war against us and we have no choice but to fight back. All the control Labour councils enjoyed until recently is under threat because the Tories don't want us to have the power to fight back — if the coun-

## Fighting Back

cillors can't see that, as our elected representatives, then we have to show them.

In Southwark Fights Back we are firstly aiming to get the message across to local people about what the council are doing, and why. There has been a successful campaign by the trade union NALGO in Southwark to keep open a day centre. This day centre is for 175 adults with learning difficulties and the council wanted to close it and sell the building. Southwark Fights Back members were involved in that campaign.

Through the Southwark Fights Back newsletter we are letting people know what is going on and are planning a housing charter to take around our estates and arguing that, unlike the majority of councillors, we haven't thrown in the towel and are still prepared to campaign against the government. Our estates could be good places to live. We don't want them sold off or allowed to get into such a bad state that they fall down around us.

Our message will be that we have a choice. We must organise and pressure the councillors to change and fight for our needs.

Trade unions are at last taking seriously issues that affect their black members. The racist immigration laws in this country affect most black trade unionists.

Every year these laws are used to deny hundreds of black people the right to live and work in freedom from harassment. Each month about 250 people are deported or forced to leave as a result of the immigration and nationality laws.

In the past NALGO has successfully taken up the cases of several members faced with deportation and supported their right to live in this country. It is currently campaigning for Marion Gaima who has lived in Britain for over 14 years. Her job is here, her home is here, her friends are here. Her life is here — but the government want to deport her. It says she has no right to be in Britain and must "go home" to Sierra Leone where she could face persecution because of her and her family's political beliefs.

Every day people like Marion and Som Raj (an NUJ member) have to live with the nightmare of worry and insecurity while the Home Office decides their fate.

Deportation is a trade union issue — until the racist laws are changed more people like Marion will need support. There is a national demonstration in London on Saturday 14th November. It will march from Finsbury Park to Shoreditch leisure centre and starts at 12 noon. It is supported by NALGO, NUPE, NUJ, NUS and is specifically protesting about the threatened deportation of Marion Gaima and Som Raj.

### SUBSCRIBE TO WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK!

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To: WF, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to Women's Fightback.

# FAB

FIGHT ALTON'S BILL

Women's Fightback Special

# Why the Alton Bill must be defeated

**Trudy Saunders and Michele Carlisle look at the implications of the Alton Bill – and how to fight it**

Getting an abortion on the NHS is an horrific experience for any woman. Unless you have an understanding GP you are likely to be treated as an irresponsible teenager (whatever your age) who is incapable of keeping her legs closed.

If your GP is good enough to allow you an NHS abortion then you are likely to wait weeks, if not months, for the actual operation. On the day of the operation you are treated as someone who is wasting the hospital's time and money and shouldn't really be there at all. And, of course, this says nothing of the mental and physical trauma you are likely to be going through.

That's, of course, if you can get an NHS abortion. In many parts of the country the Health Authorities seem to be unaware that abortion has been legal since 1967. For

women in these areas, particularly young and poor women, the battle to get an abortion is even harder.

Leon Trotsky called abortion "the miserable right". It is always a traumatic and difficult decision for a woman to make. Under present conditions it is certainly made more miserable.

On October 27 this year, Liberal MP David Alton (when will he ever need an abortion?) introduced a Bill into the House of Commons which will attempt to restrict women's abortion rights. At the moment, under the 1967 Abortion Act, a woman can be up to 28 weeks pregnant and get an abortion. Alton's Bill seeks to reduce this to 18 weeks. We must ensure this Bill is defeated.

No woman wants a late abortion. The majority of abortions are done in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy by a quick and simple operation.

Turn to page 5



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

# FAB

FIGHT ALTON'S BILL

## Why Alton must be defeated

Contd from page 4

An abortion after 12 weeks of pregnancy uses another method which is physically and mentally much more harrowing. But there are many factors that cause delays for women seeking abortions. A late abortion is distressing, but nowhere near as distressing as being forced to carry through an unwanted pregnancy.

Every year, 6,000 women have an abortion after 18 weeks of pregnancy. If Alton's Bill becomes law this number of women every year will be forced to seek dangerous back-street abortions or carry through an unwanted pregnancy.

Many of these women are women who have travelled miles across Europe because they cannot get an abortion in their own country. These women prove what the pro-choice lobby (ie. those who believe it is a woman's right to choose whether or not she has an abortion) have always argued — that the outlawing of abortion does not mean it will cease to happen and that women will go to great lengths to exercise control over their own bodies.

Alton and his supporters are outraged that "foreign women" are using British hospitals but are quite happy to see British women travelling abroad or to the back streets for an abortion the British state has denied them.

The British state is directly responsible for 20 per cent of

"late", (ie. after 12 weeks of pregnancy) abortions. This 20 per cent are women who went to their GP during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. They have then faced delays and unsympathetic doctors who have forced them to have an abortion far later than necessary.

But Alton isn't introducing his Bill out of concern for women who have late abortions. In 1981 he voted against a Bill which, if passed, would have forced all Health Authorities to provide abortion facilities. Such a law would have helped cut the number of late abortions.

Alton is not concerned about women's abortion rights at all. He is concerned **only** for the foetus. He would like to ban all abortions and deny all women who find themselves unwillingly pregnant the right to **choose** whether they have an abortion or not.

### Attacking the most vulnerable

The most desperate and vulnerable of all women who need an abortion are those who need a late abortion. For the moment Alton is confining his attack to them. Teenagers make up one half of the British women who have late abortions. This is usually due to poor sex education and fear of the reaction of their parents

and GPs.

Alton's Bill will force teenagers, some as young as 12, to continue with a pregnancy with which they may not be able to cope and which, in all likelihood, will restrict and ruin their lives. Any restriction in law would also add to an atmosphere in which abortion is taboo, making young pregnant women even more scared to come forward.

Older women who misread the signs of pregnancy for the menopause, women whose doctors misdiagnose pregnancy and women who find they are carrying an abnormal foetus have all been targetted by Alton as sacrificial lambs in his crusade to restrict the law.

LIMIT THE  
TIME  
AND YOU  
LIMIT THE  
CHOICE

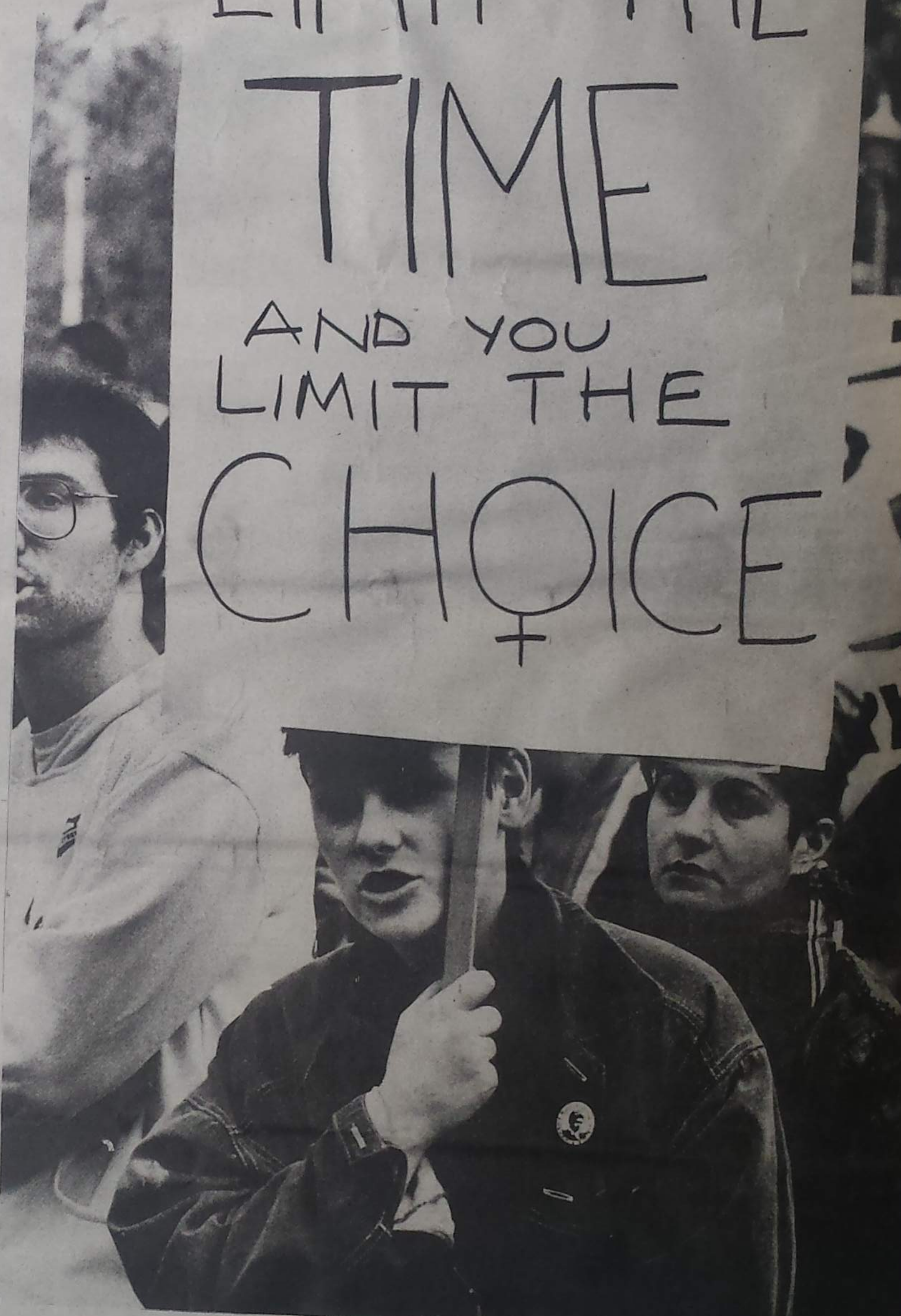


Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

### A woman's right to choose

Alton's Bill is yet another attempted attack on a fundamental right — a woman's right to decide what she does with her own body. This right is already limited. It is particularly limited for working class women who, unlike middle class women, are unable to afford private abortions if none are available in the local area on the NHS.

The fight against Alton's Bill isn't the end of it by any means. Only when free, legal

and safe abortion is available to every woman who wants it can we truly say that women have won their right to choose.

This right is vital, not only for working class women, but also for working class men. An unwanted pregnancy has a devastating effect on a woman. It also affects her family and friends. Working class families living in poverty and bad housing are all affected by the lack of abortion rights.

Working class men must unite alongside working class women in order to defeat this vicious Bill. If we can unite on issues such as this then we are moving forward in our fight

**T.U.C. says  
ABORTION  
KEEP IT LEGAL  
KEEP IT SAFE**



# Move this motion

## MODEL RESOLUTION

### Believes:

1. The attempt by MP David Alton to reduce the upper limit for abortion from 28 weeks to 18 will force 6,000 women at the very least every year to continue with a pregnancy that they do not want or force them to the backstreets. (In 1986, 5665 abortions were carried out after 18 weeks, more than 17,000 after 14 weeks).
2. A reduction in the time limit will particularly affect young women who make up over half of the women who have later abortions.
3. That the lack of decent NHS facilities mean that one out of every five women who have late abortions initially saw their doctor before 12 weeks of pregnancy. If facilities were improved, many unnecessary late abortions could be avoided.
4. That older women who misread the signs of pregnancy for the menopause, and consequently present late to their doctor, will be forced to continue with the pregnancy, even if it puts their health at risk.
5. That women who obtain the results of amniocentesis and other tests at 18 weeks will have no choice about whether they want to continue with the pregnancy.
6. This Bill would particularly affect women from overseas who do not have access to legal abortion in their own country, especially Irish women.
7. That a genuine attempt to reduce the number of late abortions would address the causes of late abortion and aim to reduce the need, rather than merely ban late abortions, and that the way to reduce late abortion is improve NHS facilities. This legislation will only drive women to the backstreet, forcing them to continue with unwanted pregnancies and causing women misery.

### Resolves:

1. To campaign against the Alton Bill.
2. To sponsor the Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) Campaign and send £ as a donation.
3. To support the call for a mass lobby of Parliament in January.
4. To call on our national organisation (trade union, NUS, etc) to support the national demonstration against the Bill in March.

You may also wish to include this clause:  
5. To establish women's rights to decide when and if to have children and the right to comprehensive NHS facilities to back up our decisions, whatever they are.

against the ruling class as a whole.

## Building the campaign

A campaign has been set up to fight the attack on women's rights posed by the Alton Bill — Fight Alton's Bill (FAB). FAB involves a broad group of pro-choice organisations such as the National Abortion Campaign, socialists, women's groups, trade unions, Labour Party women's sections and some Liberal women. The aim of

FAB is simple: to defeat Alton's Bill. On 27 October FAB held a counter-demonstration outside the Life (anti-abortion rights group) rally at Central Hall, Westminster at which some 600 pro-choice supporters attended.

Other FAB activities planned include a lobby of Parliament on 21 January before the second reading when the Bill will be debated for the first time. A national demonstration will be held before the third reading, when the final decision will be made. This will take place in March 1988.

FAB have produced a bulletin and petition which can be obtained from FAB c/o NAC, Wesley House, 4 Wild

Court, Holborn, London WC2. Tel: 01 405 4801. They can also give further details of FAB groups in your area or, if there are none, advice on how to set one up.

Individuals can put pressure on MPs through lobbying and letter writing. Locally, people should call meetings of all interested parties and set up FAB campaigns. This has already happened in places around the country such as Liverpool, the Wirral, Manchester, Stoke and South London. FAB groups can organise leafletting, petitioning, meetings, lobbies of MPs to build for the national events. We need to start now. We have a real battle on our hands and we must win.

# FAB

## FIGHT ALTON'S BILL

Access to abortion is currently governed by law by the 1967 Abortion Act and the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act. Intended to stop infanticide at birth it is the 1929 Act which established 28 weeks as the time at which a foetus is capable of being born alive and therefore at which abortion becomes illegal.

In 1985 a BMA/Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists study claimed that a foetus is 'viable' at 24 weeks and the DHSS ensured that no abortions are carried out beyond that. The time limit became in effect 24 weeks, which, given doctors' caution and the unreliability of conception dates means that abortions are not performed after 22 or more likely, 20 weeks.

The 1967 Abortion Act legalised abortion only on limited conditions. Abortion on demand, ie. if a woman asks for one, does not exist in this country although some doctors, abortion charities and private clinics are likely to interpret a woman's situation liberally.

#### The 1967 Abortion Act

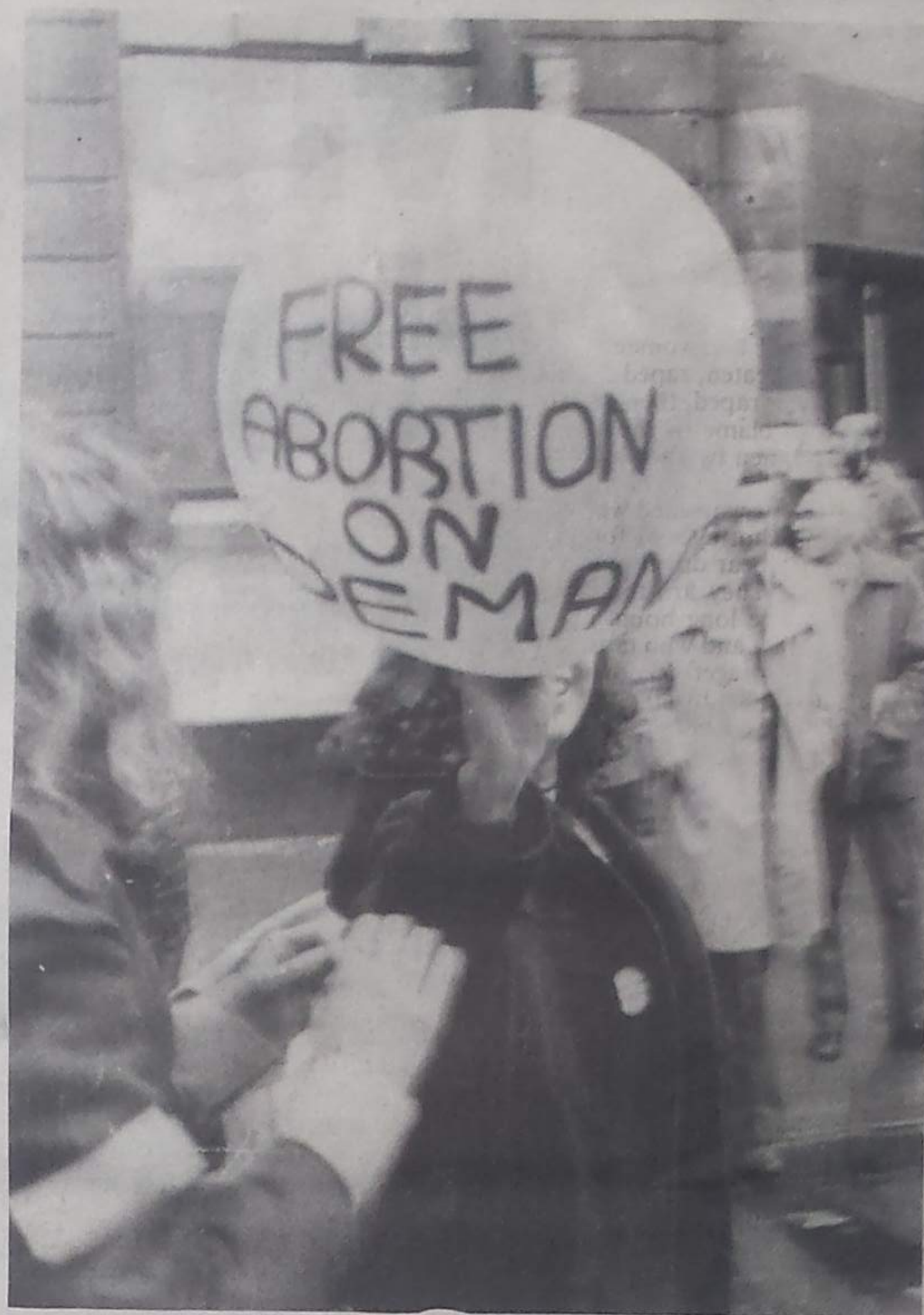
The main terms of the act are as follows:

An abortion can only be performed if 2 doctors agree to it. No other medical operation requires the permission of two medical practitioners.

An abortion must be carried out by a registered medical practitioner and must be performed (except in an emergency) in an NHS hospital or approved place.

The two doctors give permission if one of the following conditions applies to the woman requesting termination. It is up to the doctors to interpret these conditions:

1. There is more risk to the life of the pregnant woman if she continues with her



## Abortion: the facts

pregnancy than if she has an abortion.

2. There is more of a risk to the mental and physical health of the pregnant woman if she continues with the pregnancy than if she has an abortion.

3. There is more of a risk to the mental and physical health of an existing child(ren) than if the pregnancy is terminated.

4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born 'it would suffer from such serious physical or mental ab-

normalities as to be seriously handicapped'.

Or, in an emergency, certified by the operating doctor as being immediately necessary:

5. To save the life of the pregnant woman.

6. To prevent permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

Note: Rape is not sufficient grounds for an abortion.

the streets, leafletting local clinics, shopping precincts, supermarkets, bingo halls, etc. Set up stalls if you can. The FAB petition will be out soon, use it to talk to people.

3. Organise letter-writing to MPs, local media, etc. Look out for radio phone-ins and so on. The anti-abortionists are well organised at this sort of thing — we must be too.

4. Lobby your MP. If she/he is pro-Alton, picket their surgery, regularly if possible. If you're in the North West try and get a trip up to picket Alton's Liverpool surgery with the Merseyside FAB. Organise any other pickets, stunts, rallies, etc. you can manage. Organise fundraising events too.

Phone numbers:

National Abortion Campaign: 01 405 4801.

Women's Reproductive Rights campaign: 01 251 6332.

Co-ordinating Committee in Defence of 1967 Act: 01 580 9360.

#### Important Dates:

Jan 21st — Bill's second reading. There will be a FAB lobby of some kind and local activity should be planned for around the same time.

March 1988 — the Bill will reach the third reading sometime in March and FAB will be calling a national demo, hopefully supported by the TUC.

F A B  
Wesley House, Kingsway,  
Holborn, London WC1.  
Tel: 01 405 4801.

## Make Labour MPs accountable!

Two years ago Labour Party conference voted that Labour MPs must vote against changes to the 1967 Abortion Act. Previously Labour MPs could vote 'according to their conscience'.

However, the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) have their own constitution and are not bound by conference decisions. It is unclear whether the PLP accepts conference decision or not.

It is vital that all Labour

MPs abide by conference decision and oppose Alton's Bill. No socialist should vote for a bill which limits the rights of a woman over her own body.

If you are a member of the Labour Party get your Labour Party ward or Labour Party Young Socialist branch or Women's Section to write to the PLP saying that they do not accept that the PLP has the right to ignore conference and outline why they should oppose the Alton Bill.

## South London FAB group formed

A South London Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) group held its first meeting a fortnight ago at the London College of Printing, and got a lot of support from students at the college, as well as workers from the DHSS and SOGAT clerical branch.

The meeting was used to explain facts and arguments relating to the Alton Bill, and the FAB campaign. The group has its base in the London College of Printing (LCP) where it gets financial support, but as a FAB objective we aim to broaden the campaign out to the local area.

At the meeting it was decided that we schedule another, bigger meeting based in the student union canteen at lunchtime and so publicise the group further. We also decided to print petitions and leaflets, the aim being for teams of people to work in and around the college and shopping precinct and the workers from the DHSS and SOGAT to use the petition in

their trade union branches and workplaces, to mobilise support for FAB.

Broadening the campaign out to specifically involve working class women is obviously a priority and the FAB group will be organising flyposting and leafletting around local housing estates, etc.

During the time lapse between the last meeting and the next, scheduled for this week, ideas of debates with various organisations/individuals are being looked into, as well as the possibility of organising creche facilities during the time of meetings so even more women can get involved. The initial meeting was all in favour of getting things rolling straight away, so people did not treat the FAB campaign purely as a talking shop on the Alton Bill.

Hopefully the FAB group will initiate links that will enable us to build the campaign for women's reproductive rights in the wider labour movement.

### Setting up a local FAB group

1. Contact FAB for any local contacts already involved. Hold an initial meeting to sort out, contact address, etc. Let FAB know you exist. (FAB address below).

2. Contact local groups and individuals, trade unions, women's groups, local councillors, local Labour parties, YS branches, etc.

3. Write to local papers about the Bill, publicising yourself.

### Campaigning

1. Planning meetings should be held regularly. Also try for bigger public meetings with named speakers to build interest in the campaign. FAB are producing speaker's notes.

2. Take the campaign out onto

# FAB

## FIGHT ALTON'S BILL



# Women in Iran

From the media, you would think that all Iranians are loony Muslim martyrs suicidally provoking the military might of the United States. But they're not. The war has had a tremendous impact on Iranian society. It has been used as an excuse by Khomeini for severe repression of any groups seeking to change or struggling for their rights.

Roshan, Jaleh and Fariba of the Women's Section of the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) spoke to *Women's Fightback* about the plight of women in Iran today.

Women were active in the movement to topple the Shah. Although their demands were never clearly spelled out, women wanted greater freedom, greater rights to participate fully in society. The Islamic Republic that followed has crippled women's aspirations. In many cases their lot is worse.

It began with how women looked.

The Islamic State wanted women to wear the veil, to be covered from top to toe, to put away make-up. Now, with the war, certain colours only should be worn — sombre browns, blacks and greys, since no-one can be happy with a war on, can they? Many women have been fired from their jobs, and forced back into the home, where Islamic law decreed they belonged.

Women are no longer free to study law or medicine. They have no rights to their children. Men can divorce their wives, but women have no right to divorce. Abortion is illegal. If a man leaves his wife, he gets custody of children. If he is dead, his family takes them. Women have no rights at all to an independent existence. They go from father to husband. If left alone through death, they cannot legally earn enough to live. Many women turn to prostitution to survive.

Punishment for women is severe. Women are beaten, raped or slashed. If a woman is raped, then she has only herself to blame — she must have 'provoked' men by showing her hair or her face.

The war has worsened women's lot because the shortages of food and of other goods bear down most heavily on women. They are the ones who have to queue long hours for scarce food supplies, and who must struggle to make ends meet. Many have been made homeless by the war, since many cities have been bombed. Conditions for homeless people are appalling, with hundreds of people often forced to share one tap of water.

Many have lost husbands, children or other relatives in the war. Those who have been widowed can then be compelled to marry veterans of the war. Many of the maimed and wounded soldiers in the war are given

these unwilling brides as some kind of reward for their service. The women have no right to refuse anything to these glorious warriors.

Women in Iran haven't accepted these defeats. Many have been forced to adapt simply to survive, but it is very difficult for them. Simply because women have a second place role in Islamic religion does not mean that their lack of human rights is easier for them to accept and live with. Women aren't treated as humans or individuals; they have no security. Driven from their jobs, many have no collective base from which to organise with other women.

They need our support. To find out more, contact CARI. Read their pamphlet on 'Women under the Islamic Republic'. Get a speaker along to your trade union, Labour Party ward, or Women's Section.

CARI, B.M. CARI, London WC1N 3XX.



# The Witches of Eastwick

By Cathy Nugent

Having seen *The Witches of Eastwick* I felt it was just another crass, boring and slightly unpleasant film about nothing in particular. Later it dawned on me that it was supposed to be a clever and witty film about relationships between men and women. That annoyed me enough to make me think it was worth reviewing.

Eastwick is a small, close-knit country town, somewhere in America. Life is idyllic and beautiful and everyone goes to church on Sundays — Baptist probably, or something equally upright and cleansing. There are three women living in the town who don't quite fit in. The first — played by Cher — is a widow.

She is a sculptress, making nothing but models of very pregnant women. ('Deep down' she obviously wants to have lots of babies). The second is a divorcee and a music teacher. She plays the cello but she has problems getting enough emotion into her playing. The inference is that she is 'a bit frigid'. The third has been deserted by her husband, leaving her with six kids, the rearing of which has left her face and body unscarred. She is very, very fertile.

It's all highly symbolic (yawn) — the three states of 'liberated womanhood': the three Ds — divorced, deserted and deceased. In real life these three things generally mean poverty and loneliness for women. Not so here. However, these women are discontented. Why? Because they want a man.

One wild and stormy night the three friends get drunk and the conversation turns towards that subject. Collectively they dream up a perfect man, someone they can talk to, someone who understands them. The next day Jack Nicholson, a balding, podgy, rich guy appears.

## Gross

He is the new owner of the mansion on the hill. He is gross. He is an anti-sexist — get-your-knickers-down man. He seduces all three women in turn, almost against their will it seems, but not really because he is their ideal lover, he is the man they have created. They move into his mansion. They eat, they drink, they bonk. He is vile but they are passionately in love with him.

What does it all mean? Well... Jack Nicholson is Mr Evil, the devil. He has special magic powers. He is



Cher making a meal of it in 'The Witches of Eastwick'

also Mr Potency, a real man. Although apparently he was created by 'the witches of Eastwick' he is in control and he brings out further witchiness in the women — magic powers, their sexuality, their real womanliness — defined in relation to him.

There is a Mrs Whitehouse in the town, who launches a campaign against the harem on the hill. She represents Christian 'Victorian' morality. Jack Nicholson kills her off. 'The witches' are outraged and decide to get their own back. They make a spell to get rid of him. Inevitably, there is a twist in the tale and he comes back to haunt them, they cannot defeat him.

When John Updike wrote the book on which the film is based it was probably hailed as a "great sexual comedy of our time". It is a product of the so-called sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s which in many ways was not at all liberating for women. At the same time it is an attack on the middle class feminism that has been so prevalent in the United States: the feminism of *Ms* magazine and NOW (the National Organisation of Women).

## Feminism

It is not a direct attack, it's just that this kind of feminism is seen to represent feminism in general. The

attack comes not from a class but from an anti-woman point of view. This message is that, yes, women have a sexuality but it can only be fully expressed in relationships with men. The film goes further; it suggests that the natural whore in women, women's 'essential' witchiness is a good thing.

But this positive is transferred into a negative by the fact that it is 'brought out' in this film by the 'potency' of Jack Nicholson's character. The overall message is that men and women are 'naturally' complementary, therefore all this stuff about women wanting to be independent is, finally, a waste of time. It will only end in tears — let us resolve our

differences.

The story was supposed to be funny and much of the audience in the cinema seemed to think it was. I don't think this proves I haven't got a sense of humour. In the 80s there is a right-wing moral backlash in America perhaps more than anywhere else. Some feminists have fallen in with the moral crusaders, and this film could be conceived to be a counter-attack on that.

It fails because it is as one-sided as the right-wing conception of women's proper place and natural womanliness. If you like Jack Nicholson, go and see this film. Otherwise not recommended.

# The joys of motherhood?

Lynn Ferguson looks at the problems of childcare under capitalism and at possible alternatives

Being a mother in our society isn't easy. Even given all the changes in the position of women over the past 30,000 years, women are still fundamentally defined by their role as wife and mother. Odd, then, that we're expected to get on with it with little or no support. The Tories may exalt the family, but they're not prepared to cough up any increase in child benefit this year. And when mothers go out to work to feed their kids? — then you get all the "social ills" blamed on uncaring absent mothers and their "latchkey" kids.

## Women and Class

but women and children were drawn into social production in the factories and mines.

Towards the end of the 19th century these tendencies went into reverse. Protective legislation excluded women and children from certain industries, and restricted the hours they could work. Many male trade unionists and some non-Marxist socialists saw the break up of the working class family with its attendant real suffering — young children roaming the streets, women giving birth on the factory floor, etc. — and organised to force women out of the workplace and into the home. Women, of course, did continue to work as they have in varying numbers ever since. But the basic set-up of women at home, men at work, was solidified.

What this meant was that social problems were seen as individual problems, with individual solutions. Part of the bedrock of bourgeois ideology is the idea of individual competition. People are seen as free individuals competing in the marketplace. If you do badly, then ultimately it's your own fault. And so with childcare. Capitalism has at times been forced to take on some degree of responsibility for children — for instance, during wartime, when women were needed to work in industry while the men were fighting. But after World War II came the backlash. New psychological theories were developed, proving that children needed a mother at home. Nurseries were closed down. The responsibility for children's wellbeing



and the blame for their failings was thrust firmly back onto the family, meaning, of course, the mother.

It's a lousy state of affairs, but what should we do? One recent

response is set out in Germaine Greer's book *Sex and Destiny*. In the chapter, 'A Child is Born' Greer criticises, quite legitimately, what she calls 'western consumer society' and its appalling attitude to mothers and children. She catalogues the dreadful experiences many women have of childrearing and childbirth, the complete isolation and lack of support we frequently endure.

But Greer's 'solution' is just as backward-looking and utopian as that of the 19th century socialists who wanted women out of the workplace. Germaine looks to the traditions and female support networks of 'primitive' societies and likes what she sees. Women help each other through childbirth and share the care of children. Children are integrated into adult life — no early evening mealtimes for the kiddies, so that mum and dad can enjoy a quiet dinner for two later on. All in all, Germaine concludes, a far more psychologically and spiritually healthy state of affairs.

It is probably true that in a lot of ways these societies do show us things of value that have been lost in the advanced capitalist countries. For sure I find the accounts of childbirth, where women give real support to the woman in labour and actually see the whole event as a communal effort, very attractive, compared to my own experiences of flat on your back hospitalized labour.

But, as Greer herself hints in passing, we can't wind the film of history backwards. Any changes we're going to make to the way children are treated and the pressures mothers experience, are going to be on the basis of where we are now.

So where does that leave us socialists? Too often all we have to say on the subject is the old '24 hour nurseries' stuff. All well and good, as far as it goes. But we've often got to be a bit more thoughtful on the issue. I don't want to see a socialist society where children are still seen as a 'problem' to be solved by all-day nurseries. I'd like a society where children are valued as people in their own right, where adult and children's worlds are fully integrated, not rigidly walled off.

Housing, for instance, will have to be re-thought, to provide for all different kinds of living arrangements to allow people to share childcare with other people in their home.

In short, our whole world view will have to change. That will take time — old habits die hard. A socialist society will have to think through imaginatively what material things need to be provided to facilitate this.

One thing's for sure — we ain't gonna get nowhere by looking backwards. The way to ensure a better future for women and children is for us to fight in the labour movement now.

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

## Where we stand

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.



Left to right: John O'Mahony; Janush (from the Solidarnosc student union); Marek Garztecki (Voice of Solidarity); speaker from the Hungarian arts group 'Inconnu'; Gus Fagan.

# 'Forge links with Solidarnosc'

Seventy years ago in the Russian Empire there was the first workers' revolution. The working class gained power.

Fifty years ago in the Soviet Union the bureaucratic counter-revolution consolidated itself definitively. It is a system of totalitarian domination, a system of oppression and exploitation of the working class. It is a system of oppression by the Great Russian nation of the other nationalities. Today that system finds itself in deepening crisis.

I think we are entering into the third period of the epoch opened by the Russian Revolution. The Gorbachevian reforms express one fact; that the totalitarian bureaucracy finds it more and more difficult keeping its system going.

In Poland the crisis of the bureaucratic system has been unfolding for a long time. This crisis shows that the bureaucratic regime is unreformable. The Polish experience is very important for understanding what is going on in the Soviet Union.

This experience shows that only the working class can overthrow the bureaucratic regime — the working class in alliance with all other oppressed groups in society: the youth, the women — and not only the women of the working class — the oppressed groups and nationalities, the peasants, and the intellectuals.

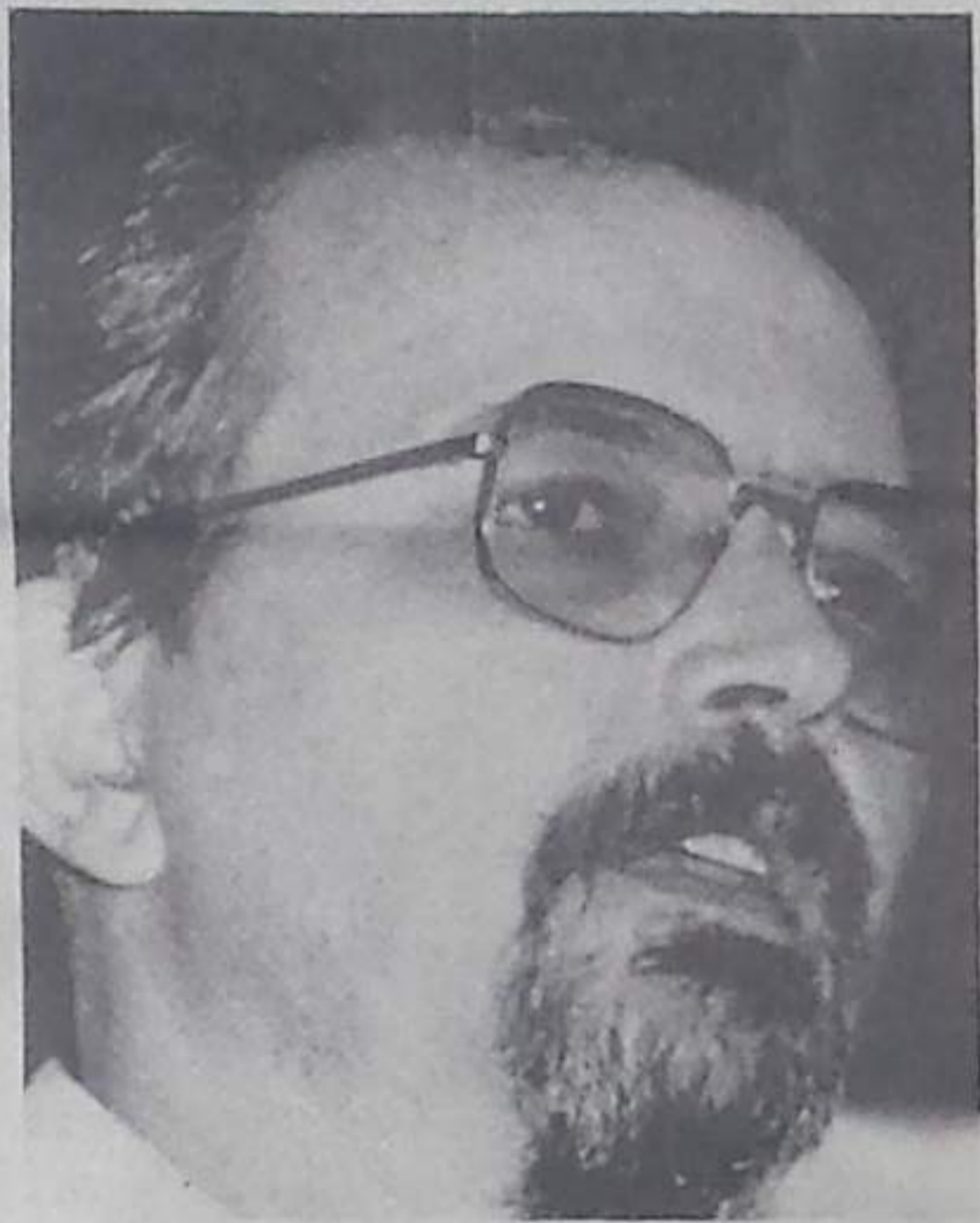
Only the working class can liberate society from the bureaucratic oppression.

## Revolution

The Polish revolution of 1980-1 was defeated. But the revolution lit up their own social landscape for workers. Not only for Polish workers, but for workers in the rest of the Soviet bloc too. What did the Polish revolution show?

In the first place, the power of independent mass action by the working class. The Polish working class in 1980-1 gained its independence in relation to the bureaucratic regime. It won trade union freedom and organised itself in a very large trade union.

This Polish working class had been



**By Zbigniew Kowalewski, exiled former leader of Solidarnosc in Lodz**

deeply atomised for several decades. And then in 1980, in just a few months, it managed to construct a trade union that was one of the most powerful trade unions in history.

In a few months this working class discovered working class democracy; and in a few months it built one of the most democratic trade unions in the history of the world workers' movement.

This working class created a large layer of natural worker leaders. It developed gigantic class struggles in the form of strikes and occupations of factories. The Solidarnosc trade union was capable of unleashing factory occupations by 10 million workers simultaneously.

The Polish working class learnt all that in a few months!

Not only that. When it won trade union freedom, when it organised itself independently, when it learnt to struggle — then it decided rapidly

that it should become the master of its own destiny.

The question was posed: who should run Poland, the bureaucracy or the working class itself?

The workers moved quickly from the trade union struggle to a more advanced scale. They moved for workers' control, for social control over production, for social control over information, over radio, over TV, for political democracy in the state, and for political and ideological pluralism.

Starting off from a movement by the Solidarnosc trade union, workers' councils began to form. In this way the beginnings of a new form of power appeared. The dynamic of these developments was clear. The struggle for social control, for self-management, was objectively a struggle to win workers' power in society.

Solidarnosc started as a self-managed trade union. From a self-managed trade union it went on to fight for the project of a self-managed republic.

The Solidarnosc militants said we want a state in the image of our society — free trade unions, liberty and democracy. The labour movement began to work out an overall programme of political democracy in the state. From the struggle for workers' control Solidarnosc went to the struggle for real social control of social property.

## Creative

During 18 months, all the creative capacity of the working class was shown. In this very brief period the working class transformed itself from an object to a subject.

Today, it is of fundamental importance that the Soviet working class should do the same things that the Polish working class did.

The Soviet bureaucracy has realised that it can no longer rule in the old way: Gorbachev is trying to find a new form of domination for the bureaucracy. He is conscious of the necessity of reforms to preserve a system of society in crisis. It is of fundamental importance that the Soviet working class should take advantage

of this situation and enter onto the scene as an independent force.

It should demand in the first place very simple things. Decent wages; decent conditions of work; decent housing; freedom of expression and freedom to hold meetings. It should demand elementary civil and human rights. The Soviet working class should organise strikes in defence of decent wages and conditions. It should begin to form democratic unions starting off from strike committees. It is very important that it should begin to organise itself independently, without bureaucratic control, under the exclusive leadership of its own natural leaders democratically elected.

## Prepare

It is necessary as from now to begin to prepare our future solidarity with Soviet workers. In the same way it is very important to continue to develop solidarity with the Polish workers, with the struggle of Solidarnosc, a struggle which has already continued for six years since the defeat of 1981.

We do not know when and in which country the next phase of workers' struggles will begin. The next wave may begin in the Soviet Union, in the conditions created by the current reforms, and it may spread from the Soviet Union to other countries of the Soviet bloc. On the other hand, it may start from the satellite countries and generate repercussions in the Soviet working class.

In any case, it is of fundamental importance to prepare our solidarity with Soviet workers and trade union militants, and of course, with Solidarnosc. We must forge links between the struggles of workers in one country with those in others.

Unfortunately this task is quite difficult to carry out. The international labour movement is deeply divided.

There is a traditional long-existing division in the labour movements of the more developed countries and in the labour movements of less developed and dependent countries. Stalinism, when it came to power in the Soviet Union, introduced new divisions. These divisions were visible in the labour movements of capitalist

countries and dependent countries with the movement of the Polish working class and its defeat.

Broad sections of the labour movement in the capitalist countries regard the Eastern bureaucracies as positive and progressive alternatives to capitalist countries. And these broad sections still consider today that workers' struggles against bureaucratic regimes is reactionary and anti-socialist. In the same way broad sections of workers in the Eastern bloc, in Poland and not only in Poland, think the national struggles, revolutionary struggles, and strikes in capitalist and dependent countries are engineered by the bureaucracy.

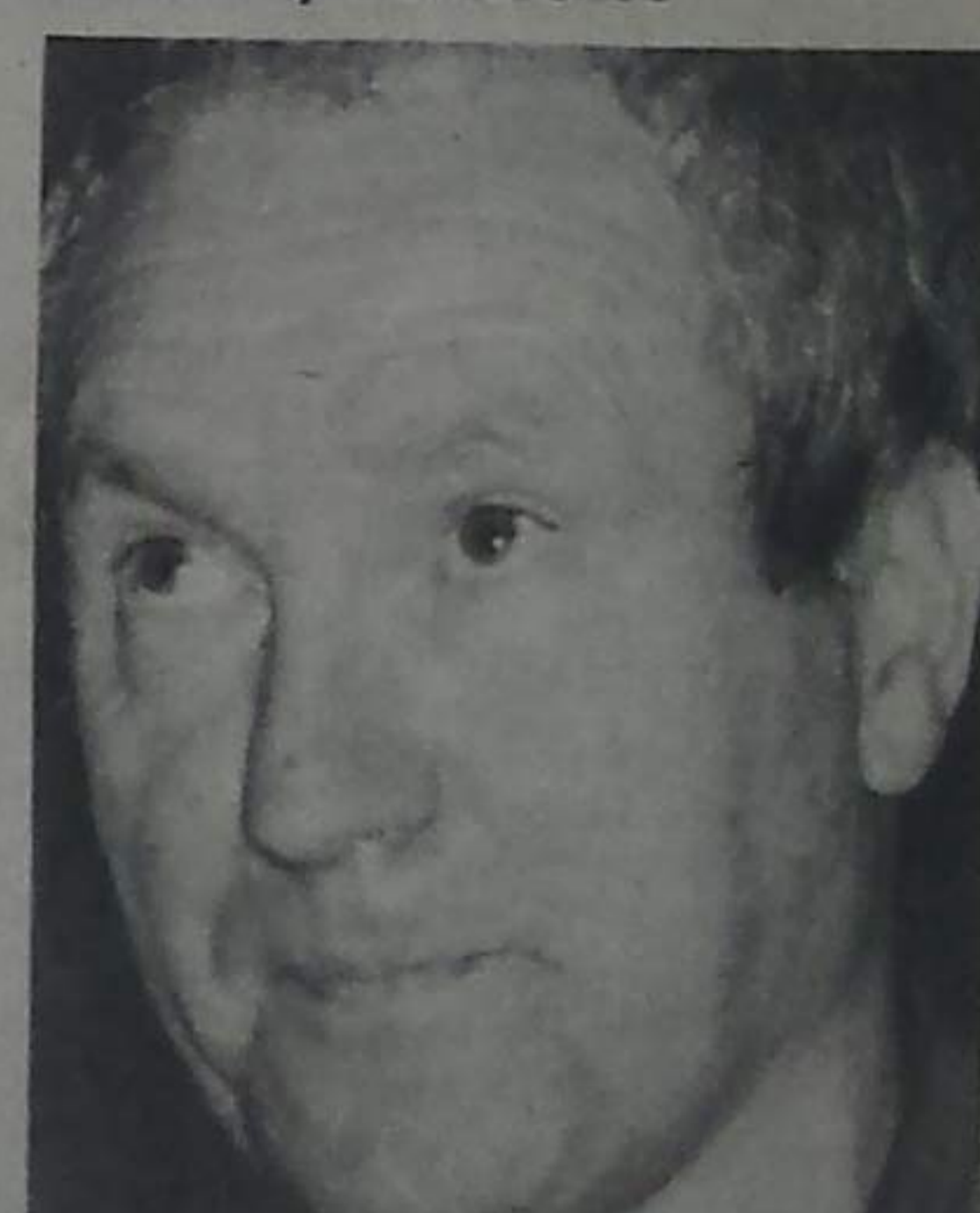
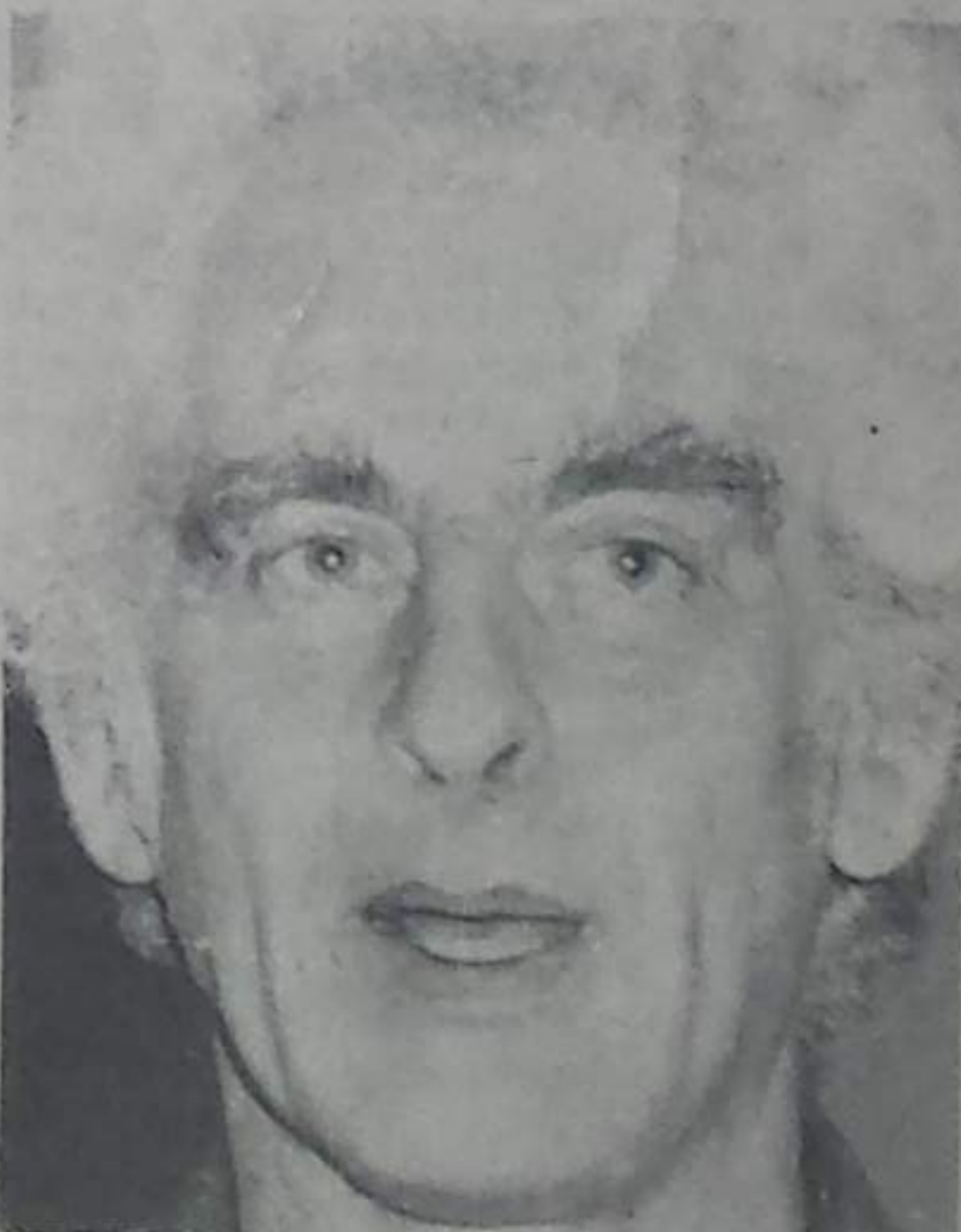
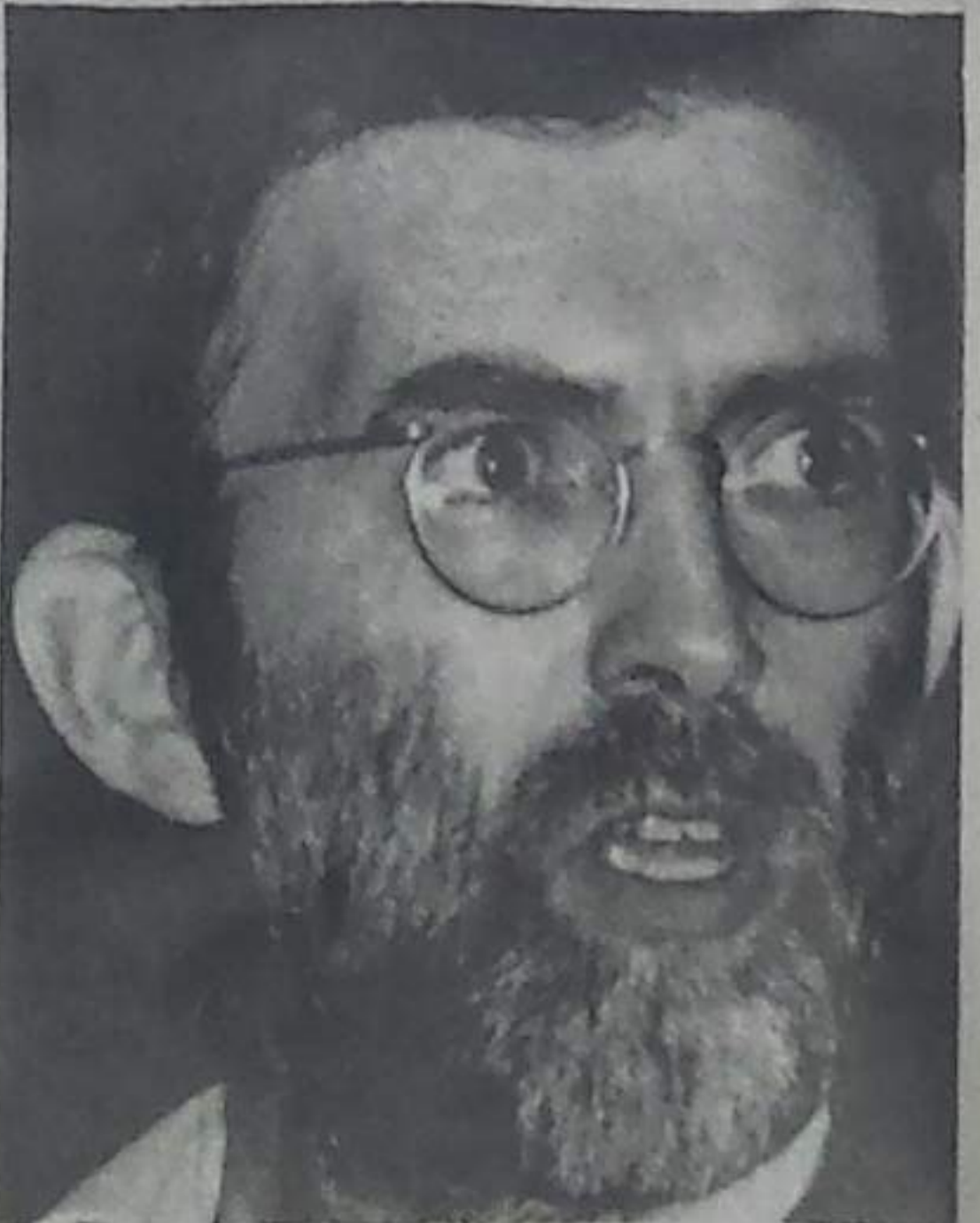
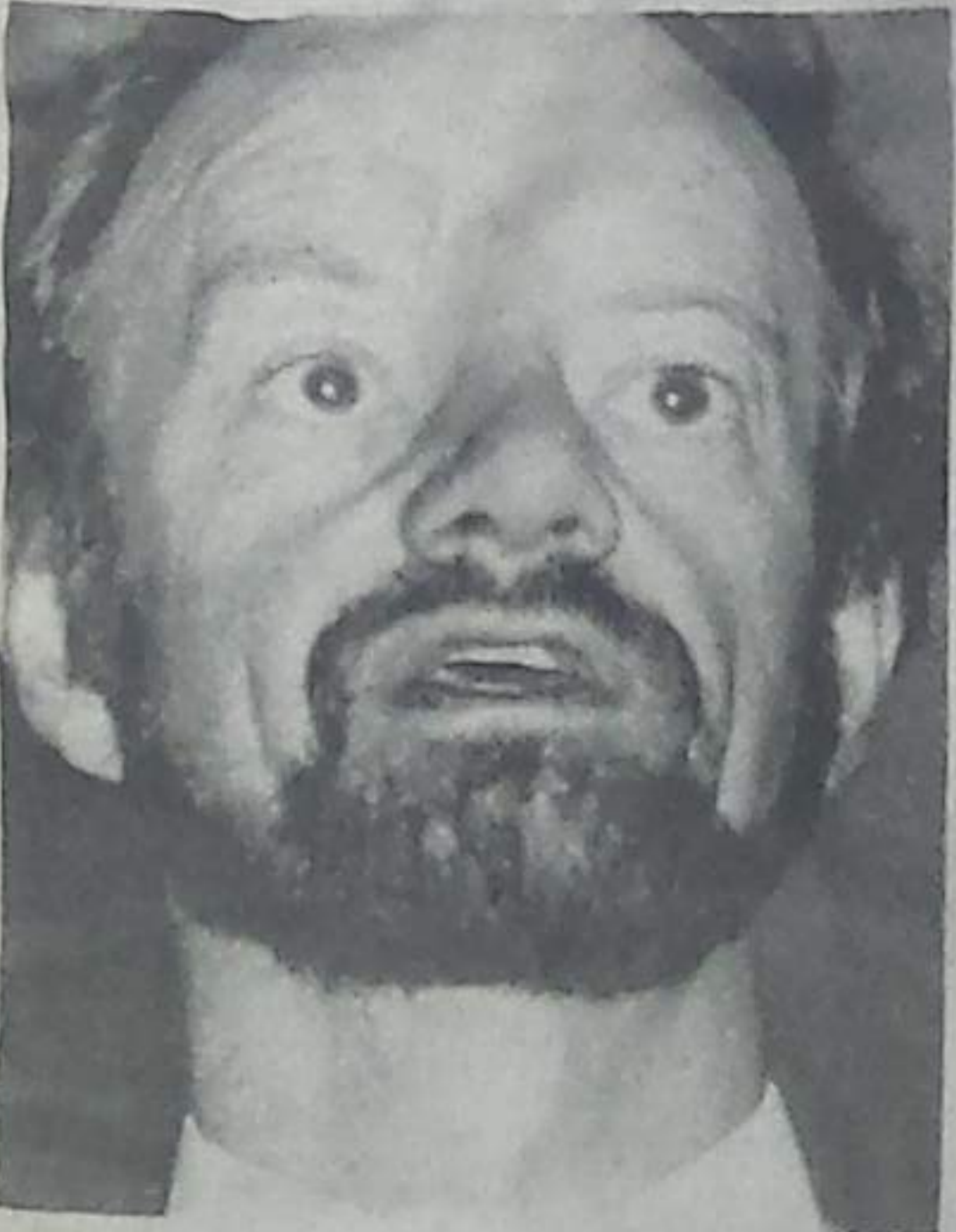
There is a great distrust among the workers in Poland of struggles that are supported by propaganda from the Soviet Union or Jaruselski. In this respect there are terrible situations. For example the fighters in the Salvadorean revolution think Solidarnosc is the agency of the CIA. And in a similar and symmetrical way many workers in my country think the Sandinista revolution was simply an expansion of the Soviet bureaucracy.

So we have got very big tasks to confront in the creation of international links and internationalist consciousness between workers in East and West, and in the North and South to use a conventional expression. To create that feeling of solidarity, which in a sense is a natural feeling, to overcome these divisions.

I think the divisions between workers here and workers in Eastern bloc countries are a particular problem in the British labour movement. More so than in France.

And in that sense initiatives like the Conference today, which I hope will be continued in the future are very important for creating real solidarity between sections of the working class. The existing divisions benefit only those who oppose the working class, whether they be capitalists or bureaucrats, imperialists or chauvinists.

**Zbigniew Kowalewski was speaking at the 7th November Solidarity Conference**



Conference speakers, from left to right: Robin Cook MP; Gus Fagan (editor, 'The Socialist Alternative in Eastern Europe'); George Krasso (editor, 'Hungarian Free Press'), Janush (NZS, independent Polish student union), and John O'Mahony (editor, Socialist Organiser)

# An anarchic comic feast

Edward Ellis  
reviews 'Eat the Rich'

'Excuse me. We're starting a people's uprising. Would you like to join us?' 'Well I don't mind if I do'.

Eat the Rich describes the valiant efforts of three of the dispossessed

and downtrodden victims of this unjust society to take revenge for all they have suffered.

Losing his job in an ultra-expensive restaurant populated by gross, conceited, upwardly-made-its, who gorge themselves on koala bear and panda, Alex, a camp black waiter, finds himself with no job, no money and no future. After shooting dead an entire DHSS office, he takes

to the hills in a stolen car, and with three comrades plans a particularly gruesome form of retribution on the rich and greedy.

Chief representative of the rich and greedy is Home Secretary Nosh Powell, a rough-and-tough, if ageing thug who parades his racism, sexual infidelity and general brutality to great public acclaim. When a (presumably) pro-Palestinian ter-

rorist group takes over the Israeli Embassy, Nosh single-handedly raids the place and beats them up. When a trade union leader threatens strike action, Nosh threatens to kick his head in if he doesn't call it off.

But what really scares at least one top civil servant, who is actually a Soviet spy and for some reason has a heavy-metal singer as a sidekick, is that Nosh could be the next PM. Something has to be done to stop him. And maybe Alex and his brave band can do it...

Eat the Rich is from the Comic Strip stable, although Rick Mayall, Jennifer Saunders et al only have cameo parts. It avoids a lot of the self-indulgence of some of the Young Ones offshoots, and instead races from one bizarre but dead-pan episode to the next, as the inevitable collision between Alex and Nosh gets closer and closer.

Lanah Pelay as Alex is magnifi-

cent. Every line is a gem, spoken with what can only be described as a combination of disdain and heart-felt sincerity. 'Excuse me,' he lies to a Palestinian terrorist. 'We're from Ethiopia. Would you mind giving us some money?'

Flitting through the story are all manner of famous people including Paul McCartney, Sandie Shaw and Bill Wyman, all of them — not surprisingly I suppose — representatives of the rich, over-eating enemy. Jools Holland is a creepy reporter who makes no attempt to disguise his adoration for Nosh.

Eat the Rich is a very funny satire on Britain today. Politically it's more anarchist than anything, and its heroes, after all, indulge in some of the most horrible examples of individual terrorism that you can imagine. Still, ideological purity probably wouldn't make us laugh as much.

## A sanitised revolutionary

Nelson Rockefeller sacked Diego Rivera in New York in 1933 because Rivera refused to remove a portrait of Lenin from the mural Rockefeller had commissioned.

Rivera returned to Mexico, and in 1936 joined the Trotskyist International Communist League. In 1937 he successfully lobbied the Mexican government to allow Leon and Natalia Trotsky to come to Mexico. The Trotskys lived with Rivera at Coyoacan until 1939, when Rivera fell out with them.

Rivera had joined the Communist Party of Mexico in 1922, left and re-joined before being expelled in 1929 and announcing his sympathy for Trotsky's positions. Later, after Trotsky's death, he would rejoin the Stalinist party.

Rivera is famous as a political artist. The major part of his working life coincided with the Mexican revolution and upheavals from 1910 to 1940, and with the Russian Revolution.

He painted huge murals and frescoes depicting Mexican history and world events. He showed recognisable individuals and the ordinary people, interacting and making that history.

In murals and smaller paintings he often chose working people as his subjects. This was not in a socialist realist fashion of heroic poses, in-

By Janet Burstall



animate and false. The figures are in motion, or absorbed in what they do,

not posing to attempt to impress the viewer.

I'm not sure why Rivera fell out with Trotsky and decided to support Stalin's CP again after 1939. I didn't find his post-1939 works in the exhibition as enjoyable as his pre-1939 ones — he did only a few murals after that date.

Rivera's choice of the mural as a medium served his political ideas. A mural is accessible to the oppressed classes, and its size makes it possible to show many characters as individuals and their part among the masses of people involved in making history.

The Hayward exhibition includes photographs of some Rivera murals, mounted on the walls of the gallery to the same size as the original murals.

The gallery is also showing a 35-minute video about Rivera, which makes it easier to follow the exhibition.

It is definitely worth seeing the work of a revolutionary artist, a rare opportunity. The exhibition is sanitised, as is to be expected with the Ford Motor Company being the main sponsor. The exhibition doesn't answer questions about the Mexican Revolution or Diego Rivera's politics, but these can be looked for elsewhere.

The exhibition is showing at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank Centre, London until 10 January 1988. Monday is cheap entry day — £1.50.



Revenge of the dispossessed

# Remember the Manchester Martyrs

By D. Delaney

Every November Irish Republican sympathisers make their way through the streets of Manchester to commemorate the executions of three Fenians in 1867. This year's march is the 120th anniversary of the Manchester Martyrs, Michael Larkin, William Allen and Michael O'Brien, hanged for the accidental killing of a policeman during a daring and successful prisoners' breakout.

The Manchester Martyrs hold a special place in the hearts and minds of the Irish community in Britain and their executions outraged not only Irish people but also many sections of the British working class. Tens of thousands marched in protest and what was designed to deter others, backfired on the British establishment.

The mid-nineteenth century saw turbulent times with revolutions across Europe; America too was engulfed in Civil War. It was the return of Irish-American war veterans which precipitated the abortive Fenian uprising of March 1867. Many of the rebel leaders were sentenced to long periods of hard labour whilst others went on the run. Two of the leadership, Irish Americans Colonel Thomas Kelly and Captain Timothy Deasy, evaded capture in Dublin and escaped to Manchester only to be apprehended in the Shudehill area of the City, ostensibly for vagrancy. They were soon identified, despite giving false names, and so on 18 September they were remanded to Belle Vue gaol by

the City magistrates.

The horse-drawn black maria carrying the prisoners was accompanied by twelve policemen, a heavy but unarmed guard. As the van passed under a railway bridge on Hyde Road, just out of the City centre, a sizeable group of Fenians, armed with revolvers and staves, ambushed and rescued Kelly and Deasy.

It was during the attack that Charles Brett, the police guard inside the van, was shot and fatally injured. Accounts of the killing differ but eyewitnesses suggested that Brett was accidentally hit while the lock was being shot, having refused to open the doors. None of the other policemen were seriously injured as they fled from their attackers, and they were soon joined by more constables alerted by a passing cab driver.

In the ensuing mayhem Kelly and Deasy escaped and vanished, to emerge later in New York. Larkin, Allen, O'Brien and Edward Condon — reputed to have been the leader of the ambush party — were arrested nearby, eventually to be charged and convicted of the 'murder' with one other, Thomas Maguire. Within five

**SUNDAY 22nd NOVEMBER  
DEMONSTRATE**



**120th ANNIVERSARY  
MANCHESTER MARTYRS  
COMMEMORATION**

days, fifty arrests had been made, most quite randomly from the Irish quarters of the City, and eventually twenty-six men were committed for trial.

The Press of the day reported the successful rescue with incredulity and outrage. The Establishment was stunned. The trial was a showpiece and full of drama.

On 13 November, after sixteen days, the trial came to a conclusion with twelve convictions, five of them for murder. Widespread doubt as to the guilt of Thomas Maguire was mirrored in the British press. Those same journalists who had created the vile atmosphere which made up the backdrop to the trial, now petitioned the Crown for a pardon. On 21 November this pardon was granted, followed on the 22nd by the commutation of Condon's sentence. Larkin asserted:

**Die**

"I want no mercy...I will die proudly and triumphantly in defence of Republican principles and the liberty of an oppressed and enslaved people".

There was rising disquiet all over Britain from humanitarians like John Bright, to utopians like John Stuart Mill, and perhaps most significantly from the scientific socialists Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Twenty-five thousand people rallied in protest at Clerkenwell Green, London and mass demonstrations were organised throughout the country. But it was all to no avail and the three were publicly hanged at New Bailey prison on 23 November 1867.

The executions were gruesome.

Calcraft, the hangman, did a poor job as Larkin and O'Brien survived the 'drop'. Father Gadd, present at the hangings, later asserted that Calcraft descended into the pit and himself killed Larkin by jumping on his back. Gadd interceded to prevent O'Brien suffering the same fate and he continued to breathe for a full 45 minutes.

**Hindsight**

With historical hindsight the executions did not achieve the effect desired by the establishment, they became yet one more British atrocity. Newspapers across Ireland, America, Australia and France condemned the hangings and sympathy for the men

and the Fenians only grew stronger. Frederick Engels commented cynically — but quite correctly — that by creating martyrs the Establishment had only aided the Fenian cause, and the brutal executions would not be forgotten by future generations committed to national liberation and socialism in Ireland.

The Martyrs have been commemorated by marches every November since their death and as a permanent reminder a monument — paid for by public subscription — was raised in Moston Cemetery in 1897.

Last year 1500 people and eight flute bands marched in appalling weather and the organisers of the commemoration predict "considerably more" this year.

## Bluefields Express

By Joe O'Connor

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign organised a recent tour of Britain by the Nicaraguan band Zinica. The tour was so successful that we've decided to do some work in the area of Nicaraguan music and culture.

As part of this plan we have set up our own record label, 'Club Sandino Records', and our first release is now available.

The album is called 'Bluefields Express' and it is Zinica's first release in this country. It has already received a lot of airplay on the John Peel and Andy Kershaw radio shows.

Zinica are from Bluefields on Nicaragua's English-speaking Caribbean coast. They play *Palo de Mayo* music, a lively hybrid of calypso, salsa, reggae and Latin folk. *Palo de Mayo* is unique to this part of Central America, where the Afro-Caribbean tradition meets and mixes with the Latin-American. The *Palo de Mayo* festival derives from the maypole celebrations brought to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua by the British, who colonised the area in the 18th and 19th centuries.

'Bluefields Express' is available by mail order from the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 23 Beveden Street, London N1 6BH, telephone 01-608 0414.

# Ford workers must link up

Over the last 11 days Ford workers have reacted angrily to their bosses' latest pay and conditions package.

A section of the Halewood plant in Liverpool, and then parts of the Dagenham plant in Essex, walked out in disgust. At Dagenham, Ford's biggest plant in Britain, a day's production was lost in both the body and assembly plants.

Ford's 9,000 white collar workers have reacted likewise to a similar package.

Last Tuesday 1100 technical staff were out for 24 hours at Dagenham, Dunton and Aveley.

The package involves a three-year deal, with a 4.25% pay rise in the first year and then cost of living rises in the two following years in return for radical changes in working conditions and practices. The union demanded a 10% wage rise and double the present productivity bonuses and allowances, better pensions and a reduction in the working week.

Ford bosses want to extend the 'flexibility' they have imposed over the last years. Skilled workers are already involved with maintenance. Now they want

By John Bloxam

them to work on the track as well! There are other 'Japanese' working methods: 'quality circles', 'group leaders' of production teams, foremen doing management jobs.

Clearly their immediate model is Nissan's Washington plant in the North-East, with its low rate of unionisation and with unions not directly represented on company councils. The Financial Times says it clearly: "Ford calculate that the streamlined working practices and more efficient production methods employed by Nissan would give it a cost advantage of about £250 per car".

Tied to Ford's package are further job losses. Foremen are immediately threatened by the changes, but the company has a blunt message for its other 32,700 workers: "...we need to be more efficient to be competitive and that will inevitably mean further reductions in manpower."

Internationally Ford is in the process of overtaking IBM as the most profitable company in the US and, probably, in the world. In Britain Ford's profits are boom-

ing, and are forecast this year to be "considerably" up on last year's £109 million pre-tax profit. They predict record sales this year.

But Ford's workers don't get much benefit out of Ford's prosperity. Ford workers got a miserable 4% pay rise in their recent two year deal. They also got 'flexibility', major productivity rises and job losses.

At Halewood 4,000 jobs have gone since 1980, one-third of the plant.

For a long time, Ford workers have heard the bosses claim that productivity is much higher in Ford's European plants. So why does Ford stay in Britain then?

## Lowest

British workers suffer some of the lowest wages and worst conditions. For example, in Germany Ford workers work ten days a year less than their British counterparts.

It is partly for this reason, as well as the pound-deutschmark exchange rate, that Ford — like General Motors/Vauxhalls — has been shifting production to Britain, and cutting back on the cars and

components brought in from Europe.

The workers are now in a stronger position than they have been for a long time against the company. Ford want all the cars they can get. It is possible that Ford workers will take on the company at the same time as 11,000 other car workers take on Vauxhall. Vauxhall workers too face a radical and dangerous pay and conditions package.

The walk-outs in response to Ford's pay and conditions package mean that the package is overwhelmingly rejected by workers on the shop floor.

The key thing now is to build on the anger that exists above all by forging links between the plants at a rank and file level, especially between plants in the same company.

Pressure must also be kept up on the national officials against a sell-out. There is a real danger of a sell-out. On October 9, the Financial Times reported that the Ford union leaders "indicated privately yesterday that they would not be averse to a three-year pay deal possibly involving far-reaching changes to working conditions as long as these were accompanied by adequate improvements in basic pay".

# CPSA Broad Left meets

By Trudy Saunders

Thousands of Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) members voted for Broad Left supporters standing for the National Executive Committee in May this year.

The result was an overwhelming majority for the Broad Left. It was a vote for socialism and it was a vote to fight.

The Broad Left national conference took place last weekend in Liverpool. Numbers attending were as many as in the years before the split, when the "soft left" and the Stalinists broke away to form the misnamed "Broad Left '84".

But there should have been thousands there instead of hundreds. The hard core of activists must ask themselves why the many members who voted for us did not attend the conference.

The answer lies partly in the way the conference is tightly controlled by supporters of the Militant Tendency and by the weak sectarian response of the main opposition — the Socialist Workers' Party.

Militant supporter Kevin Roddy chaired the conference. He attempted to ensure a "balanced" debate by calling speakers from the three factions — Militant, the SWP and the Socialist Caucus (the left in the Broad Left which includes Socialist Organiser supporters).

What this meant in reality was that Roddy only called people he knew from the floor. Roddy also abused the chair in a manner reminiscent of the "Broad Left '84" chair of DHSS Headquarters branch.

Most of the conference was a slanging match between the SWP, who claimed everything the Broad Left NEC had done was wrong and should be censured, and the Militant, who claimed everything the Broad Left NEC had done was right and should be congratulated!

Since taking over the NEC the Militant Tendency supporters on the NEC have sold out on the fight against Limited Period Appointments (long term casuals) in the DHSS. The role of the Militant was a disgrace. For this they were rightly censured and a motion was passed at DHSS Section Broad Left Conference to this effect.

The Broad Left NEC can also be criticised for its handling of the 1987 pay campaign. But all Broad Left supporters recognise the treacherous role of the right wing/soft left/Stalinist block in ensuring a vote against an all-out strike as well as the role of the SCPS and the Tory victory in the general election.

So the SWP's motion censuring the Broad Left was not particularly useful or forward looking. The Militant motion congratulating the Broad Left NEC was even worse! What was needed was a serious learning of the lessons and a serious strategy drawn from those lessons.

There was very little real political debate throughout the conference. A particular example of this was the South Africa debate (or lack of it), when with only one hour to go, a guest speaker from the Marxist Workers' Tendency (Militant in South Africa) spoke for 45 minutes. This left five minutes for a "debate" on a vital issue. This also meant that motions on Ireland, racism, sexism and free trade unions in Eastern Europe were knocked off the agenda and not debated.

There were however some useful discussions on issues on which there is broad agreement: to fight the Alton Bill; to oppose local, regional and merit pay within the civil service; to make direct links with COSATU trade unions in South Africa; and to fight for workplace creches.

Despite all its shortcomings the Broad Left is the most open and democratic faction within the CPSA. It is also the faction with the most support amongst the members. But the Broad Left needs to draw these members closer to it if we are to put up an effective and consistent fight against the right wing.

The only group who appeared to have any interest in seriously learning from the lessons and the mistakes of the last six months was the Socialist Caucus. This was also the only group interested in serious political discussion and debate — something which the Militant Tendency and the SWP seem to have forgotten about.

The task of all CPSA Broad Left supporters is to build the Broad Left and ensure that next year's conference is accessible to the ordinary members who support its basic aims, and not the sectarian battlefield it seems to have become.

## FE COLLEGES

# Work conditions under threat

College lecturers in the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) have recently begun a series of selective strikes over pay and conditions.

The first round of one-day strikes has already occurred in Manchester. The West Midlands and the London boroughs will follow, then Avon, Leeds and Liverpool.

## TEACHERS

### MOVING RIGHT

Some interesting, but worrying, developments have occurred recently in the National Union of Teachers and the Labour Party. Both illustrate how *not* to conduct a campaign against the Tories.

In the NUT, the executive has recently agreed to replace Fred Jarvis with Doug McAvoy in the position of general secretary. The main reason for this, according to the Guardian, is that the executive see McAvoy as a man of inaction, an enemy of strikes.

McAvoy has openly stated that the Tories cannot be defeated, that the best the NUT can hope for is an appeal to MPs, the House of Lords and the "liberal" press, in the hope that public opinion will swing suddenly against the Tories.

Still at least Comrade Doug is quietly defending the pay and conditions of teachers. Jack Straw, the new Labour shadow minister of

The selective strike programme is in protest at proposals by the employers to do to college lecturers what has already been done to school teachers.

They want to increase the number of hours spent in the classroom and add a week to the academic year.

In return they have made a miserable but highly divisive pay offer of around 5% at the bottom end of the salary scales and over 15% at the top end. Part-time lecturers, an increasingly large section of the profession with no job security, would

have two weeks' sick pay available to them.

The leading negotiator for the employers is none other than Neil Fletcher, leader of the Labour Inner London Education Authority, who was drafted in last October because his predecessor was getting too soft on negotiations. Since then the employers have reverted to a 'take it or leave it' stance.

Labour-controlled County Councils like Durham have threatened lecturers with suspension and even legal action for damages if they refuse to enrol students.

The role of the union leadership has been downright treacherous. They originally suggested negotiating conditions along with pay back in 1984, and since then have only been prevented from negotiating away conditions by the employers' refusal to consider any kind of deal.

Nationally the Socialist Lecturers' Alliance has been set up with the aim of

## CUTS

# How to run a campaign

Islington, like so many other Labour councils, has cuts plans — not as well announced as boroughs like Camden, Sheffield, Lambeth or Manchester, but just as savage.

The campaign to stop them is being led by trade unionists and industrial action is central to the fight. But so is mobilising local communities to support council workers who defend jobs and services.

Caroline Hall, the Secretary of Islington NALGO's Libraries Department stewards, explains how to link the two types of campaigning.

On Tuesday 3 November, the Libraries

Department won a major victory against cuts in jobs and services. We saved the North Library and the Illustrations Service. We did it by fully supporting the branch's position of no cuts, by mobilising our members and also by campaigning actively with the users of the library service.

We held a half day strike on the day of the Recreation Committee meeting. All ten libraries were closed, 98% of our members supported the action.

And we have put a lot of effort into winning the support of the public.

Firstly we produced and distributed a general leaflet on defending the libraries, and all council services, from government cuts. It was well-produced and invited readers to get involved in the campaign.

We got a lot of response to it.

When we knew what cuts were being proposed in the libraries we:

\*Produced petitions against cuts that were used in all libraries.

\*Planned a lobby of the Recreation Committee.

\*Produced attractive leaflets on the cuts plans and our strike.

\*Made sure that workers in the sections most under threat talked to the users face-to-face and got them to write protest letters and attend the lobby.

The half day strike was not just a protest — it was designed to get as many members as possible out leafletting in the borough between 4 and 6 pm and then to stay for the meeting. It worked.

We distributed 20,000 leaflets in those two hours. We increased the numbers of signatures on the petition to 5,000 — the total was collected in only 12 days!

We felt it was important that all the members were involved in the campaign as a way to develop the real solidarity a union needs if it is to win. There were over 80 people at the lobby, almost half the NALGO members in the Libraries Department were there.

During the Recreation Committee meeting we presented our petition and spoke as a delegation. But the most vociferous opposition to the cuts plans came from the members of the public whom we had alerted to the threat, who insisted on their right to speak out against cuts. In the face of solid trade union action and the public outcry the councillors dropped their most severe cuts. They capitulated once and we can make them do so again.

We know that this is only the first round in a long and bitter battle. The Recreation Committee is now looking for 'invisible' cuts — our conditions of service like our 5% shift pay, and at spreading cuts more thinly all around the department.

It will, obviously, be harder to campaign against that sort of attack — but having successfully mobilised the members and the service users once we are in a far better position to appeal to them again.

The lesson is that solidarity among trade unionists can bring results. We have the confidence to keep fighting to win.

ference would at least endorse a full overtime ban.

The Durham Area recently decided to send its officials and sacked miners to leaflet miners in other Areas, calling for a stepping up of the overtime ban. It is an excellent idea. For a long time we have had over 300 sacked miners sloshing about in the system, virtually doing nothing except a bit of fund-raising, forced to go their own way. They should be fully utilised. Durham shows the way.

Apparently Des Dufield sent a letter to Arthur Scargill criticising him after a speech in South Wales. I have not seen Des Dufield's letter, but I have read Arthur Scargill's speech and I cannot see anything wrong with it at all. For him to go into the South Wales coalfield, and take the argument to them, is in my view absolutely right.

I would urge people not to forget the sacked miners. Funds are now at a very low ebb and we are having great difficulty in giving our sacked miners any kind of help. In fact, the funds look like drying up completely and we are starting the run up to Christmas. Do not forget them!

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

## MINES

# Step up the overtime ban!

We are still negotiating with British Coal over my victimisation. Last week I commented on what I had read about Ted Scott, a victimised miner from Stillingfleet in North Yorkshire. He accepted reinstatement at the neighbouring Kellingley pit. I think what he has done is brilliant.

He has got a job at the largest mine in Europe. Apparently he could quickly get a position there on the union committee. British Coal asked him to drop his tribunal case in return for getting 'unbroken service', but Ted refused and insisted he was going ahead with his tribunal, which would clear his name and then claim unbroken service.

I understand that the document he signed simply said he would obey the NUM rule book, so Ted is now the only miner with an official British Coal document saying he will not scab!

Ted originally said he would insist on being reinstated at Stillingfleet, and would reject British Coal's moves to

'deport' militants. But we are not in a position of strength. I can understand Ted's decision, and it may very well reflect on my own, that the main thing is to stay in the fight.

You turn it down and you are out of the industry, a complete outsider. That would be a victory for British Coal. By remaining in the industry we at least live to fight another day.

This Thursday the NUM National Executive is meeting. I am hoping to get to the lobby. I only hope the EC realises that the present so-called overtime ban is a complete waste, and probably only useful to the UDM. To make it bite we have to escalate it.

If they cannot even do that then at least they should call a special delegate conference to allow those who are doing the fighting to decide. I believe such a con-



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## UCW: plan for action! all-out

By Peter Keenlyside, Manchester Amalgamated Branch, UCW (personal capacity)

The votes in the Union of Communications Workers' (UCW) ballot on whether to take action over the shorter working week have by now all been sent in and the result will be made known on 17 November.

It is impossible to say for sure which way the vote has gone, but all the indications are that there is a majority in favour of industrial action.

Despite the expected barrage of propaganda from the management, including brainwashing sessions laughingly called 'team talks', and an expensive advertising campaign, the argument has got over about what is at stake in this vote. A 'no' vote would be more than just saying goodbye to any chance of a shorter working week. It would be opening us up to a whole series of management attacks.

The Executive Council's campaign for a 'yes' vote was patchy to say the least. Although they did put out leaflets and two personal letters arguing the case and answering the management's lies, there was very little attempt to get out among the members and build for the vote. Our members are more used to seeing their executive members selling them out or lining their own pockets, and it was very hard to give an answer when the question was asked 'won't they sell us out again?'

The union leaflets stressed "moderation". The main demand seemed to be for the case to go to arbitration. Maybe it is a good propaganda point to say that the Post Office is refusing arbitration, but it is plain daft for us to pin our hopes on it.

The leaflets also stressed how unlikely an all-out strike would be. Apparently the plan is just to hit the main sorting offices.

Although it is technically possible to cripple the Post Office without taking all-out action, it is highly doubtful that the Post Office will allow that to happen. They will either try to counter our action by bringing in scabs or enforce a lock-out of those not on strike.

By refusing to plan for an all-out strike, with lesser action as a mere preliminary, the Executive are leading us into a situation where either the action will be less than effective or the membership will be caught on the hop and confused about what is really going on.

Meanwhile we cannot just wait around until 17 November to see what is happening. Preparations for the dispute need to start now. Meetings of stewards need to be called in all offices to discuss how to run the dispute in the most democratic way. Local bulletins need to be planned to keep the membership informed about what is happening. This will be especially important if some members are out on strike and others are working. Otherwise management will be able to play one off against the other.

Branches also need to start contacting Labour Parties and Trades Councils to win the support that will be necessary if the dispute really takes off.

The left in the union needs to get organised. So far there has been little or no rank and file involvement in the campaign. If we are to avoid yet another sell-out that must change.

The Broad Left meeting in London on 14 November is a start. It needs similar meetings in other parts of the country. We need a regular national bulletin with information from the branches and details about what the Executive are getting up to.

We also need to take up the political arguments against the Tories and the sell-out merchants in our own ranks.

If we can do this then hopefully at the end not only will we have a membership working fewer hours but one that will have learnt some useful lessons as well.

# Labour students cheated

By Jane Ashworth

Once again the national committee of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) have set a ridiculously early final date by which new Labour Clubs have to be set up in order to take part in NOLS conference. This year's deadline is November 13.

The NOLS NC heard from their officers that there have been "surprisingly few complaints" this year from Party members trying to get new clubs off the ground but having problems with the national office.

This we doubt. At least the following colleges are dissatisfied:

Caulden FE, Shena Simon 6th form; Institute of Education; London College of Printing; Xaverian 6th form; Sunderland Poly; People's FE; St. Martin's.

All these colleges wanted to set up a club, but the national office is not co-operating. The office will not give them a definite date for an inaugural meeting.

This is particularly bad as most of these colleges are in the Further Education sector where NOLS is very poorly organised. There are no more than a handful of Labour Clubs in FE colleges.

This is not surprising as the NOLS constitution forbids part-time FE students from joining.

There are about three times as many part-time as full-time FE students so setting up Clubs in FE colleges is an uphill struggle.

Students disenfranchised by NOLS include all those who are signing on the dole and taking GCSE or A levels to improve their job chances.

Shena Simon 6th Form has been told they cannot set up a Club because they are a 6th form even though last year a NOLS NC member did attend an inaugura-

tion meeting.

In the case of the Institute of Education one Labour Party member, a delegate to Lewisham Constituency Labour Party's Executive Committee, collected in enough names to set up a Club, but the list was stolen by Adrian McMenamin, the Vice-Chair of NOLS!

Adrian was determined there was not going to be a Labour Club at the Institute. In fact, to make sure, he set up a stall in opposition to the Labour Club stall, to collect names and he wrote to all the names on the lists asking if they would like to be an individual member of NOLS rather than set up a club.

When the co-president of the Institute rang up NOLS to object, she was promised that the list would be returned. That was in mid-September — the list was not returned and NOLS have refused to give a date for inauguration.

Obstruction in setting up Clubs is not new. Nor is it the only problem "opposition" Clubs face. Already this year at least one Club, Nottingham University, has had all its membership cards cancelled. They asked for another forty cards. They got them — and then found that their original 30 had been voided by the office.

Exactly the same thing happened to the same Club last year as well as to North Staffs Poly.

The history of NOLS central office denying equal rights to Clubs which do not ally themselves with the leadership of NOLS — the ridiculously mis-named Democratic Left which has Clause 4 at its core — goes back almost ten years. But the situation has worsened in the last five.

The atmosphere is so bad inside NOLS that Clubs which are not sympathetic to the Democratic Left do not trust anything said to them by the Office. Most correspondence is either hand delivered or sent by recorded



Student 'grants not loans' demo. Photo: Ian Swindale.

mail as Clubs know from past experience that unwanted mail gets 'lost'.

In a new pamphlet, 'A Stitch in Time', produced by Socialist Students in NOLS, the history of these bureaucratic manipulations is charted.

The pamphlet also covers the political decline of the organisation. NOLS has changed from an organisation capable of winning control of the NUS in 1981 to one with falling membership and an ineffectual leadership, struggling to hang on to its increasingly perilous hold on the national union.

## NOLS

NOLS gives the Labour Party and socialism a bad name. The entire student movement knows that the Democratic Left have only been able to maintain their hold on NOLS by rigging conferences and have seen the official wing of the Party as incapable of mounting a fight in the colleges against the Tories.

NOLS should have delivered the student vote for Labour in the last election. By and large it did not. Preferring to sit tight and not 'rock the boat', NUS failed to 'organise students into a crusade against the Tories, even though students' standard of living and the entire education system is under severe attack from the government.

The disillusionment with NOLS throughout the student movement has meant that six NUS executive members who are on the left of the Labour Party were not elected on the NOLS ticket (there are only eight official candidates on the NEC). They stood on different slates. SSIN supporter Simon Pottinger actually beat an official NOLS candidate for Vice-President Welfare.

The pamphlet details not only how the Democratic Left hold onto NOLS and have failed to develop NUS but also how the political ideas behind the Democratic Left have turned people against the Party. The Democratic Left are no longer as politically tight as they were; with only 27 people at their last conference they cannot afford to be clear about politics!

But one thing the Democratic Left

do is to continue to project as their binding political thought a crass 'anti-Trotskyism' — which unites the members from Labour Solidarity sympathisers through to Morning Star supporters.

In fact this projection is a cover for their Stalinism.

The Democratic Left are pro-Stalinist, not only in terms of their support for the Eastern bloc against the West but also in their support of the ruling bureaucracies of Eastern Europe against the workers and students. And anyone who chooses to support, say, the Solidarnosc student wing — the NZS — against the official state union, the ZSP, is a 'cold warrior'.

Labour students are in political crisis; the leadership does not command majority support in NOLS nor among Labour Party members active in NUS. The only thing the Democratic Left are good at is hanging on to office.

And now with the changes in the YS rules and the Sawyer proposals to partially merge the YS and NOLS, it becomes even more important that the labour movement is aware of the corruption in NOLS and the likely direction of a new youth movement under the control of the Democratic Left.

## Witness to police assault

A former policewoman has admitted to witnessing assaults by police on the six men subsequently convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. Mrs Joyce Lynas has appeared for the second time in the Court of Appeal which is reconsidering the case.

The first time she appeared as a witness she denied having seen anything. But now she says this was because of intimidation. A Birmingham police officer and an unidentified man threatened her over the phone, and fearing for her family's safety she lied to the court.

Allegations of police brutality and forced confessions have been central in persuading the courts to hear the case of the convicted men.

Patrick Hill, Hugh Callaghan, John Walker, Richard McKenny, Robert Hunter and William Power were all given life sentences after a court found them guilty of the pub bombings thirteen years ago.

But for some time pressure has been building for a retrial.

Aside from the allegations of police thuggery, various aspects of the evidence used to convict them has been open to question.

Chemicals found on the men's hands were alleged to be proof of contact with explosives. In fact, the tests need have proved only that they had been playing cards. Yet it took a great deal of lobbying and publicity before the Home Office allowed a retrial.

In the aftermath of the Birmingham events, the government wanted a scapegoat. The six, who were known to have Republican sympathies and had recently attended an IRA funeral in Belfast, were easy targets.

Their treatment at the hands of police were horrific. As well as beatings, including around the genitals, a revolver was put in Hill's mouth and the trigger pulled, and McKenny was threatened with execution.



Workers' Liberty no.8, with Zbigniew Kowalewski on Solidarnosc in Lodz, special feature on South Africa, survey, features, reviews. Send for your copy to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 90p plus 30p postage.