

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!



Back Benn and Heffer!



Photo: Ian Swindale

TORIES CHEAT THE NURSES

The National Health Service is facing another crisis as Health Authorities find it impossible to fund the promised pay increase for nurses.

After the nurses' industrial action earlier this year, Thatcher and her health chief John Moore were forced to promise new pay rates for nurses to be fully funded by central government.

More empty promises from the Tories. Many nurses are discovering that their pay increase could be as little as 4.2% — the lowest

rise for three years.

The reason for this is that Regional Health Authorities are finding that the cost of the re-grading will be a staggering £150 million more than the government has provided. This gives health authorities two options — avoid proper re-grading or fund the excess by further cutting beds, maintenance and building work.

The Government's barefaced reply has been that if Health Authorities cannot afford to fund the increase out of the money they have provided, they must be guilty of bad

management.

It is clear that the Tory promises were empty words, intended to head off the action in the NHS. Chancellor Nigel Lawson has in the past few days restated that keeping down pay settlements in the public sector is central to the government's strategy.

The Tory liars show again they have no intention of giving proper financial support to the NHS. The immediate outcome of their actions will be more demoralisation amongst nurses, and worse provision for patients. Without a fight back the long term result will be the death of the NHS.

Children of the stones

Clive Bradley, recently returned from Israel and the occupied territories reports on what he saw there.

Palestinian children in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza have become known as the "children of the stones". Their stone-throwing confrontations with the Israeli army, according to the poem that coined the phrase, have achieved more for the Palestinian cause than the intellectuals ever could.

In El-Ram, on the outskirts of East Jerusalem, the small children do indeed throw stones at anyone they guess to be an enemy. Up the street, older youth erect a barricade and wave the Palestinian national flag. Then Israeli troops arrive; shots are fired and people scatter.

On that occasion — it was June 8 — no one was killed in El-Ram. Elsewhere people were not so lucky. There was a general strike that day, and the Israeli authorities were continuing their 'iron fist' policy.

El-Ram stands in sharp contrast to West Jerusalem. El-Ram is a dusty village. On that day, all the shops were closed because of the strike, so it seemed quieter than normal. Not everyone in El-Ram is poor. But cross into West Jerusalem, the mainly-Jewish part, and you enter a different world.

There are soldiers everywhere in Israel and the occupied territories. In the Jewish areas they relax in cafés, machine guns slung over their shoulders. In the Arab areas, and especially the West Bank, they race around in jeeps taking pot-shots at Palestinians.

This is no exaggeration. While we were there, an Israeli bus was attacked by children as it drove through the West Bank. Off-duty soldiers (who always have their guns with them) leapt off the bus and shot one of the kids dead. And this kind of thing happens all the time.

An Israeli soldier who shot dead an Arab at point blank range recently received a one year sentence for manslaughter — which he didn't have to serve. Meanwhile, thousands of Palestinians are in prison many of them arrested under

old British Emergency Regulations that entitles the authorities to keep people without charge for 6 months.

And the gloves are off with the Israeli left. The staff of the Hebrew newspaper *Derech Hanitzotz*, accused of membership of an illegal Palestinian organisation, face 40 year jail sentences. Michel Warschawsky, director of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem could get 20 years.

The recent period has seen a growth of new protest groups, moved to action in response to the *intifada* (the uprising). On 4 June, we joined a demonstration in Tel Aviv commemorating the 21st year of the occupation. The demonstration, which included Jews and Arabs was about 7-10,000 strong.

'Peace groups' include the Women in Black, the 21st Year group, Stop the Occupation, Down with the Occupation (the most radical group) and Yesh Gvul ('There is a Limit') — an organisation of people refusing to do military service in the occupied territories.

The general trend in Israel is to the right: the election due in November will probably see a victory for the right, or another 'hung Knesset' like the present one. But despite the general trend, the left — if you define it broadly, to mean all those serious about peace with the Palestinians — is stronger than in the past.

The chief demand, both of the *intifada* and of the Israeli left, is for an independent Palestinian state. Some — especially among the Palestinians — want to see a



Demonstration in Tel Aviv, 4 June 1988. Photo: Matthew Davies.

'secular democratic state' in the future; but the operational current programme of the Israeli-Palestinian left is 'two states'. Moreover, contrary to the absurd allegation of such people as the British SWP, people with similar attitudes to Socialist Organiser in Israel are considered clearly anti-Zionist.

The prospects for the Palesti-

nians are better now than at any time in the past. The *intifada* has created strong organisations throughout the occupied territories, and shows no sign of abating. Israeli military sources are predicting that the uprising will last for years, not months.

The key question is whether the Israeli left can make serious inroads into the Israeli Jewish population.

Mexico

Election crisis

Even before any results were out, Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was declaring itself the

winner in the country's latest elections. The PRI has practically owned Mexico for most of this century. But for the first time it has faced a serious challenge, and the validity of the election result is being hotly contested.

Cnauntemoc Cardenas, son of the radical nationalist Mexican president of the 1930s and leader of the broad left National Democratic Front (FND) claims the election was rigged. Other opposition parties, from the right wing National Action Party (PAN) to the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers' Party also have denounced the election.

Official figures give the PRI 82.9%, the FND 29.1% and the PAN 16.7%.

Cardenas has declared himself president-elect. At a rally last weekend in Mexico City. Cardenas drew 300,000 supporters. It was the biggest demonstration since the student rebellion of 1968.

Piper Alpha disaster

Unanswered questions

THE PIPER Alpha disaster raises a lot of questions the government cannot answer.

In the British oil industry 81 people lost their lives between 1978 and 1981. Between 1985 and 1987, 263 were involved in serious accidents. That was 80 per cent more than in the previous three years.

In the weeks before the Piper Alpha explosion, the oil platform saw three fires. Two weeks before the disaster, a mattress fire in a cabin was luckily stopped by a steward. Three weeks earlier, an area of sea under the platform burned for half an hour.

Workers on Piper Alpha had recently complained of strong smells of gas. Some had taken pills for gas-induced headaches.

In recent years, as oil prices have fallen, oil companies have reduced spending on oil production enormously. The companies deny that this has harmed safety. But who can believe them?

Many disasters in recent years, from Zeebrugge to Piper Alpha, point to a terrible fact: that in society today, safety is a secondary consideration to profit. The bosses' greed for money inevitably reduces safety levels.

Recent tragedies have also pointed to another fact: that workers in these industries, in the first place through their unions, are aware of the dangers and call for measures to prevent disaster. That's partly what the P&O dispute has been about.

Workers' control is the way to prevent further Piper Alpha tragedies.

Turkey

Police suppress anti-dictator demo



Photo: Ian Swindale

A small but vociferous demonstration by 100 Turkish workers against the State visit of President Evren of Turkey was suppressed by police last Tuesday, 12 July.

While supporters of Evren, who led the army coup of 1982 were allowed to welcome their hero with

flags and banners, opponents of the former dictator and unelected President were harassed by police. All placards and banners were confiscated, and the demonstrators were forced to stand ten yards back from the crash barriers lining the route.

When the Queen arrived to greet Evren the demonstrators began chanting. At this point police ac-

tivated a pre-arranged plan which mounted police had been overheard discussing earlier, to force the demonstrators even further from barriers and surround them with a cordon of police and mounted police. Six arrests were made.

Islington North Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn — well-known for his work on behalf of the Turkish community in London — protested vigorously at the suppression of the demonstration and the denial of the democratic right of Turkish workers to protest at the State welcome given to their oppressor.

The police however, were clearly under orders to prevent a demonstration taking place and this they did with their usual efficiency and cynicism, shrugging off the protests of passers-by who were horrified at what they saw.

10 MPs signed a motion condemning the invitation to Evren and protests were staged at most subsequent stages of the four-day state visit.

USSR

Kremlin loses control in Armenia

Events in Soviet Armenia are now moving far outside the control of the Kremlin. The general strike in Armenia, demanding that the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan be allowed to join Armenia, was called off last Saturday (16 July) while the supreme soviet of the USSR considered the matter.

The ruling Communist Party had been getting tougher with Armenian demonstrators. But Soviet soldiers can't easily control mobilisations of the enormous size that have recently been witnessed in Armenia.

Meanwhile, in Nagorno-Karabakh itself, which unilaterally declared independence from surrounding Azerbaijan last week, a two-month old general strike continues.

WOMAN'S EYE

Marriage is bad for you

By Lynn Ferguson

Marriage is bad for your health — at least if you're a woman. Married women are seven times as likely to suffer from depression than married men. Interestingly, before marriage men are twice as likely to be depressed as women.

Stress and anxiety related illness affect one in seven British women. Given the relative unavailability of real support, women are turning more to drink, cigarettes and drugs.

All this information comes from a report "Stress and Addiction Among Women" produced by the Women's National Commission, a government advisory body.

The report's recommendations are, shall we say, rather a mixed bag. On the plus side suggestions include more child care provision, better training for GPs in counselling and in dealing with stress and addiction and assertiveness training for young women in school. So far so good — though it is noticeable that the emphasis is on helping women deal with their problems rather than dealing with the problems themselves. But why does the Women's National Commission think that women are under so much stress?

Central it seems, is the "devaluation of motherhood as a career". If only motherhood were better valued, and recognised as a real career choice for women, all would be well. Also to blame is the women's movement.

Before the women's movement women knew their place, knew what was expected of them and what to expect of themselves. The women's movement emphasis on women's potential has they say, put unbearable pressure on some women.

Well, that's a help isn't it? All we have to do is shut up those terrible women who think that we can do everything that men can, have lots of babies and devote ourselves to rearing the next generation. So long as we get lots of pats on the head and eulogies to the fine social contribution of motherhood we'll be fine.

Except, of course, that the facts don't bear this out. In the early '60s Betty Friedan wrote a book "The Feminine Mystique" which was one of the early sparks to the modern US women's movement. In this she talked of "the problem with no name" — the feeling of depression and dissatisfaction of bored suburban housewives, the feeling that there must be something more to life than having babies, making nice dinners and plumping up cushions.

Betty Friedan is no radical. She's the leading light of the US National Organisation of Women, a bourgeois reformist women's organisation. But her book touched a real nerve of feeling amongst women.

Married women suffer from depression because the home isn't a refuge for them. It's another responsibility. Women's energy and vitality is sapped by worrying about the kids, the bills, the state of the house and her husband.

The reason married men suffer less from depression than single men is that they're nurtured by their wives. What women need is not a glorification and legitimisation of this lack of selfhood but the annihilation of it.

We don't need therapy to help us cope with the problems and worries that the world heaps upon us — we need to rid ourselves of the conditions that grind us down, and annihilate our self-confidence and self-esteem.

In short, the solution to our problems is women's liberation. But I don't expect any government think-tank to recommend that.

Behind the Airbus massacre

The Iranian Airbus was not off course. It was not diving; it was climbing. It was within a few minutes of its regular scheduled flight time. It was three times the length — nine times the overall size — of the F-14 fighter it was allegedly mistaken for.

The ship that shot it down, the *Vincennes*, claims the Airbus was sending military as well as civilian identification signals. Another US ship, the *Sides*, received only civilian signals from it. Apparently it is technically possible that the *Vincennes*' radar could have picked up a signal from an F-14 on the ground in Iran.

The *Vincennes* had a second electronic-warfare system which should have been able to identify the Airbus beyond doubt. There has been no news on what that system said.

The danger of misidentifying a civilian airliner as military should have been well-known: another US ship had done it to a British Airways flight only four weeks before, sending the airliner warnings to change course and almost caused a mid-air collision. There are 150 civilian flights a day in the area. But the *Vincennes* did not even contact air traffic control at Bandar Abbas airport to ask about the Airbus.

The shooting-down of the Airbus, and the massacre of 290 people, was an act of criminal recklessness — initially covered up by a pack of lies. As Iranian socialists in the Campaign Against Repression in Iran have stated:

This incident shows once again that contrary to what is being claimed by the American and British Governments, the presence of the US Navy (and other naval forces) in the Gulf has nothing to do with their declared aims of helping to end the Iran-Iraq war. They have continued to supply both sides with weapons of destruction, and their presence in the Gulf has only helped to provide a justification of the escalation of the war.

It has also given ammunition to the warmongers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Baathist Regime of Iraq to continue with this criminal war. It is now clear that the imperialist gunboat diplomacy carried out by trigger-happy generals can also directly endanger innocent lives.

It must also be stated that the actions of the reactionary regimes in both Iran and Iraq in continuing with this war is also responsible for this tragic incident. These barbaric regimes have not only directly caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in this futile war, but have also provided the cover for imperialism to join in the killings.

One other issue is raised by this tragedy. The same electronic-warfare systems which controlled the rockets on the *Vincennes* also control nuclear missiles. We know that they have had lots of false alerts. How long until one of those false alerts finds someone in charge who is as trigger-happy as the commander of the *Vincennes*? How long can we afford to leave nuclear-weapon systems in place, threatening the destruction of civilisation?

Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
01-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first post Monday or by phone, Monday evening.
Editor: John O'Mahony
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd (TU)
01-358 1344

Published by Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
Printed by Press Link International (UK) Ltd (TU). Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the view of Socialist Organiser.



CARI picket US Embassy. Photo: Ian Swindale

An end to the Gulf War?

When Iraq launched the Gulf war against Iran in September 1980, it expected to win it easily. Eight years on, it looks like the end is finally in sight.

The government of Ayatollah Khomeini has agreed unconditionally to accept United Nations calls for a ceasefire, dropping its previous insistence that Iraq first be blamed for the war.

It's not all over yet. Iraq is

A frightening fact

Most of the press has done all it can to obscure it, but the main finding of the Butler-Sloss inquiry was clear enough.

"We have learned during our inquiry that sexual abuse occurs in children of all ages, including the very young, to boys as well as girls, in all classes of society and frequently within the privacy of the family".

The inquiry was set up after a media-boostered outcry against two doctors in Cleveland who had diagnosed 121 children as sexually abused between February and July 1987. Its basic finding is that the doctors, Marietta Higgs and Geoffrey Wyatt, were competent, conscientious and doing the best they could to uncover and cope with a terrible evil.

Indeed, the hard fact is that the

EDITORIAL

suspicious of Iran's motives, and moreover wants to press the advantage it has developed since April (following several years of doing very badly).

Recent Iraqi successes, which have included the recapture of territory, are of course the immediate background to Iran's decision. To

great majority of those 121 diagnoses were later confirmed by other doctors.

Yes, there were some diagnoses that were not confirmed. There were some families unjustly disrupted. The procedures used were bureaucratic, and sometimes did not give parents sufficient information or sufficient procedures for complaints and appeals.

All that is important; but it is much less important than the basic fact: **huge numbers of children, far more than were previously thought, are being sexually abused and maltreated.**

As Alan Gilbert of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children puts it: "Parents, the public, professionals, government, the media and everyone else will have to come to terms with this sad reality which for too long has remained hidden".

those were added the US attack on the Iranian Airbus: the usually ultra-belligerent Islamic Republic seems to have been aware that it could not respond to the massacre by launching the war-weary people of Iran into yet more bloodshed.

The recent Iranian contact with the United Nations, the first in many years, allowed the regime to find new friends.

Iran could backtrack, particularly if Iraq thinks it can get away with kicking the Ayatollah while he is down. In declaring for a ceasefire, the Iranian government has retreated from its objective of overthrowing the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq; it will not endure further humiliation.

Significantly, all the states involved in the conflict, especially the United States, have been playing down Iran's retreat. For the US it is vital that the Iranian regime — with Khomeini, or when he's dead, which will be soon — is stabilised and kept in power. They have no better option.

Socialists should welcome wholeheartedly an end to the Gulf war, one of history's most horrible slaughters. But both of the regimes that kept it going for so long are still in power. We must do what we can to help the workers and oppressed of Iran and Iraq to make peace the prelude to revolution.

And we must demand that the US fleet, and all other foreign forces, get out of the Gulf now.

PRESS GANG

Quality on Sunday

By Jim Denham

DAVID Lipsey is looking for £18 million to launch a new 'quality' Sunday newspaper.

There is very clearly a need. The *Sunday Times* is a shadow of its old self (if something so bulky can be properly described as a shadow), and exudes a particularly nauseating combination of trendiness and Thatcherism.

Tame leftie Ben Pimlott has a column, and Simon Jenkins (whose political allegiance is not quite clear since the disintegration of the Alliance) is allowed some space for vaguely dissident copy, but 'editor' Andrew Neil knows His Master's Voice and ensures that the correct line is maintained in editorials, articles by the likes of Brian Walden and Stephen Pyle, and (more subliminally) in endless stuff about property, cars and 'personal finance'.

Over at the *Observer* a more liberal editorial tone prevails, and proprietor Tiny Rowland has never succeeded in imposing the kind of control over editor Donald Treford that the Digger has over Andrew Neil.

In Neal Ascherson the paper has probably the best columnist writing in any British paper. Some people even think that Alan Watkins' political column is occasionally quite interesting. But it's the news content, or rather lack of it, that lets the *Observer* down. Call me old-fashioned if you want, but I can't help feeling that this is a rather serious deficiency in something calling itself a 'newspaper'.

It may account for the *Observer's* failure to make any significant circulation gains from the widely-felt dissatisfaction with the *Sunday Times*.

That leaves the *Sunday Telegraph*, which I'm ashamed to admit I rather like. It's a real newspaper, and not padded out with supplements about holidays and rubbish about nonentities getting drunk in trendy night clubs.

OK, so Peregrine Worsthorne is probably mad, and certainly very right wing. At least he can edit a paper that carries real news, and doesn't insult your intelligence.

But the *Telegraph* is not a great Sunday paper. It just seems good in comparison with its rivals.

Against this sort of competition, Lipsey has to be on to a winner with his venture, and my only surprise is that 'City institutions' are not, apparently, falling over themselves to get in on the act. If I had a few million quid going spare, I'd certainly invest in the project.



Available from SO PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 85 pence plus 25 pence p&p.

GRAFFITI

'POLICY REVIEWS' EXPLAINED....



Corruption and conspiracy

Russian bank officials have been involved in corruption, cover-ups and frame-ups, according to a report in a Soviet newspaper.

3 years ago the Voskhod Handelsbank — the Soviet Union's gold and currency dealing bank based in Switzerland — went bankrupt. At the time the mess was blamed on a Swiss official from the bank.

However investigations from the Soviet Foreign Trade Bank, uncovered a seedy story of shady dealings, speculation and bribery that shocked even them. One investigator dropped dead shortly after his arrival in Zurich, so alarmed was he at what

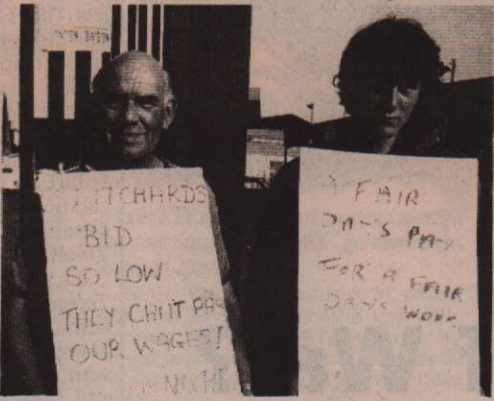
he discovered.

The bank had been buying large and expensive presents for leading Soviet politicians — including Leonid Brezhnev and Viktor Grishin. Bills were found for large quantities of top quality Swiss watches and even of paintings by well-known artists.

Bank officials had also discovered the thrills of gambling on the money markets. The bank was under strict instructions

that all transactions were to be covered on a daily basis. Even so there was evidence of long-term speculation and dealing.

When confronted the manager of the bank, Yuri Karnaukh, blamed the bank's collapse on an "imperialist conspiracy". Nice one Yuri. Karnaukh was granted an amnesty by Soviet courts — apparently because of decorations he'd received for his sterling work as a ... bank manager.



Crimes?

Following on from their judicial rehabilitation earlier on this year Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov have now been fully politically rehabilitated by the CPSU. Not only are they now officially not guilty of the "crimes" for which they were executed in 1937, but their political ideas are now officially OK to be discussed.

Amongst others to be restored (posthumously) to full party membership was Mikhail Tomsky, who was hounded by Stalin's henchmen and committed suicide in 1936.

Gorbachev, it is thought, has a soft spot for Bukharin, who in his time was very keen on encouraging small scale enterprise.

Hiving off

More and more local authorities are putting services out to tender.

A survey covering three fifths of local councils in Britain revealed that over the last financial year privatisation ran at 3 times the rate of '86-'87.

92 authorities contracted out the running of at least one service between March 1987 and April 1988.

Under the Local

Government Act, from next August local authorities will be under a statutory obligation to allow tendering for services.

The council run departments will have to compete for the tender against other firms — leading to 'cost cutting' exercises like job losses and attacks on pay and conditions. It seems that some local authorities are getting in some practice before the Act comes into effect.

Deportation made easier

The Home Office has further attacked people's right of appeal against deportation.

Until now, if an MP intervenes on behalf of someone who falls foul of the immigration laws, the deputation is automatically deferred to give time for appeals to Home Office Ministers. From now on MPs will have to provide new and "compelling" evidence in order to get a deportation order suspended. MPs will be expected to correspond with the Immigration Office rather than with Ministers.

Home Office Minister Timothy Renton claims

this will ensure a "better service". For the Home Office racists this is certainly true. But for those

people who will be faced with summary deportation without the chance to appeal, it's bad news.

Unemployment ends!

From this October there will be no unemployed 16-18 year olds. No — there isn't an unexpected boom in jobs for youth. It's just that the Government has decided that as from October under 18s will not be considered to be unemployed — moreover, most will not be eligible for benefit.

According to the

Department of Employment this change 'reflects a government commitment to offer every leaver either a job, further education, or a place on the Youth Training Scheme'.

The changes mean that by the end of the year the official unemployment figures will be around 2 million.

Atlanta: politics or showbiz?

By Katherine O'Leary

THIS week Atlanta, Georgia, hosts the Democratic Party Convention. Around 5000 delegates, and 15,000 media people and assorted hangers-on, are assembled for a glitzy occasion to rival the Oscar awards.

As for political debate, there will be less than at the Oscar ceremony, where there's always a chance of some actor or director making an unexpected statement. Michael Dukakis arrived at the convention with the presidential nomination in all but name. By Monday he had made his peace with Jesse Jackson.

His running mate is already chosen — right-winger Lloyd Bentsen. The Atlanta jamboree has very little to do with politics, and much more to do with showbiz.

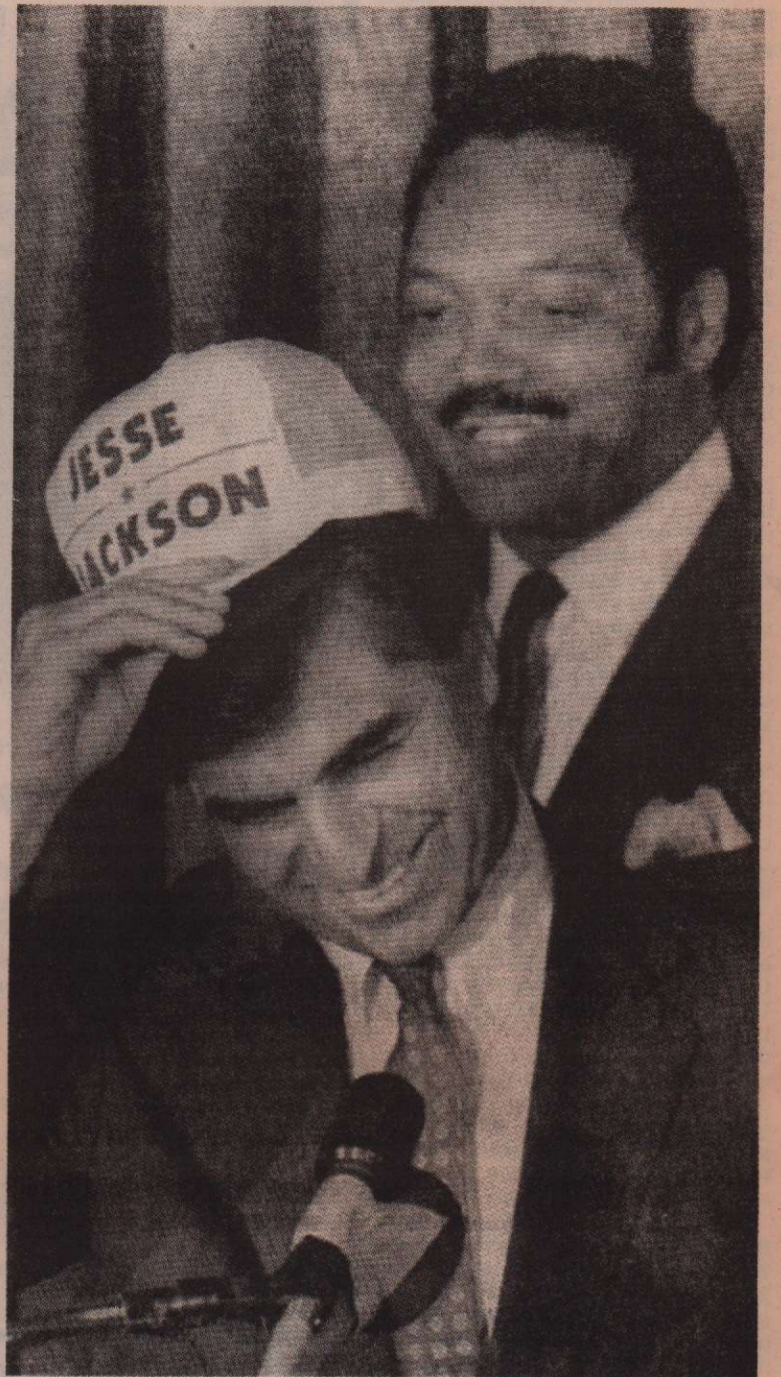
It is meaningless for most people in the US, but especially for US workers. The Democratic Party is not an Americanised version of the Labour Party. According to a New York Times survey, 56 per cent of delegates to the convention have incomes of \$50,000 or more. It is hardly representative of the US working class.

Deals

The Democratic Party has never been, or even claimed to be, the party of the US working class — though from time to time it has made deals with the trade union leaders to get workers' support.

The Democrats' record in power is a shameful one. Jimmy Carter turned viciously against striking miners. He started the new US arms build-up, which Reagan has only continued. Democratic Presidents have supervised the driving-out of militants from the trade unions, and the use of the Taft-Hartley laws against the unions. Kennedy tried to invade Cuba, and stepped up US intervention in Vietnam into full-scale war.

Dukakis's running-mate, Bentsen, has a political programme any right-winger could be proud of. He thought the best way to end the Korean war was to nuke North Korea. He supports the death penalty. He favours aid to the Contras in Nicaragua. He backs



Dukakis and Jackson

Reagan's economic policies.

The tragedy behind the raz-zamatazz of the Democratic convention and the Presidential election campaign is that there is no choice for US workers. The election will be between candidates of two

bosses' parties, one with a slightly more human face.

US workers need their own party. Not even Jesse Jackson's radical-Democratic rainbow could have substituted.

The Rainbow Express

By Dion D'Silva

Jesse Jackson travelled 700 miles from Chicago to the Atlanta Convention, leading a string of cars and coaches full of enthusiastic supporters in the 'Jackson Action Rainbow Express'. But this express has run out of steam.

The talk of a serious bust-up between Jackson and the Democratic Party leadership had been exaggerated. Jackson was annoyed that he wasn't going to be the Vice-Presidential nominee. He was even more annoyed to find out — from the Press that Dukakis had picked Lloyd Bentsen, a conservative Texan. Nevertheless he has always made it plain that he would support the Democratic nomination. The only question was over the role he would be given in the campaign.

Gains

Jesse Jackson can not be simply ignored by the Democratic Party. He has won the overwhelming support of the black community, and

has made significant gains amongst trade unionists and farmers. His Michigan caucus vote victory was partly due to organised UAW (United Automobile Workers) militants. The fact that a black person can even be considered by a major Party for President owes much to the black struggle of the last 30 years.

Boycotts

Jackson was a prominent figure in the Civil Rights movement around Martin Luther King Jr. He only came to real prominence after King's death when he set up his own organisation, Operation PUSH. This used the threat of boycotts on major firms like Burger King to force them to hire more blacks. When thousands of black car-workers were made redundant, its strategy was to buy more shares in the company.

The Civil Rights movement had changed from a mass movement of

action to one of wheeler-dealing in the system.

Today the results have benefited small percentage of the black population — rich, educated and middle class — many of whom will be represented in the conference by Jackson's delegates.

Racism

Correspondingly many of the black leadership looked for positions in the Democratic Party — the party of capitalism and, in the South particularly, the Party of racism. Philadelphia, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit all have black mayors.

Jackson's campaign seemed radically different. He talked of uniting the dispossessed and fighting for the working man and woman. But he has now made his accommodation with the Democratic machine.

There may be challenges to the platform but nothing serious. In a country full of divisions, the picture we will be seeing is of Dukakis and Jackson hand-in-hand.

Hands off our homes!

By Will Adams

Over a thousand tenants from all over Tower Hamlets met in York Hall last week and voted unanimously to oppose any attempts to set up a Housing Action Trust on any estate in the borough.

The Government have announced plans to take 25,000 council properties in London (Lambeth, Southwark and Tower Hamlets), Sandwell, Leeds and Sunderland away from their current landlords and to hand them over to unelected Housing Action Trusts (HATs). The HATs are part of the Housing Bill, which is likely to become law before the end of the year. The Government plans to establish the Trusts at the beginning of 1989.

HATs are based on the model of Urban Development Corporations such as the London Docklands Development Corporation. They will be run by boards of businessmen appointed by Nicholas Ridley, Secretary of State for the Environment, and will be answerable to him for their actions. Their job is to do up the housing under their control and then, within 10 years, sell it off to new landlords — housing associations, tenants' cooperatives, private landlords or developers for sale to owner-occupiers.

HATs will have no obligation to carry out the wishes of their tenants. Nicholas Ridley says that HATs will 'listen to' the views of their tenants, but also makes it very clear that it will be his views that matter. The Housing Bill allows Ridley to sack the board of a HAT if they fail to carry out his wishes.

Tenants in the area affected will have no veto on whether their housing is transferred to the HAT. William Waldegrave, Minister for Housing, was asked at the press conference announcing the proposed HATs why he was not prepared to give tenants the limited right of veto they have under the so-called "Pick a Landlord" provisions of the Housing Bill — where a transfer to a new landlord can be stopped if a ballot on the issue shows a majori-



Glasgow (above) and Birmingham (right): housing in Britain today. Photos: Andrew Wiard (Report), Nigel P Clapp

ty of those eligible to vote (rather than a simple majority of those voting) against the proposal. His reply was that there is no real choice for the tenants involved: they can stay with their Council which will not have the money to improve their homes, or transfer to a HAT which will.

This sums up the Government's approach to council housing since 1979. They have used their control on council borrowing powers to prevent councils spending the

money needed on their housing stock. Now they are blaming those councils for failing to maintain their stock. They hope that tenants welcome the HATs, which come with the promise of money for major improvements.

The Government will give the HATs £125 million over the first 3 years of their existence. In his letter to the tenants in the areas involved he says that this money will mean that HATs will not increase rents before improvements are done on

their homes.

Of course tenants welcome any money that is made available for improving their homes. But £125 million is nowhere near enough to meet the needs for improvement in the proposed HAT areas. It works out at about £5,000 per flat, spread over 3 years. On Ocean Estate in Tower Hamlets, 4 blocks are to be handed over to a HAT. 3 of these blocks are severely cold and damp. The cheapest option for solving these problems is to demolish the blocks and build low-rise housing. This was last cost at £15 million — about £70,000 per flat.

The Government sees the HATs raising money for improvement work from two sources — from the sale of property and from raising rents for its tenants. Ministers have said that after improvement work was carried out rents would have to reflect "the economic value of the work carried out".

The HAT would have many of the powers that councils currently have: power to evict tenants from property they wanted to sell or improve and to issue compulsory purchase orders against owner-occupiers. What prevents councils using these powers is the political pressure that tenants are able to exert on them. HATs would be unelected and so more prepared to use these powers. There is no obligation on a HAT to allow tenants moved out of flats to move back in after improvements are complete.

HATs have no duties to house the homeless or to consider council tenants for transfer into its area. They will remove housing from the council stock; and increase the pressure on the housing left.

HATs are not about meeting the housing and other needs of inner-city council tenants. Their aim is to change the type of people living in the inner cities.

House prices on the open market are way beyond the reach of all but a tiny minority of council tenants in London, and out of the question for the unemployed and those on Housing Benefit anywhere

in the country. So housing sold by a HAT to developers would not be sold to the people currently living there.

Rent levels on housing sold to housing associations or private landlords would be twice current council rents or more, because of the changes in housing association financing arrangements and the provisions in the Housing Bill allowing for rents to be set at "market levels". Again, this will be beyond the reach of many of the current tenants. Housing Benefit is unlikely to cover the full cost of increased rents.

The Tory Government wants to shift poorer people out of the inner cities and replace them with people who can afford owner-occupation and market rents. Bringing richer people into the inner cities will generate jobs — and increase the number of Tory voters, thus doing down inner-city Labour councils.

As for the people forced out of the inner cities, the Government argue they should take their chances in an unrestricted free market in housing. So, in the terms of Tory ideology, tenants form the demand side of a market where the supply in housing available for rent and the price is rent levels. The market will increase the price if demand is higher than supply. If this leads to an increase in homeless people and people forced to live in substandard and overcrowded accommodation, then hard luck.

Tom Baron, chair of the Stockbridge Village Trust (a private trust running an ex-council estate in Merseyside) spelled it out at an Institute of Housing Conference. In order to attract private money to ex-council housing, he said, a degree of "social engineering" must accompany the improvement of the stock. "If the excessive concentration of the elderly, the poor, the unskilled, the unsocial and the ethnic minorities is still seen to predominate, then the investors will not believe that the improved housing and environment will be maintained and they will not invest."

Fightback in East London

Having considered the proposals for a HAT in Tower Hamlets including part of Ocean Estate, the Tenants Association committee voted to oppose the attempts to take our housing away from the council and to campaign for the Government to make available to Tower Hamlets Council the money needed for improvements on our estate.

We took this proposal to a general meeting on the estate where over 200 tenants — the largest meeting on the estate anyone can remember — voted overwhelmingly to oppose the HAT.

Already our campaign is well advanced. We distributed an emergency newsletter to all 2000 flats on the estate. Included in the newsletter was a window sticker "Flatten the HAT" which is appearing in windows across the estate.

A petition is being taken to every household on the estate. With this we are confident we can demonstrate that a clear majority of the estate don't want the Government's plans. It also will ensure that everyone on the estate has answers to the glossy propaganda the Government is putting out. A banner "No to the Housing Action Trust" has been fixed to one of the

By Will Adams

blocks on Mile End Road and more banners are being prepared for other blocks on the estate.

Approaches are being made to unions representing Council housing staff whose jobs would be under threat if a HAT was established.

The Tenants Association wrote to Nicholas Ridley and William Waldegrave inviting them to visit us and hear the objections of tenants to their plans. The Labour-controlled Stepney Neighbourhood Council (our local council) have voted to oppose the HAT and are supporting our campaign.

The Government don't have to listen to our protests. Ridley has said that he will ignore the wishes of tenants if he so chooses. But Waldegrave said at the press conference that it would be extremely difficult for these plans to go ahead unless the Government "won the hearts and minds of the tenants". The more we can do to demonstrate that the Government don't have the "hearts and minds" of Ocean Estate tenants, the better chance we have of knocking back the plans.

At the general meeting we heard from tenants from Hulme Estate in Manchester where the Government was forced by tenants' protests to withdraw plans for a HAT on their

estate and has given a commitment to fund a feasibility study into how the housing and other needs of the estate can be met.

An important part of our campaign is to make a positive statement of the needs of our estate and to argue for the Government to make money available to meet these needs without taking our housing away from the Council. We are preparing work on a report that brings together a survey of the needs of the estate with proposals for how these can be met.

We are confident that the interest shown by tenants from across the estate will be sufficient to stop Ridley's plans to take away our homes and to make it difficult for the Government to ignore our case for increased funding for work on the estate.

Altogether there are 6 estates in Tower Hamlets that the Government wants to come under a HAT. All the other estates are running similar campaigns to ours. We oppose a HAT in any part of Tower Hamlets and will be working with tenants groups on other estates and with the Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants, who are coordinating the work.

There are also plans for a national tenants campaign against HAT to be launched by the tenants groups from Hulme Estate over the next month or so.

Free Nelson Mandela!

Mandela and the struggle

Nelson Mandela was the son of a chief in rural Transkei. He received a privileged education (compared to most blacks) at a Methodist school and Fort Hare College, where his political life began.

He is said to have rebelled against his family's attempt to arrange a marriage and returned to Johannesburg, where he studied law at Witwatersrand and then practised law with the current leader of the ANC, Oliver Tambo.

Mandela joined the ANC in 1944 as a member of the radical Youth League. The ANC was a highly conservative organisation at this time, dominated by chiefs, legalistic in the extreme, thoroughly alienated from the working class. During the war for instance, they opposed all industrial actions by black workers on the general grounds that they were illegal and would hamper the war effort.

The Youth League, of which Mandela was soon a leading member, was in favour of mass mobilisation and campaigns, but its political direction was African Nationalist rather than socialist. Its 1944 manifesto, which Mandela helped to write, declared that it was 'imperative for the African to view

Nelson Mandela said: 'The struggle is my life'. Bob Fine takes a look at Mandela's life and 40 years of struggle.

his problems and those of his country through the perspective of Race".

It spoke of "the national cause" of Africans, the need to impart to the ANC "a truly national character", a belief in "the divine destiny of nations", a rejection of "foreign leadership and ideologies" and the unity of all Africans. It sought cooperation with Indian and Coloured national organisations. It saw South Africa as a country of four nationalities and claimed the right of "African self-determination".

It drew back, however, from the slogans of 'Africa for the Africans' and 'Hurl the white man into the sea'. It described itself as offering a 'moderate' nationalism which was "not against the European as a human being — but irrevocably opposed to white domination".

There was little or no class perspective in the Youth League's Africanism. Mandela himself voted for the expulsion of Communists.

The defeat of the African miners' strike in 1946 was a terrible blow for the movement as a whole but especially so for the black working class.

On the side of the rulers, it paved the way for the defeat of Smuts' segregationist United Party and the rise to power of the hardline apartheid Nationalists in 1948.

On the side of the ruled, it paved the way for more militant forms of nationalism, expressed in the Youth League's take-over of the ANC, the 1949 Programme of Action, and a closer alliance between African, Asian and Coloured nationalist groups and the Communist Party.

Mandela was 'volunteer-in-chief' of the Defiance Campaign, a cam-



Mandela (centre) during a recess of his trial

aign in which 8500 people had openly defied the government's race laws and suffered the penalty, in 1953.

The campaign had great impact in arousing a moral conscience against apartheid, but it did not succeed in securing the repeal of any of the six or seven 'unjust laws' it was aimed at. More important, it offered little to the urban working class beyond the role of admiring onlookers.

For black workers violation of the law was an everyday necessity and their concern was to avoid the clutches of the police. Many must have been bemused as the volunteers offered themselves up to the police.

As a leading Trotskyist of the time Baruch Hirson, commented: "The philosophy of passive resistance is one that flows from a middle class leadership which places no reliance on the masses... It is a glorification of leaders and elevates them as political martyrs... It stems from the religious philosophy that there can be a moral re-awakening of the rulers and it calls in effect for negotiations and concessions that exclude the broad mass of the people."

Mandela was not unaware of the problems. He wrote: "A political movement must keep in touch with reality... Long speeches, the shaking of fists, the banging of tables and strongly worded resolutions... do not bring about mass actions and can do a great deal of harm."

He also advocated the need to "fight unreservedly for the recognition of African trade unions" and called upon the ANC to "make the greatest possible contact with working people". Workers, however, were not seen as an independent force but as one element of the people's struggle.

"Freedom in our lifetime" was the slogan Mandela attached to the Freedom Charter approved by the 1955 Congress of the People. This provided the formal basis of the popular alliance between African, Asian, Coloured and White parties to the Congress Alliance.

In his review of the charter Mandela emphasised its multi-

racialism: "For the first time in the history of our country the democratic forces irrespective of race, ideological conviction, party affiliation or religious belief have renounced and discarded racialism". It was a great step forward in this respect, but Mandela underplayed the degree of racialism still present in an alliance based on racial groups and oriented to a future society based on equal status... for all national groups and races."

The formal character of the Alliance as a coalition between races also obscured its class composition, that it was an alliance across classes. Mandela, however, stressed approvingly its non-socialist nature: "It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings among the people on a democratic basis... Its declaration "The People Shall Govern" visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country."

To all the classes, he argued, the struggle for democratic rights offered definite advantages. What was important was unity, "the united front".

Alliance and unity were certainly necessary, but on whose terms? What was really at issue in the coming years was the class leadership of the movement; was it to be by workers or by the petty bourgeoisie? Although Mandela saw that "the workers are the principle force upon which the democratic movement must rely", the strategies, tactics and goals of the movement were in no way determined by the working class.

A clear illustration came in the Election Strike of 1958. Mandela argued — totally correctly in my view — that boycott is an "effective and powerful weapon" but not a principle.

He wrote: "Some people regard the boycott as a matter of principle which must be applied invariably at all times... This is a mistake, for the boycott is no way a matter of principle but a tactical weapon". Some people, Mandela continued,



Black workers have the power to smash apartheid.



"regard participation in the system of separate racial representation in any shape or form" as impermissible.

This "inflexible principle" was also an error. It was vital to distinguish between "participation in elections by the people who accept racial discrimination... and participation... in order to exploit them in the interests of the liberatory struggle."

In principle, Mandela was absolutely right. Unfortunately the occasion was not.

Instead of pursuing demands for a pound a day and the end to the pass laws coming from within the ranks of the unions and instead of pursuing the militant anti-pass campaigns of the women's federation,

"Mandela was never able to investigate the reasons for the terrible defeats of the 1960s."

Mandela called for participation in the white elections in favour of the United Party and against the Nationalists on the grounds that defeat of the Nationalists was the top priority.

The campaign backfired badly and the strike in support of the United Party was a flop. In the event, the Nationalists galloped home while the UP drifted ever more to the right.

The failure of the Election Strike led a new burst of Africanism and boycottism in the form of the Pan African Congress, which split off from the ANC.

In 1960 Mandela offered his testimony at the Treason Trial. The

government had arrested 156 political leaders following the adoption of the Freedom Charter, charging them with participation in a treasonable conspiracy, inspired by international communism, to overthrow the state by violent means.

The trial dragged on for over four years, the last of the defendants being acquitted in 1961... It served its purpose, however, in exhausting the financial and mental energies of the movement at a crucial time.

The court gave considerable space for political statements. Mandela reasserted his commitment to universal adult franchise, his distance from Communism and his non-racialism: "we are not anti-white, we are against white supremacy".

After his release, Mandela was heavily involved in the mass actions which followed the Sharpeville shooting. This was a tumultuous time in South African history, when tens of thousands of workers went on strike and took to the streets.

The Congress Alliance was not prepared for this level of working class militancy. It either left it to its own resources or made inappropriate calls for Days of Mourning and Stay-at-Homes which drew workers back from initiatives already taken. In 1961, for example, Mandela was still approaching the United Party, offering support to their opposition to the declaration of a Republic.

When the ANC finally called a general strike, it was far too late, the workers exhausted by their heroic efforts. It was also probably on the wrong issue. What was the Declaration of a Republic, the abolition of any position for Britain's Queen, to most blacks.

Mandela went underground to organise the May Stay-at-home. From there he issued the ANC calls for "a countrywide campaign of non-cooperation with the government."

The plan, he said, was to "make government impossible". But the workers had already suffered a defeat. The strikes were over. Pass burning had turned into queues for new passes. The government itself

had severed the possibility of cooperation.

The ANC turned to armed struggle in the form of a sabotage organisation, Umkhonto We Sizwe (Spear of the Nation). Although it broke through the bounds of pacifism and legality, its guerrillaist orientation cut against the mass organisation of workers. Instead reliance was to be placed on small groups of armed men infiltrating into the country.

Mandela, known as the Black Pimpernel, was picked up and tried for incitement to strike illegally.

Mandela was convicted only to reappear on sabotage charges at the Rivonia trial. Here he declared that "violence by the African people had become inevitable" and that "without violence there would be no way open to the African people... All lawful modes of expressing opposition... had been closed by legislation. There was no choice, it was a question of 'submit or fight'".

Violence was to be kept to the minimum, sabotage against property not terrorism against persons.

The object as far as he was concerned was not communism or a classless society, but rather the attainment of democratic rights: "I regard the British Parliament", he said, "as the most democratic institution in the world and the independence and impartiality of its judiciary never fail to arouse my admiration".

Mandela never explored the particular form in which "the turn to armed struggle" was conducted in South Africa: its alienation from workers and mass struggles, its exclusivity, its cult of violence as the way forward. He never was able to investigate the reasons for the terrible defeats in the 1960s at the hands of the South African security forces nor of its connection with the annihilation of mass struggle in this period.

From his prison cell Mandela has become an embodiment of black resistance. But he never really understood working class politics or the class reasons for the defeats suffered at the time of his imprisonment.

Pakistan: for a workers' party!

Pakistan's ruler, General Zia, has sacked the country's civilian government and dissolved the Parliament chosen by 'non-party' elections.

If he keeps his promise to abide by the constitution, he must hold elections open to the political parties by 29 August. Tens of thousands demonstrated in Lahore on 13 July demanding that Zia set a date for these elections.

The biggest opposition party is the Pakistan People's Party. Under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto it ruled Pakistan from 1970 to 1977 with a populist and nationalist policy, including extensive nationalisations and some welfare measures and land reform. In 1977 it was overthrown by a military coup.

Today the PPP is led by Bhutto's daughter Benazir, with a markedly more conservative policy. Ali Asghar and Amjad Mirza argue that Pakistani workers need not the PPP's vague promises, but their own workers' party.

Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party say that they are poised for a "historic challenge to President General Mohammed Zia Ul Haq" which will "put an end to the martial law years" and provide a solution to "economic and social hardships".

The PPP aims to mount this electoral challenge with a number of possible alliances. The PPP may fight the general election with an electoral pact with the other parties in the Movement for Restoration of Democracy in Pakistan (MRD). However, this is unlikely, as a comprehensive division of electoral constituencies would be needed taking into account the relative strengths of each of the eleven parties. Negotiation of such an electoral pact would also necessitate negotiations as to which party would fight the highest number of winnable seats and thus be the majority party in the National Assembly.

A second possibility is an electoral pact with the Jamat e Islami and elements of the parliamentary Muslim League. The fact that this is being considered as a serious possibility by the PPP really exposes it as a party bound on a course of out-and-out opportunism and the reduction of the populist slogans of the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of "food, clothing and shelter", which had such an echo among the masses in the seventies,

Zia's secret friends

We now find out that the avowed enemies of martial law regime, Jatoi and Co, the old Pakistan People's Party leadership, have been in constant dialogue with Zia.

The whole spectrum of bourgeois parties and even some of the left parties are either currying favour with or adopting a favourable posture towards the regime. This can mean nothing more than a crass betrayal of the Pakistani people.

to an evasive and indecisive: "you adapt policies to achieve certain ends".

Jamat e Islami is an extreme right-wing strike breaking party. It is a willing tool of the American imperialists, and acted as the intermediary between the army and the Americans at the time of the 1977 coup. The Muslim League has shown itself for three years now as a willing tool for Zia until its dismissal on the 29 May 1988.

Benazir Bhutto is even talking about cooperation with Zia. "The promised elections pose no threat to the president" because "the constitutional changes have legally indemnified him against prosecution."

The populist anti-American tinge of Z.A. Bhutto's later days as leader of the PPP has been replaced by an appeal to the Americans for "moral support more than anything else", and the reduction of the relationship between Zia (and what he represents) and the Americans to a mere arms transaction. Benazir Bhutto urges the US to use this as a bargaining counter to convince Zia of the folly of his ways: "When you give money, you have the right to ask who you are giving it to".

The reasons for the shedding of this populist image of the PPP are many.

Firstly, there has been the definite falling away of popular activity and unrest during the years of the martial law regime, starting with the failure first of all to mount any kind of successful campaign during the trial and after the execution of Z.A. Bhutto himself. Then there were the two periods of stabilisation of the martial law regime itself.

The first of these resulted from the Russian intervention in Afghanistan. It so disorientated and undermined the Pakistani left, and strengthened the role of Zia's regime as a policeman and pawn of the West in the region. Pakistan received additional military and financial aid. The conditions for mounting a successful campaign and mobilising the masses subsided.

The second period of stabilisation was that following the non-party based elections of 1985 when the martial law regime succeeded in giving itself a civilian face after the election attracted (it is widely held) a 50% to 60% poll.

In elections for the municipal councils the PPP has suffered severe reverses. This has been accompanied by the defection from the party of senior figures such as Jatoi (a former chief minister of Sind province during the Bhutto regime) and Mustafa Khar (a former Governor of Punjab province under Bhutto).

A serious rift in the PPP over the party's attitude to the US threatens its unity and may lead to further splits in the party.

The party's political impotence in fighting Zia and the weakness of the party structure itself have undermined its broader support amongst the masses, with the consequent shedding of its populist message, and left the PPP seeking electoral alliances of a completely unprincipled nature as a means to an electoral victory at any costs.

We urge all those in the Pakistani labour, peasant and national liberation struggles to increase the tempo of the class struggle and bring about the collapse of the capitalist and feudal order in Pakistan. We cannot trust the destiny of the oppressed classes and nations to a group of bourgeois politicians gathered over a cup of tea.

The interests of the oppressed classes and nations can only be won by these classes and nations taking up their own struggles through their own representatives."

Why the SWP tells lies



SWP Guru Tony Cliff

"We don't tell lies to the working class", said SWP speaker Phil Taylor, introducing a session at 'Marxism '88' summer school. Either he was lying or there were no working class people in the audience.

'Marxism '88' was billed as a week of debate and discussion organised by the Socialist Workers Party. It contained neither debate nor discussion.

SWP leaders threw SO supporters out of the school for no good reason and used lies, slander and sub-political abuse to attack anyone who challenged their political line. A lot of the lies, slander and abuse were directed at Socialist Organiser. Here are some examples. The culprits are prominent SWP members.

Lie: "Socialist Organiser are hypocrites when they talk about fighting the witch-hunt. In Liverpool they joined the Liverpool Labour left and supported the witch-hunt of Militant". (Maureen Watson).

Fact: Socialist Organiser have never supported the witch-hunt of 'Militant'. We have always voted against and vehemently denounced the expulsion from the Labour Party of Militant supporters. We have organised and taken part in campaigns to defend 'Militant' from the witch-hunters.

We have been highly critical of the politics of 'Militant' and their leadership of Liverpool City Council. We have also been highly critical of Derek Hatton for his 'flash Harry' life and lifestyle.

Only somebody who believes that we have no right to criticise 'Militant' can possibly believe that this adds up to support for the witch-hunt.

SO supporters did attend two or three meetings of the Liverpool Labour left to argue for our politics — including our opposition to expulsions.

The SWP are the last people to

By Tom Rigby

give us lessons on fighting witch-hunts in the Labour Party. Yes, SW has opposed the witch-hunt; at the same time, it has advised Labour left-wingers not to fight the witch-hunt but instead to save Kinnock the trouble of expelling them and quit the party first!

Militant supporters were violently ejected from IS (forerunner of the SWP) public meetings in Liverpool in the early '70s. Their crime was asking awkward questions.

Lie: "Socialist Organiser has the same policy for the Jews as Hitler and Stalin". (John Rose)

Fact: It is obscene even to equate Stalin with Hitler in relation to the Jews, let alone to equate us with either. The Nazis killed six million Jews during the Holocaust. Roughly 1½ million escaped from the Nazis to the USSR. There they faced prejudice, discrimination, and sometimes violent intolerance, but nothing comparable to the Holocaust. You can say Stalin and Hitler had the same policy towards the Jews only if you think it makes no difference whether Jews are slaughtered or survive.

As for Socialist Organiser: we oppose anti-semitism; we support the right of the Israeli Jews to their own state; we support the right of the Palestinian Arabs to their own state and their struggle against oppression by Israel. How is that like Hitler, or even Stalin?

Mike Simons explained it in Socialist Worker of 16 January: an independent Palestinian state is no good because "it would be a phoney state with no power, no resources and unable to decide foreign policy independent of Israel". Why? Doesn't that depend on the struggle? If the SWP think the Palestinians can't muster the strength to make their own state really independent, how do they think the Palestinians can conquer Israel?

"There is no support in Israel for the only thing which could bring peace to the region, a democratic secular state of Palestine in which all religious groups would have equal rights." The SWP explains that the way to win this democratic secular state is to extend the Palestinian uprising into a pan-Arab workers' revolution.

How can this 'democratic secular state', imposed by Arab might against the unanimous opposition of the Israeli Jews be democratic? How could it be maintained by anything less than the Arabs doing to the Jews what Israel is doing today to the Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza? Why, if we have a workers' revolution across the whole region, is it impermissible for the Israeli Jews to have a small niche of their own? Socialists want to see all national prejudices, hostilities, and feelings of separateness fade away: but why should we not grant the Israeli Jews the same rights as any other nation, that their union with other nations should be voluntary rather than forced?

The SWP call the revolution they want, 'socialist'. It sounds more chauvinist than socialist to us. No, the SWP leaders are not Jew-haters. They are just people who use radical sounding slogans without thinking them through.

Lie: "Groups (meaning Socialist Organiser) support the Israeli state in its reign of terror against the Palestinian people". (Alex Callinicos).

Fact: Socialist Organiser makes a clear distinction between the Israeli Jewish nation (and their right to a state of their own) and the policies of the Israeli state. We support the uprising of the Palestinian people, we are for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza, we are for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Lie: "Socialist Organiser has a two-state position on Ireland". (Chris Bambury).

Fact: Socialist Organiser argues for a united Ireland with federal autonomy for the mainly protestant areas. You can read this in our "Where We Stand" column every week. The SWP is a lot nearer a 'two-state' position than us. It blithely sloganises about 'Troops Out Now' without any proposals to deal with the Catholic/Protestant communal conflict other than generalities about socialism. The SWP leaders must know that this version of 'Troops Out' would certainly lead to full-scale civil war and bloody repartition. They cannot possibly believe what Socialist Worker sometimes implies — that British withdrawal would automatically undo the entire heritage of centuries of British domination of Ireland, including the communal conflict.

In Socialist Worker of 9 July Paul Foot wrote that troops out might produce "chaos" but "the 'chaos' might produce a unity in a labour movement which has been for so long successfully divided". Through civil war to comradeship? Even if Paul Foot believes this, the SWP's political leaders are not so foolish.

The SWP leaders do not want full-scale civil war and repartition. But they are irresponsible enough to mouth slogans which mean that — just because the slogans sound good.

To tell lies about your political opponents is a sure sign of political bankruptcy. In the '30s the Stalinists perfected the lie as a political method. Now the SWP have embarked on the first steps of the same road. But why?

What the SWP says today about Iran and Palestine flies in the face of its basic theory and political tradition. The SWP's forerunner,

the Socialist Review group, started out in 1950 on the basis of refusing to support North Korea against US imperialism as other would-be Trotskyists did. In the '50s and '60s, one of its chief political badges as a tendency was its opposition to 'Third Worldism', which often went as far as downright disdain for Third World struggles. It has continued the same attitude into the '80s, though (without explanation) developing quite different theories to underpin it: see Nigel Harris's recent book, 'The End of the Third World'.

In 1982 the SWP was one of very few would-be Trotskyist groups who (like us) rejected the 'anti-imperialist' line of supporting Argentina in the South Atlantic war, and instead explained that Argentina's role in the war was imperialistic like Britain's, though on a different scale. In 1980 the SWP opposed both sides in the Iran/Iraq war, though the recentness of Iran's 1979 revolution made many would-be Trotskyists back Iran. On Palestine/Israel the SWP's current line has a longer history; but even there the insistence on the immovably reactionary nature of the Israeli working class is new, and in 1967 the SWP (then IS) favoured self-determination for the Israeli Jews within a socialist federation of the Middle East.

What's going on? For the SWP, what it expounds as theory has always been one thing, what it uses as day-to-day practical politics another. As Tony Cliff once put it (in an argument over the SWP/IS's shift to opposing British entry into the EEC, in 1971), "Tactics and principles contradict each other".

Often the SWP "line" is put together in the same sort of way that bourgeois parties package their "message". The first requirement is that the line sounds good and suits organisational needs. Squaring it theoretically is a job for scribblers to mop up afterwards.

At present the SWP wants to sell itself as the hardest of the 'hard left'. It addresses itself to Labour leftists and tells them that the SWP fights for the same causes as them, but with a hard, pure party, and without the hassle of face-to-face battle with the right wing and soft left in the Constituency Labour Parties. To appear very 'anti-imperialist' suits this sales line. It also serves SWP factional purposes in the student movement, where they have been resoundingly outflanked by Socialist Students in NOLS (in which SO is active) and where Israel/Palestine is a big issue.

'Building the party' for the SWP, is first and foremost building an organisational machine. Politics come second. And honest debate and discussion comes nowhere.

WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:
For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and

gays.

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

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

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

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Britain's death squad exposed!

Ulster cops did shoot to kill

The Tories new homeless

SUBSCRIBE!

Get Socialist Organiser delivered to your door by post. Rates(UK) £8.50 for six months, £16 for a year.

Name

Address

Please send me 6/12 months sub. I enclose £ To: Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Get your copy!

Is the SWP an alternative?

available from SO PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 75p plus 25p p&p.

Designer communism

Belinda Weaver reviews "Rouge Baiser".

'Rouge Baiser' isn't all that disappointing when you're watching it. It's rather cleverly made. Paris in the fifties looks pretty good, with its Left Bank jazz clubs and baguettes for breakfast.

The film is like a prolonged Levi 501s commercial; lovely to look at and packed with symbols. Only the symbols don't mean much, they're just designer accessories.

'Rouge Baiser' is supposed to be about a young Parisian girl growing up as an ardent Communist in the fifties, and what happens to her when she falls in love with a cynical Paris-Match photographer. Yet it never really connects with its subject. The scenes don't knit together to form a story. Some scenes seem significant and then go nowhere. The film is weightless emotionally and politically; nothing's at stake.

Nadia's Communism is like received religion, accepted and embraced unthinkingly. She idolises Stalin the way teenagers worship pop stars, as elusive, unattainable gods. Her enthusiasm for demonstrations and marches is more a 'shock the bourgeois' adolescent rebellion than anything serious and considered. It's politics is fun. Her parents and all her friends are Communists so Nadia is too.

When Nadia's photographer-boyfriend challenges her ideas, she doesn't have any arguments to beat him with. Her politics simply evaporate, as if that were a phase she was going through.

Russia-worship is back in fashion now, with the rise of Gorbachev. All the designer Communists will



Radical chic

love 'Rouge Baiser'. The clothes are pretty much the same as what people are wearing now, and the politics are similar — hate America, love Russia.

Gorbachev's admirers hail him as a great reformer and ignore the real tyrannies still existing in the Soviet system. So too do Nadia's family and comrades ignore the realities of Stalin's Russia. Even when a former comrade returns to tell of the horrors of Stalin's labour camps, they don't want to believe him. Nadia's mother believes him, but doesn't want to face the truth. Telling people will just deprive

them of all hope, she says.

That attitude was wrong then and is still wrong. Covering up the Soviet Union's crimes only helped Stalin continue. The way to give hope is to call things by their real names, not support distortions and falsifications. That way, the fight can be in the open. Cover-ups only lead to cynicism and disillusionment.

Nadia's eventual reaction against her youth group comrades is healthy. The baby bureaucrats have adopted the norms of the debased and corrupted Communist Party. Anyone who disagrees with the Par-

ty line is a degenerate deviationist, good only for expelling as an example. Nadia is right to reject their absurdities. Yet she rejects them only to embrace cynicism, which is no better.

The stifling atmosphere of the Communist Parties in the '50s bred cynicism. It never educated the members to be thinking, questioning people. It demanded obedience. Good militants were broken by the experience, ending up cynical and disgusted with politics for good. Nadia isn't wiser at the end of 'Rouge Baiser' she's just exchanged one blind alley for another.

Les Hearn's
SCIENCE COLUMN

Is Earth hotter?

ENVIRONMENTALISTS have warned for years about the 'greenhouse effect', a consequence of increased levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere. The theory is that the CO₂ will prevent the Earth losing so much heat at night, so that temperatures will gradually rise, causing disruption of the climate.

Predicted effects include droughts and the raising of the sea level due to melting of the polar ice-caps, which will flood many low-lying lands.

After drought in Africa, and many other disasters in the Third World, it has taken the present drought in parts of North America to bring the greenhouse effect to the headlines.

But has it really arrived? What is indisputable is that CO₂ levels have risen substantially since the Industrial Revolution and have shot up by over 10% in the last thirty years. This is largely due to human activities — burning coal and oil in power stations and engines, and chopping down ever-increasing numbers of trees.

Also indisputable is that this must have some effect on the amount of heat escaping from the Earth and therefore on the climate. The question is, how much effect? Is the effect noticeable already, or are the various climatic disasters merely part of the normal range of variations?

The evidence from nature is conflicting. CO₂ levels have in fact been rising since the last Ice Age, though not as fast as now. Weather records give a mixed picture, too. On the one hand, world temperatures so far this year are the highest on record, and the average temperature this decade is some 0.4°C higher than for the previous thirty years.

This has led NASA's top climate scientist to say that the greenhouse effect has arrived. On the other hand, other climatologists point out that the drought-stricken US Mid-West has just had 40 years of cool wet weather, while 10 years ago the US had its worst winters for 200 years — hardly evidence of a warming trend.

Further evidence of past weather has come from studies of tree rings. These are layers of new growth put on each year, and their thickness corresponds to the quality of that year's climate. Information is available for thousands of years past and for one region, North Carolina, it indicates that the climate went through wet and dry spells, each lasting an average of 30 years. Frequently the change was an abrupt one.

On this evidence, North Carolina could be at the start of another long dry spell as part of the normal pattern, without any greenhouse effect yet being noticeable.

Other human activities are affecting the atmosphere, too. Most readers will have heard about the threat to the ozone layer from aerosol propellants (chlorofluorocarbons — CFCs). Once again, it is difficult to point to an effect and say that it is due to the destruction of the ozone layer.

The current rise in skin cancer is easily put down to the post-war habit of light-skinned people going to hot countries for their holidays.

But there are many theories about just what is happening to the ozone layer. According to one idea, the total amount of ozone will remain the same, so there won't be an increase in skin cancer from the extra ultra-violet light reaching the Earth's surface. But the distribution of ozone in the atmosphere will change, leading to cooling of the upper atmosphere and warming of lower layers. This will cause disruption of the wind and weather systems.

Yet another interesting theory suggests that pouring extra nutrients into the sea (due to acid rain dissolving metals from the soil or from agricultural pollution) may be partly to blame for 'blooms' of algae, such as killed many fish in Scandinavian waters recently. These blooms could absorb massive amounts of CO₂ from the air, thus counteracting the greenhouse effect!

It is hardly a comforting thought that we may avert one disaster by perpetrating another. Despite the enormous uncertainties in the scientists' models, we have to take them seriously. Therefore, we must urgently find ways of stopping the altering of the world's CO₂ and ozone layers. These predictions are among those I am not too anxious to see tested!

A very British threat

By Lilian Thomson

I hope Neil Kinnock was watching 'A Very British Coup'. He might have picked up a few pointers from Ray McNally's left PM Perkins. First, that being decisive comes over a lot better than windy waffle; and second, that taking a clear class line wins votes. It's worked for Thatcher, hasn't it?

'A Very British Coup' was good telly. There should be more programmes like it. But politically, it was a bit of a muddle.

Author Chris Mullin is right that a left wing Labour government would be destabilised by the ruling class and its state organs of power — the police, MI5, the army. Surprisingly, he doesn't bring in the House of Lords, the monarchy, or the courts. Mullin's story comes unstuck in his depiction of the opposition to Perkins; in his conception of the labour movement; and in the issues he thinks the Establishment would get het up about.

Perkins's opposition seems to consist of a nutter with a computer, a career civil servant, the American government and a Murdoch-style newspaper magnate. It's true that the Americans would not be best pleased by a Perkins-style Labour government. The CIA certainly had a hand in destabilising the Australian Labor government in 1975. Yet it was a true-blue Australian who finally pulled the plug. Similarly, Perkins would have met his greatest opposition from the British ruling class and not only, or even mainly, from behind-the-



P.M. Perkins

scenes conspirators.

Mullin's view of socialism and the labour movement is also flawed. If the labour movement was strong enough to get itself a left-wing Labour government, it would also be strong enough to defend it and fight for it. But the movement is completely lacking — not a single worker is sighted, apart for a few union bigwigs in the TUC. Perkins seems to carry the whole movement on his own brawny shoulders.

Browne, the career civil servant is bothered about Perkins, not because Perkins is a socialist — Browne is used to dealing with socialists — but because Perkins has got brains. He is not a bungler or a fool. The way Mullin has written it, Perkins is different from Harold Wilson or Neil Kinnock because he is smarter. He second-guesses his opponents all the time, so he's one step ahead.

But if all socialism depends on is

a smart Prime Minister, it would seem a bit ineffectual, wouldn't it? A bit feeble?

For all Perkins's speechifying, his programme is hardly radical. Mullin seems to think nuclear disarmament is the key issue for the left, and the one issue the ruling class would fight to the death on. They probably would resist a move to take Britain out of Nato. But they'd fight longer and harder to defend their property from a Labour raid.

Perkins doesn't put them to the trouble of defending themselves. His programme is to be financed by Kremlin gold, not by seizing the wealth of the big corporations. Economics is never mentioned. No word of taking over the means of production, nothing. What kind of socialism is this?

Why did Chris Mullin write his book? He wants to warn us that Labour governments will meet with strong resistance from the ruling

class, even to the point of dismissal and coups d'etat.

That is an important truth, one well worth stating. We've seen the damage Thatcher has inflicted on the labour movement in her three terms — and the ruling class is feeling confident. Her attacks are nothing to what we'd see if they really felt threatened. The thin shell of democracy would be broken. All the might of the state and its institutions would come down with a crash — the police, the army, the courts — to break the labour movement.

But a socialist movement could still beat them, could reduce the whole apparatus to nothing. The main thing is not to overestimate our opponent's strength.

'A Very British Coup' makes that mistake. It's pessimistic. Reforming governments seem doomed to fail, because the state is just too strong. But the living movement that swept Perkins into No. 10 could have kept him there, and could have defeated the state that tried to crush it. The movement would first have to face the fact that legislation alone can't bring socialism. Speeches, referendums and smart Prime Ministers can't do it; only mass rank-and-file action can.

Perkins did have a good word of advice for those who forsake principles for expediency. 'Tried middle of the road once — got knocked down by traffic from both directions'.

It'll take more than a Perkins to bring socialism. But it'd be a start if we could get the Labour Party out of the middle of the road. As Perkins says, it's not a safe place to be in.

Eric Heffer on socialism

**Martin Thomas
reviews 'Forward
to Socialism', by
Eric Heffer**

"SOCIALISM in Britain today is surely at rock-bottom", writes Eric Heffer. "The flame of socialism, however, is not out because the class society which created it continues to exist..."

"Socialism has not been snuffed out. It is present in everyday life among industrial workers, in the tenants' movements, in unemployed centres etc.... It needs to be fanned into a new life with a great campaign for Socialism".

Eric Heffer has made one big contribution to that campaign for socialism by challenging Roy Hattersley for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party. This pamphlet is another contribution.

In his introduction, Tony Benn writes: "Eric is a grass-roots trade unionist with long years of experience on the shopfloor, and a socialist with a deep compassion and a vast knowledge of socialist history and theory, on which he has been able to draw in this collection".

Eric Heffer's great advantage over most of the left in the Labour Party is simple: he knows what socialism is, and he knows who must make it.

He is not deceived by the claims of the USSR and similar states to be socialist. "As a socialist, as someone who passionately believes that we cannot create a just and sane society without publicly owning our industries, under democratic management and control, I also passionately believe that

it can only be achieved with real success if we ensure that free institutions exist with free elections, freedom of speech and freedom to worship according to one's choice.

Socialists cannot have double standards. We must defend the rights of working people to have free trade unions and political rights in South Africa, in Chile, in Turkey, in Pakistan, in the Philippines, in Iran, in East and West Africa. But we must defend and support the right... in the so-called socialist countries to freely organise independent free trade unions, with genuine democratic rights.

Socialism nowhere can be achieved without democracy. The twin concepts of socialism and democracy are indivisible. The struggle in Eastern Europe for democracy is also part of our struggle for socialism".

And Eric Heffer knows that the liberation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves. "Despite all that is said by *Marxism Today* and *Guardian* writers, the working class is not dead. It is still there, with its history and fighting capacity, and it is from that premise that we must begin to redevelop the socialist movement in Britain".

Eric Heffer also argues that socialism must be international. Unlike *Socialist Organiser*, he favours British withdrawal from the EEC; but he also insists: "Europe's problems cannot be solved except on a European basis... What is needed is for European socialists to put forward policies that can do two things, as long and medium term objectives. In the long term, the aim must be a United Socialist States of Europe; in the medium term, a nuclear-free Europe from the Polish-Soviet border to the Atlantic..."

Labour, in considering its alternatives to the EEC, must argue for

a type of European Free Trade Area covering the whole of Europe..."

Eric Heffer looks to working-class struggle to create socialism, rather than the sort of 'rainbow alliance' of miscellaneous oppressed groups favoured by some on the left. But that does not mean ignoring the concerns of specially oppressed sections of the working class.

In a section of the pamphlet which forms a powerful reply to those left-wingers who have shied away from backing Heffer because he is supposedly 'not good on women's issues', he outlines his ideas for a 'women's manifesto'. They include "a major programme to provide free and integrated child care facilities for all who want them; the promotion of positive action programmes to deal with discrimination in employment; action to deal with the sexist and degrading portrayal of women in the media".

"I support Party policy on the issue of abortion. I believe there should be changes in the law to give women the right to choose whether or not they have an abortion, and to ensure that abortion facilities are available, free within the National Health Service, on an equal basis throughout the country. I have voted against attempts to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act, and I voted for Jo Richardson's Abortion Facilities Bill in 1981".

Remember that Roy Hattersley abstained on the Alton anti-abortion Bill!

Opposing witch-hunts, Eric Heffer argues strongly for all socialists to get active in the Labour Party and to form an organised network of local Socialist Groups. "There are those who would argue that the time has come to set up a new Socialist Party. That I believe is wrong. A new Socialist Party may at some future date be necessary, but the time is not yet, and it may never be necessary, especially as long as the trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party and give it its working-class base.

The argument for a new Party, whilst a serious one, is sterile. It is also looking for a short cut, and there are no short cuts. The struggle for socialism in Britain will be long and hard."

One point on which many *Socialist Organiser* readers will disagree with Eric Heffer is his belief in a peaceful socialist revolution. "Can socialism be achieved by peaceful, parliamentary means?"

The answer must be that if it cannot and a violent revolutionary overthrow of society is essential, with the type of dictatorship that inevitably flows from the 'socialist



Eric Heffer

revolution' as exemplified in the regimes in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China and Cuba, then such a society is not worth having and not worth living in... To impose power without a democratically elected base is the prelude to the end of democratic rights which have been fought for and defended against the forces of reaction".

I would argue that the Bolsheviks in 1917 did have a "democratically elected base" — the most democratically elected base that has ever existed — in the workers' councils or soviets; and that Stalinism did not flow at all 'inevitably' from that revolution. But in any case Eric Heffer's position is not quite as pacifist as it first appears.

"In Britain a socialist Labour Party would be faced with all the powers of the old ruling class who would do all they could to halt democratic socialist advance, including the use of anti-democratic force. So I conclude: let us try the democratic road, but without any illusion that we will succeed, and be prepared to use the strength of the labour movement to defend our gains and defeat potential aggressors."

Or again: "The law is not above society. It is the product of the balance of class forces, of the dominant section in that society at a given movement."

The struggle for freedom, for democracy, for a free press, for a free trade union movement, has always been met with repressive measures. No ruling group in socie-

ty has ever given up its power and privileges cheerfully, out of the goodness of their hearts...

One often hears that violence has never been part of Labour's tradition. That is true, but whether we like it or not, violence forced on the workers at times has made Governments look into issues..."

This pamphlet is well worth reading, both for the ideas it argues, and for the way it argues them. Whether he is taking issue with Roy Hattersley, with Stalinists, with cold-warriors, or with the SWP, Eric Heffer always presents the opposing arguments fairly and deals with them seriously. That should not be unusual in the labour movement, but it is: too many are the people who rely on bombast, demagoguery and alliteration instead.

All the issues dealt with in this pamphlet are important; re-establishing in the labour movement the methods of loyal and serious debate which it uses is even more so.

Available from:
Jon Lansman, Campaign Group of Labour MPs, c/o Jeremy Corbyn MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA; or from John Bloxam, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Price: single copies 50p plus 20p postage; bundles of ten, £4.00 post free; bundles of 20, £8.00 post free.

Forward to socialism



by Eric Heffer MP

with a foreword by Tony Benn MP

50 pence

Confusion in Dewsbury

The Dewsbury schools row came to an end last week. 23 white parents were offered the right to send their children to Overthorpe School rather than Headfield. Their objection to Headfield was that the majority of pupils there were Asian. The council had allocated their children to Headfield and stood firm for a year.

Local teachers' unions, Labour MPs, Tory and Liberal councillors and even Tory Minister Kenneth Baker, refused to accept the parents' claim. Headfield was a

good school. There were Christian assemblies as part of a multi-cultural policy. There was no case for genuine complaint.

Suddenly on the last leg of their appeal, the parents won because of a legal technicality. The Council gave in because they feared that individual councillors could be surcharged and disqualified.

They had failed to properly publish details of their admissions policy, especially the limits on each school. They have a legal duty to publish these details. If they continued with the case they could be compelled to pay the legal costs incurred.

The consequences of the clumsy and incompetent climbdown is con-

fusion and disarray. West Yorkshire NUT Executive member Howard Roberts denounced the climbdown and called for a public enquiry into the Local Education Authority's conduct. Ann Taylor the Labour MP for Dewsbury warned that the result was disastrous and could lead to racial segregation.

This new opening for racial agitators such as the Freedom Association are now huge. The Dewsbury case, taken together with the Education Reform Bill's plans for unlimited choice and the recent move to impose a Christian ethos on all schools, are very bad news for education, for minorities, and for civil rights.

Organise to beat Hammond!

On 8 July the EETPU was suspended from the TUC. It could be expelled at the TUC Congress on 5-9 September.

There have been tensions between the EETPU and TUC for a long time, but the EETPU has not been suspended for its scabberding at Wapping or its single-union no-strike deals. It has been suspended because it refused to obey two TUC Disputes Committee decisions on poaching members from other unions.

At Orion Electric in Port Talbot, the TGWU got 79 workers out of a workforce of just over 100 to sign a petition demanding recognition. The bosses refused, and instead signed a single-union no-strike deal with the EETPU, which had no members there.

At two new depots opened by the Christian Salvesen distribution

By John Bloxam

company, the EETPU signed deals over the heads of the unions recognised at the company's other depots.

The EETPU has refused to obey TUC instructions to withdraw from these two deals. According to TUC right-winger Leif Mills, the EETPU's refusal was "more of an excuse for inviting suspension from the TUC than a reason for so doing".

Certainly EETPU leader Eric Hammond is quite unfazed. On 19 July, as we go to press, the EETPU will announce the result of a ballot almost certainly giving Hammond a big majority for rule changes which will ease the way out of the TUC.

Hammond says that the EETPU has no plans to form an alternative TUC; but the EETPU does have



Eric Hammond

plans to change its name to facilitate recruitment among workers other than electricians, and on 4 July it held a joint conference with the Professional Association of Teachers and other no-strike groups.

The train-drivers' union ASLEF has complained that the EETPU is trying to poach members from it. There is already conflict between the EETPU and the rail unions over the EETPU's attempt to get recognition on the Docklands Light Railway.

The left-wing group in the EETPU, *Flashlight*, has already announced plans for a breakaway if the EETPU definitively parts ways with the TUC. It plans first to take EETPU members into TUC-affiliated unions, and then to regroup them in a new TUC-affiliated electricians' union. It talks about taking all 36,000 members who voted for the *Flashlight* candidate, John Aitkin, against Eric Hammond for general secretary, but its realistic initial target is 5,000. The union claims a membership of 336,000.

Is this the right policy? Socialist Organiser has argued for a long time that the clamour for expelling the EETPU from the TUC, raised by the print unions and many other activists, was misdirected. In current conditions, the creation of a new pole of right-wing, no-strike business unionism makes real dangers for the labour movement. It should be avoided if possible.

The first step should be, and

should have been, a vigorous campaign by the TUC among the rank and file of the EETPU.

Even now, the central question remains organising among the EETPU rank and file. While the EETPU ballot vote will almost certainly go for Hammond, we should argue against EETPU militants leaving the union at this stage, and thereby leaving Hammond a clear field with the 300,000 electricians remaining.

Instead, the focus should be on mounting a campaign among the EETPU rank and file for reaffiliation to the TUC and against establishing an alternative no-strike federation, as well as organising serious resistance to attacks on their wages and conditions.

S&T dispute

By Ray Ferris

The overtime ban and 24-hour strike action by 5000 British Rail workers remains solid.

Over 80% of Signal and Telecoms (S&T) engineers voted for action when management imposed new pay and grading structures in May. BR has enjoyed a record year: £291 million profit in 1987-8 at the cost of 6,500 jobs and through squeezing productivity out of the remaining workforce.

Manchester Piccadilly station was closed for four hours on 4 July; and transport minister David Mitchell was

Back Dover pickets!

By Ray Ferris

This Monday the National Executive of the NUS voted 10 to 3 to "disassociate" itself from the mass pickets at Dover.

Five months into the strike the union leaders want to throw in the towel to please a High Court Judge who openly admits to "bleeding to death" the NUS through legal fees and fines now totalling over £1 million.

Since the NEC have no idea how to win the dispute, they have tried to wash their hands of it.

But they are meeting resistance. General Secretary Sam Mc Cluskie was confronted with a counter motion drawn up by the strikers. They demanded the "mass picket continues with full support of the Executive and the General Secretary... any attempt to end it is an attempt to end the dispute". They proposed sending pickets out from Dover in support of a one day national strike on Friday 5th August as a first step to regenerating the dispute in order to win it. John Woods, a Dover shop steward, has called on a majority of the National Executive Committee to resign.

There is a real basis for wider support. Safety before profits; a defence of fundamental trade union rights; and the heroic and tenacious battle of the Dover strikers who are developing an alternative strategy of their own.

Whilst P&O claims 9 out of 11 ships working normally, it is unclear how many qualified seafarers they have nor how 'normal' their cargo levels are.

Support the Dover pickets!

Post Office

No team talks!

By Pete Keenlyside

Having worked for the Post Office for many years, I thought I knew what my job was all about.

I thought all I had to do was go to work, sort the letters and packets, and then deliver them through people's doors. Not any more.

Some High Court judge, who probably thinks his mail is delivered by miracle each morning, has decided that I've got to sit through management propaganda talks as well.

These talks — team talks, as they are called — were first brought in with the blessing of the union leadership. They were supposed to be used to discuss the problems of the Post Office in a spirit of co-operation and goodwill.

During the ballot on industrial action for a shorter working week, they were used by management to urge all UCW members to vote against taking action. So, not surprisingly, at this year's annual conference, the resolution calling on UCW members to boycott them was carried overwhelmingly. A circular was sent round the branches instructing members not to attend.

Faced with this sudden act of militancy on the part of our leadership, the Post Office took the union to court, and that is how a judge has just come to rewrite our work contracts.

The Executive Council, for their part, have withdrawn the circular, while at the same time muttering about taking legal advice on our contracts.

Team talks are obviously an important issue for the management. They see them as a way of weakening the union where we are strongest — on the shop floor. They wrote to every member in the Letters business telling us how well we were doing and how marvellous we are and what a pity it is to waste it all by kicking team talks into touch. They are obviously prepared to take the issue to a dispute.

UCW members at rank and file level can also appreciate what it's all about. There have been several strikes already over management attempts to discipline people for not attending the talks. The North West No. 5 District Council have agreed that if anyone in their area is disciplined over this issue, then all the branches will take action.

The only people who can't see what all the fuss is about are the UCW executive.

Back in the industry, in the fight

AFTER TWO and a half years, British Coal were unable to prevaricate any longer, and so I'm back at work.

I'm bitterly disappointed that it's not in Notts, back at my own colliery, but I'm back in the industry, back in the NUM, and back in the fight.

It was very emotional going back to work that first day down the pit lane. There were the sacked miners at the end of the lane cheering me in. That's an experience not easily put into words.

For the second time in four years I've had to walk down a pit lane and leave sacked comrades at the end of it. You have to go through an experience like that to understand how it feels. It's something I shall never forget, and I can give an assurance to every sacked miner that, as far as I am concerned, the fight to reinstate every single one of them will be the number one priority.

We took the Notts sacked miners' banner up to the Durham gala together with two or three other branches from Notts, and we had a great day.

The rank and file there have a good understanding of the situation in Notts. It's a pity I can't say the same for the leadership in South Wales and Scotland, who, although



they haven't got a single UDM member among them, seem to be the experts on the way to deal with the UDM.

I would have thought it would be obvious even to them that we know the problems. We live with them every day, and we understand the best way to deal with this organisation.

But Durham was a great day out, and to listen to Arthur Scargill and Dennis Skinner always gives you an extra lift.

Arthur Scargill was spot on yet again with his attacks on 'new realism', his condemnation of the stance that Kinnock is taking. Some have blamed the leadership contest for the loss of the Kensington bye-election, but I would put it the other way round. It's quite obvious from the opinion polls that Kinnock sets such great store by that he is at his lowest ebb, he is hopping from one decision to another, and really he's becoming a liability and he's got to go.

The fact that we are having a leadership contest is not about Benn

or Heffer. It's about ensuring that regular elections are held for the leader of the Party. I have no objection to carrying out a review of policy, but that review is carried out at annual conference, and it will not be determined by one man or the small clique gathered round him.

I sat and listened to Kinnock at the NUM conference. He said not a word about renationalising the assets, Thatcher has stolen from us, not one word about the reinstatement of sacked miners, sacked printworkers, sacked TV-am engineers, or sacked P&O seafarers. All he came out with was high-flow ideas about how to manage capitalism better than the capitalists can.

I have never been a great admirer of Prescott, but he did at least say that if it was left to him there would be a firm commitment to retake those assets back into public ownership. He did give a firm commitment that he would reinstate every sacked miner and return the funds taken from the unions. I was quite impressed with Prescott, but Kinnock just turned me off.

Productivity has gone up, as British Coal are claiming. It has always been going up, as long as I can remember. But I wouldn't trust British Coal's figures. It's a cookery book. The object of the exercise is to sell the pits off as a going concern.

The fact remains that they lost a hell of a lot of money. In the 30-odd years I've been working for British Coal, they have always blamed the rank and file miners for the problems of the industry. Bad management accounts for more than 90% of the losses made over the years. They haven't a clue how to run the industry. They have no industrial relations strategy. There is no heart within the rank and file for working for a firm and trying to make it successful.

The problems that management face are immense. Privatisation of the electricity supply industry is not just going to happen overnight, and the same is true of the pits. They need a trouble-free year; but they won't get an easy passage while we have wage claims outstanding and sacked miners who haven't been reinstated.

The other point is that the amount of money invested in health and safety pales into insignificance compared to the money invested in machinery. They just want to fill the industry with top-notch machinery so that they can sell it. After that it will be a disaster — back to the days of the coal-owners. Paul Whetton was formerly secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts, and is now a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER



Benn and Heffer step up fight

By Eric Heffer MP

Prescott has got 78 Constituency Labour Party nominations for the Deputy Leadership, and I have 75. In some cases

Prescott has only got the nomination by one vote. It's that close.

He's got four small trade unions, and 37 MPs. I've got 29, the same as Tony Benn. A lot of those MPs were probably pressurised by their Constituency Labour Parties.

This contest is by no means settled. Those people who are saying that it is a two-horse race, and all cut and dried, are incorrect.

The field is wide open. There are many Constituency Labour Parties who have not nominated anyone because they want to look at it further before they take a decision. A whole lot of trade unions have still to decide, and some are balloting their members. On that basis we intend to step up the campaign with the run-up to Labour Party conference. There is everything to play for in terms of getting maximum support.

The argument that the left and the leadership contest lost us the Kensington by-election doesn't hold water. After all, there was no leadership contest during the Greenwich by-election, but it was lost by Labour. What did happen there was the circulation of nasty stories about a 'loony left' candidate because the leadership weren't particularly keen on Deirdre Wood being the candidate. Those rumours did tremendous harm.

There was no leadership contest in the general election. Everyone pulled together tremendously during the election, but we still lost. It isn't the leadership contest that is responsible. That's just an excuse.

In Fulham, we did win a by-election, and we were told afterwards that the campaign conducted there was a model to be used by everyone. Come the general election, that model campaigning wasn't model enough, because we lost the seat.

So the argument just doesn't hold water. In fact there are deep political reasons why we lost — the lack of determination and boldness on the part of the Party and the leadership.

Air: the disaster that is waiting to happen

Five months ago Britain's air traffic controllers warned that chaos was coming on the airways.

At the conference of their trade union, the IPCS, they passed a vote of no confidence in Keith Mack, their boss. Bill Brett, assistant general secretary of the union, said: "This summer there are going to be greater delays if the skies are to be made safe".

The union conference, on 14 February, was alarmed by a series of near-misses in the air

and proposed three measures:

- * Transfer of some military airspace to civilian use. The civilian airways are overcrowded only because a huge part of airspace is given over to the military.

- * New technology for training controllers.

- * Independent, rather than internal, inquiries into near-misses.

The Civil Aviation Authority responded to the union's warning by stonewalling. It did nothing.

Air control bosses elsewhere

in Europe have responded in the same way. Instead of providing proper technology, conditions and pay for the air traffic controllers, they have tried to squeeze them harder and harder. In some countries they have tried to keep the lid on by banning strikes: the only form of industrial action legally open to the Greek air controllers has been to refuse to eat and sleep.

Profit before safety is the bosses' rule here, just as on the North Sea oil rigs.

So far holidaymakers have paid the price with long waits at

the airports. How long before they pay the price with a major disaster?

CLPs Conference 17 September

Richard Aplin, Secretary of Wallasey Constituency Labour Party calls for support for the CLPs Conference planned for 17 September.

This year's Party Conference will be crucial for the fundamental direction of the Party. Basic aspects of Party policy are now up for grabs — especially Clause 4 and unilateralism — and the move to whittle away Party democracy continues. CLPs have so far been denied any voice in Walworth Road's 'Policy Reviews'. And the NEC will be putting a constitutional amendment to this year's Party Conference giving MP's a powerful veto over future elections for the Party leadership, requiring 20% of them to first agree before CLPs, other affiliated organisations and PLP members have the right to determine what the leadership should be.

We need a Party campaign in

defence of Clause 4, unilateralism and Party democracy.

A meeting organised by Wallasey CLP at the recent Chesterfield Socialist Conference agreed to hold a CLP Conference in the run-up to this year's Blackpool Party Conference. Members from 25 other CLPs were present at the meeting.

A big representative conference of CLPs on the eve of Party Conference will have an effect on the outcome of the votes there — demonstrating the strength of feeling among the Party's grassroots to trade union delegations.

In addition CLPs are far too often isolated from each other. The conference will provide a forum for us to meet, exchange experiences and discuss on-going organisation.

It will also give us a chance to review and discuss tactics for Party Conference and by improving co-ordination maximise our impact.

Venue: Manchester Mechanics Institute.

Date: 17 September.

Time: 11am — 5pm.

Guest speaker: Eric Heffer.

Contact: Wallasey CLP, 8 Agnes Grove, Liscard, Merseyside L44 3LP; or phone Lol Duffy 051-638 1338.

Rover: solidarity needed to fight the job cuts

By Ian Swindale

Nearly 5,000 lost jobs is the price that workers will pay for the takeover of Rover by British Aerospace.

4000 jobs are to go at Rover's Cowley South factory, and 900 at the Llanelli pressings factory. The Cowley plant will be run down over the next two years, but 2500 compulsory redundancies are likely when the factory finally closes.

Rover claims to be working only

to 60 per cent of total capacity, and now plans to reduce capacity to the level of 500,000 cars a year.

The shop stewards' movement in Rover was decimated during the offensive of Michael Edwardes in the late '70s and early '80s, when the company was called BL. Even some militants were so demoralised that they ended up taking voluntary redundancy.

Consequently, the ability of workers at Cowley and Llanelli to fight these closures will have been weakened. But a fight back is essen-

tial if these jobs are to be saved and the prospect of years on the dole for thousands of workers is to be avoided.

Rather than getting involved in arguments about the role of the European Commission in the BAe takeover, unions in Cowley and Llanelli should immediately draw up plans to prepare for the occupation of the threatened factories, accompanied by appeals to the rest of the Rover workforce at Longbridge, Cowley North and elsewhere for solidarity.