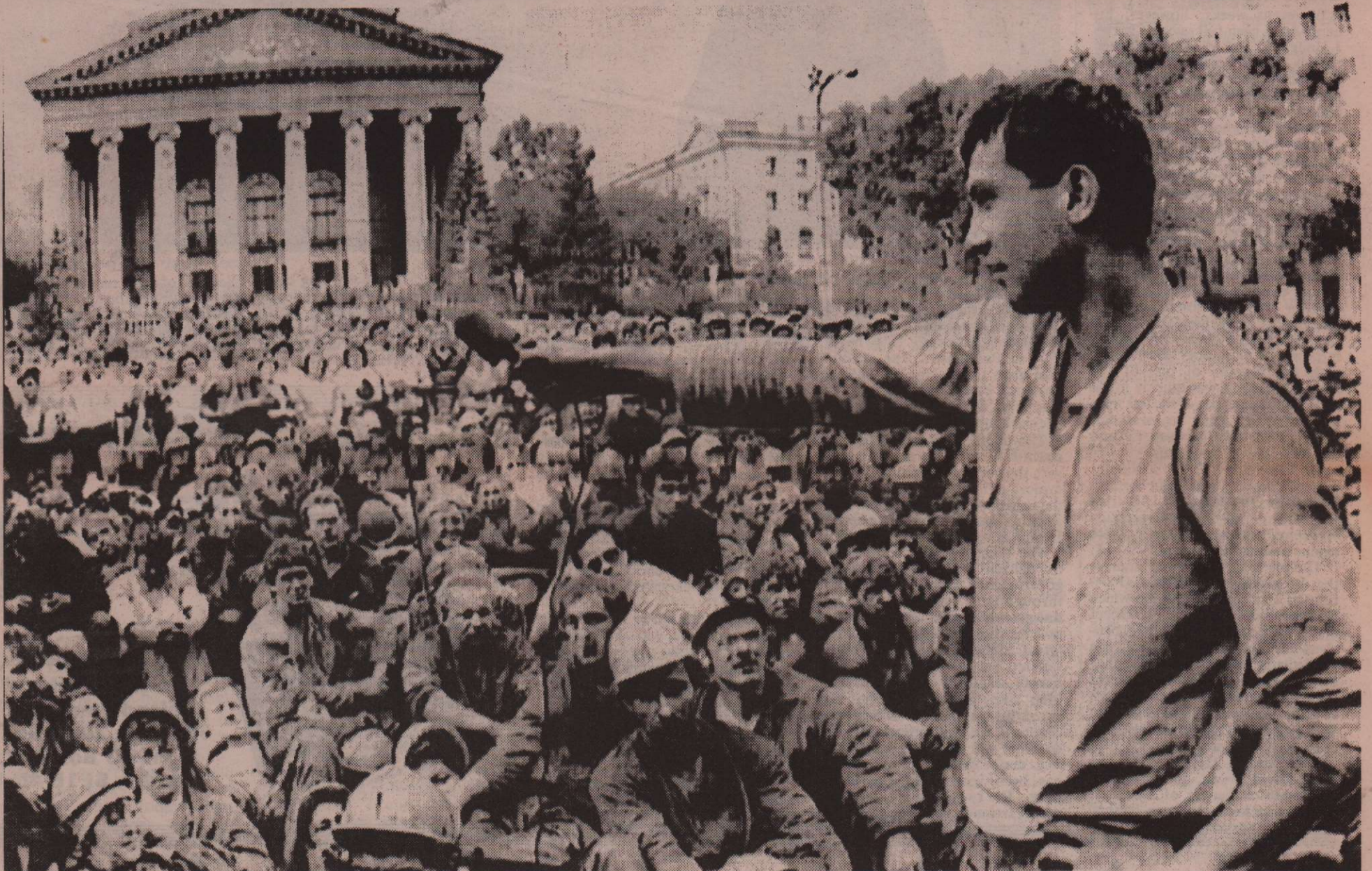


# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

**Striking  
miners  
demand an  
end to all  
privileges**



Miners hold mass meeting in the centre of Prokopyevsk

# Soviet workers rise again!

By Clive Bradley

**T**he worst nightmare of the Kremlin is coming to life. The week-old strike by 100,000 Siberian miners has spread to the coal-mining region of the Ukraine. Meanwhile bus strikes are spreading through major cities, Moscow air traffic controllers, and even the police in Leningrad are on strike.

Already the strike wave echoes the events in Poland in 1980 that led to the formation of Solidarnosc.

The strikes began in Mezhdurechensk, in Siberia, over pay and conditions and against central state control of the mines.

Soon, as strikes spread across Siberia, supported by other groups of workers, political demands were raised.

The workers are demanding

sweeping political changes: an end to all privileges; and a new constitution, incorporating all Gorbachev's reform promises, to be agreed by next November (the anniversary of

the 1917 revolution).

This is what Gorbachev has most feared — that the promise of *glasnost* could arouse the Soviet people too much, and enthusiasm

would get out of control.

Gorbachev will not quickly forget his recent visit to China, disrupted

**turn to page 3**

# Left grows in Ireland

## NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

**A** sycophantic biography some years ago described Charles J Haughey as the only man (sic) who could save modern Ireland.

In recent weeks, however, his hands have been full saving Charles J Haughey. The myth of Haughey as the 'Great Survivor' lives on. Like all great myths its main purpose is to help us misunderstand the reality.

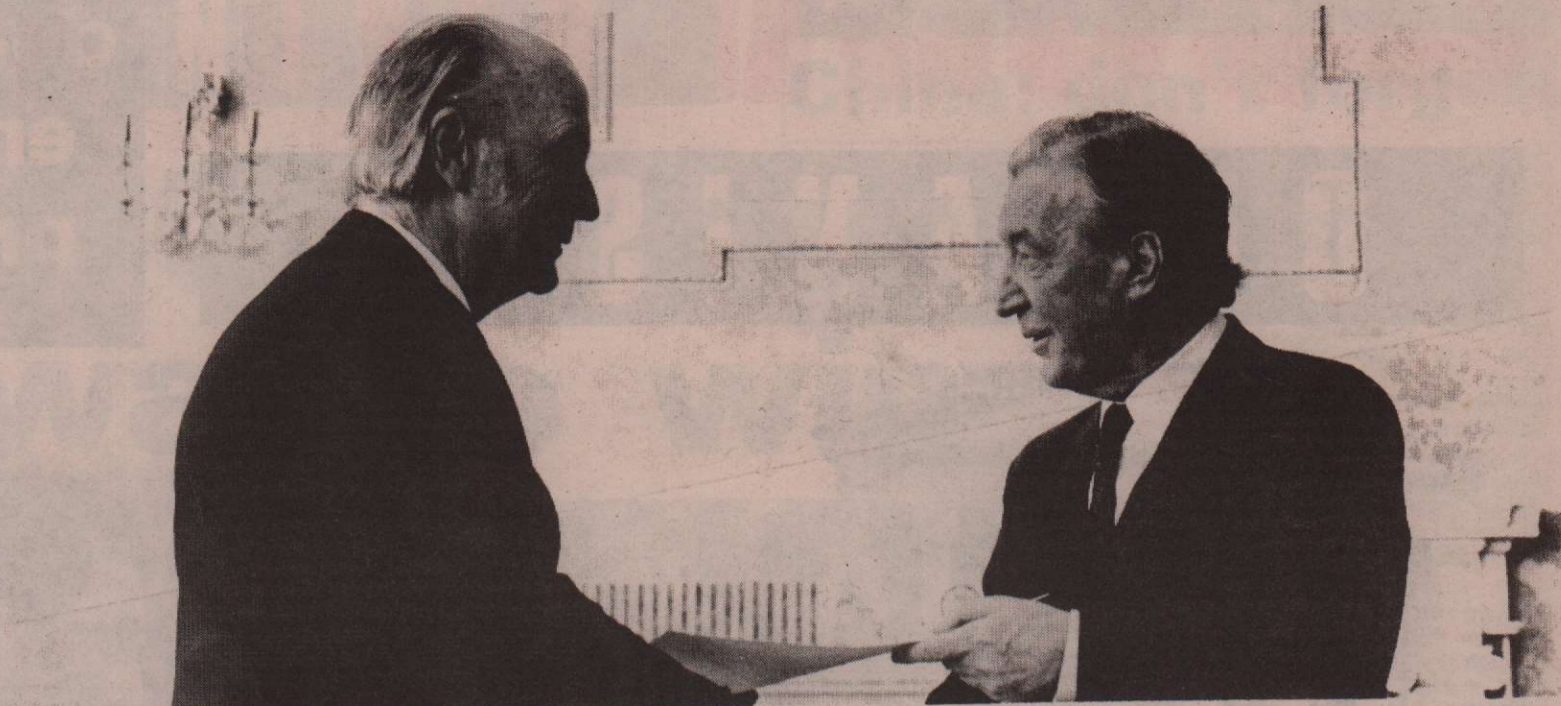
Charlie Haughey called a general election last month. He was already Taoiseach (PM), but his Fianna Fail party had no overall majority. His standing in the opinion polls was very high, the main opposition party was handicapped because it fully supported the government's economic policies, and it was expected that Fianna Fail (FF) would win an easy victory.

After the election, however, Haughey's party had fewer seats than before and could only remain in power as a minority government with the support of one of the minor parties. It was quickly made clear that the parties of the left were not interested and so attention focussed on talks between FF and the Progressive Democrats.

On Wednesday 12 July it was announced that Haughey had been re-elected as Taoiseach by the Irish Parliament (Dail). The 'Great Survivor' had managed to stay in office again, despite his losses.

The price, however, was high — the Progressive Democrats (PDs) insisted on a formal coalition which Haughey had vowed never to accept and which many of his backbenchers continue to oppose. This is a particularly bitter pill for Haughey to swallow. The PDs are a recent breakaway from FF and they left largely because they were fed up with Haughey's autocratic personal control of the party.

Their leader, Des O'Malley, an Irish David Owen, is a thwarted leadership challenger of Haughey. Their ambitions and egos clashed



Haughey receives his credentials as prime minister

and the parting in 1985-6 was very antagonistic.

The PD, the most right-wing of the Irish parties, were hammered in the general election. They have 6 TDs in Parliament. The coalition deal gives them some national importance, but they are also likely to bear the brunt of any electoral backlash against the government.

The mess emerging from this election is in reality nothing to do with the personal ambitions of these cynical politicians or, as some of the British parties would have it, the electoral system. The ruling class in Ireland is in a very severe crisis.

The bosses' parties seem unable to deliver the sort of national government which could carry through the wide-ranging and dangerous anti-working class policies they need. Far from being 'great' Haughey's career has been a failure; he has failed to win an overall majority in government after many attempts and has now taken his party into its first ever coalition, with his bitter rivals. This coalition will be very unstable.

A major feature of the election has been ignored by the British press. The two main left-wing parties in Ireland made big gains. The

Irish Labour Party and the Workers' Party are now clearly the only serious opposition to the policies of the Coalition Government. They took votes and seats off FF in the inner cities and together with two Independent Socialists and (possibly) Ireland's first green TD they form a substantial bloc in the Parliament.

This shift from the capitalist parties to the left, which completely bypassed Sinn Fein, should be welcomed by socialists.

There is a particular lesson to be drawn from the Irish Labour party. In 1987 after a period in coalition with Fine Gael who pioneered Irish Thatcherism, Labour's support declined dramatically in a general election.

Last month, after a period in which they were, with the Workers' Party, the only opposition to a government of spending cuts and austerity, support for Labour increased significantly.

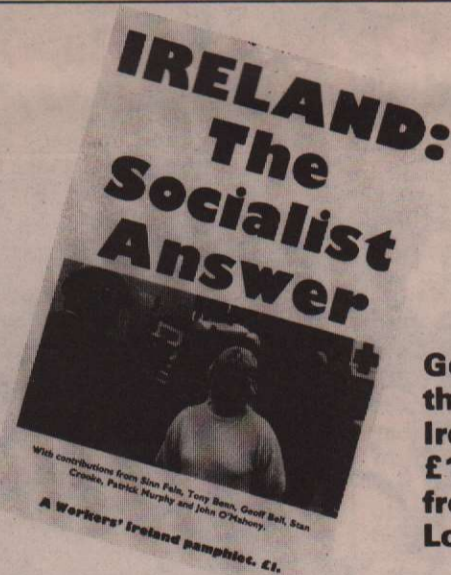
The left is an important force in Irish politics now and it is growing at a time when the ruling parties are in confusion.

It is a very limited left. Its traditions are self-consciously reformist. Nevertheless its strength at any one

time is a register of working class consciousness and independence from the mainstream parties.

The most encouraging message from the recent election is that Irish workers are breaking from the

legacy of the nationalist politics which has tied them to the establishment parties, and looking instead to parties which claim to represent them as a class.



Get your copy of the new Workers' Ireland pamphlet £1 plus 30p p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

## Tories back down on free-market reform

**Ian Forsythe looks at the battle between the Tories and the judges**

**O**ne group of militants seems to have won its struggle against the Tory government. The Tories have backed down substantially on their law reforms.

Some of Thatcher's closest allies from past struggles — the judges — had threatened to strike and denounced the government for introducing an authoritarian state.

What was all the fuss about? Barristers were going to lose their monopoly in the higher courts of the land.

At present the legal profession is divided into two branches. Barristers are a small group of specialist advisers and advocates and they alone have the right to speak in the higher courts. Solicitors are the people you go to see if you have a legal problem. They deal with the case right up to court, and then it will usually be passed onto a barrister.

To let solicitors speak in higher courts is no bad thing. It costs a lot of money to become a barrister, and their world has an ivory tower atmosphere, reeking of snobbish elitism, though, of course, there are exceptions.

The Tories' law reforms also propose taking away the monopoly solicitors have on the legal work in relation to house buying. The philosophy behind the reforms is to make the legal profession more susceptible to market forces.

Since barristers and judges are richer than solicitors, it looks like the removal of the barristers' monopoly won't go through but the removal of the solicitors' monopoly will.

The Tories claimed that their reforms will make the legal system more efficient, competitive, cheap and answerable to the consumer. As usual, what they forgot to add is that you need lots of money to enter the game to begin with.

The main criticism to be levelled at the reforms is that they say nothing about increasing access to legal help from the average working class person.

If you are injured at work, kicked out by your landlord, disabled by a

doctor's negligence, or unfairly dismissed, you will want some sort of legal help. It costs a lot of money. Eligibility for legal aid — the money you can get from the state — has been drastically reduced by this government.

Since 1979 the Tories have failed to raise the legal aid eligibility levels in line with inflation so that today 13 million people are no longer entitled.

After deductions for rent and dependents, £6,035 per year is the maximum you can earn if you want to get legal aid. Even then you will have to contribute some of your costs if you earn more than £2,515.

And if you have capital assets worth more than £6,000 — including, for example, cars and bikes — you won't get anything.

As a result you have to earn below the average income to get any help. People who don't qualify often have to take two jobs or sell houses to pursue claims against rich millionaires and employers who can afford expert legal advice.

Further, access to basic information and initial advice is very restricted. The few Law Centres that exist are short of funds, often dependent on cost-cutting local

authorities. Citizens Advice Bureaux are often closed or crowded, staffed by volunteers who are overworked and not paid.

The Tories' babble on about the consumer — what about the people who can't use our limited system of so-called justice because they haven't got the money?

What then should socialists demand? We want to see a decent network of publicly funded Law Centres to provide free advice and assistance to anyone who needs it. If someone has a case they should be able to take it before a court regardless of how rich they are.

We want to see privilege removed from the judiciary, and proper

grants and wages for people entering the legal profession so that it is not limited to the rich.

We want more money spent on the court system so that people awaiting trial don't have to cram into overcrowded remand centres for months on end. People who work in the courts should be paid a decent wage.

Ultimately we need to question 'whose justice' the courts deliver. The British justice system reflects a capitalist society and economy and the laws it upholds are capitalist laws. A socialist system of justice would be based on different principles, principles of real equality and democracy.

### Workers' Ireland forum

*The Protestants of Ulster: what are their rights, and what are the implications for socialists in Britain?*

Debate with Geoff Bell and John O'Mahony  
Chair: Nadine Finch

Thursday 20 July, 8pm at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Rd, London (near Kings X)



Dockers lobbying their union Executive

# Solidarity worldwide

## EDITORIAL

**R**epresentatives of European dockers, visiting Britain, yesterday promised support for the British dockers' strike.

This is an important milestone in international workers' solidarity, and while it remains to be seen how effective the promises will be, international solidarity is going to be vital in this — and future — disputes.

Belgian dockers, for example, know that what British port bosses are doing today, their Belgian equivalents will do tomorrow. The assault on the National Dock Labour Scheme

is part of a European-wide attempt by employers to beat down the unions in preparation for 1992.

Similar attempts have been made elsewhere. In Italy there was a bitter (and unsuccessful) strike against a similar move by the government. Spain has already put dockers on hiring by the day. French employers have announced similar plans. Indeed, the pattern is wider, including India, Australia and many other countries.

Port employers have been fully aware of the international implications of these disputes, and the need for them to co-operate. In January, there was a meeting of British and French bosses to plan their arrangements for a dock strike. French bosses are waiting to see what will happen in Britain.

The method the bosses are us-

ing to beat the docks strike is to take goods to continental ports such as Rotterdam or Hamburg, break them into smaller loads, and then ship them to non-Scheme ports in Britain. This is a difficult operation for the bosses, and doesn't always work — this week Felixstowe stewards turned away a ship with 250 containers that had been diverted from Southampton. Felixstowe is a non-Scheme port.

But it is difficult for dockers in Europe to identify the loads. Moreover, in some countries, British-style labour law makes it legally difficult for them to take effective solidarity action.

Stewards in Rotterdam have promised to 'slow down' the shipping of goods to Britain, but not to boycott them.

In fact a boycott will be necessary, as it will be in future

docks disputes elsewhere in Europe. The difficulties must be overcome. Of course, the stronger the strike is in Britain, the more likely international solidarity will be. But the better the solidarity, the stronger the strike.

Australian dockers have a good record of international solidarity, for example during the British miners' strike. We need to build on such examples.

The bosses' intention, for 1992, is to make a new Europe in which exploitation of the working class is easier. But that is not guaranteed for them — they have to win a whole series of battles first. If we win, we can use European unity to the advantage of the working class.

Developing the sinews of international solidarity is the precondition for winning those battles.

# Soviet workers rise again!

from page 1

by demonstrating students in Tiananmen Square. The gathering of building workers and others with the miners in the town of Osinniki last week, to protest outside the town hall, was all too reminiscent of Tiananmen for the Soviet authorities.

In imitation of the Tiananmen Square militants, strikers are occupying their local town squares and holding meetings round the clock.

As strikes spread to the central industrial zone of the Ukraine, it should not be ruled out that Gorbachev could turn quite as nasty as Deng Xiaoping. The last great reformer in the USSR, Khrushchev, was the man who sent the troops into Hungary in 1956. Gorbachev is a reformer — but if things get out of control, he — or if not him, another representative of the ruling bureaucracy — will do whatever they can to preserve their rule.

The almost immediate political focus of the strike is not accidental. Workers' struggles in Eastern Europe have always taken this pattern, because there is so little room for any political expression in those societies. Strikes are the major form of mass political protest.

The rapidly-spreading strikes mean an immense political crisis for Gorbachev. It seems likely, as we go to press, that the crisis will intensify. The USSR could be heading for the sort of pre-revolutionary situation we recently witnessed in China.

Strikes have also been a feature of the various national and ethnic conflicts in the USSR, for the same reason. National oppression is a powerful motor to political protest, and must be so especially in the Ukraine.

Other national or ethnic trouble spots should give socialists less cause for optimism — for example, the current communal conflict in Georgia. But that the miners' strike is spreading beyond the borders of

the republics shows it is possible to unite workers of different nationalities.

The miners' strike has scared the Moscow authorities. In the past, strikes have always been isolated and dealt with quickly. In 1962, in Novocherkassk, a workers' uprising was brutally crushed.

Now, a leading Politburo member is trying to negotiate with the strike committee — so far without success. The Soviet media is taking a soft line, repeatedly insisting that the strikers are "beating on an open door."

The strikes follow the recent formation of an independent workers' coordination in the USSR — albeit one closely watched by the authorities.

The labour movement in Britain must be clear whose side it is on. Arthur Scargill, it seems, has been contacted by the striking miners and asked for support. He and others like him must not repeat their shameful failure to support the Polish workers.

## The shadow of the axe

### PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR DAILY STAR

By Jim Denham

**D**espite her sophisticated critique of the French Revolution, Mrs Thatcher is not above a spot of Revolutionary Terror herself, when the occasion requires it.

And the occasion certainly requires it now, what with the gains of Ten Glorious Years under threat from bolshevik unions and ungrateful Green-influenced voters.

Make no mistake, heads are going to roll very soon. I can confidently name two dead certs for the guillotine — Citizens Reid and Ridley. My confidence is not based upon any special predictive powers, but simply upon reading the newspapers.

Now, I am quite well aware that you can't believe everything you read in the bourgeois press. But when it comes to sustained campaigns against government ministers and heads of nationalised industries, then you know that these stories did not drop out of the sky; they came from 'Whitehall sources', which is another way of saying Mr Bernard Ingham...which is another way of saying Mrs Thatcher.

Back in June, in the immediate aftermath of the Euro election fiasco, Peter Jenkins in the *Independent* urged Mrs Thatcher to "find re-employment" for Nicholas Ridley. "No-one," said Jenkins, "is more reviled throughout the Tory heartland of the south — ask any candidate or canvasser in last week's elections."

Towards the end of last week, the vague rumblings against the Environment Secretary began to build up into a crescendo. Papers as diverse as the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* bayed for his blood. The *Observer* described his plans to dismember the Nature Conservancy Council as "the greatest single act of vandalism in his long mismanagement of the national environment." The final nail in Citizen Nick's coffin was the *Sunday Times* front page headline: "Ridley must go say Tory MPs", above a story that included a description of Ridley as an "ecological hooligan."

When Rupert Murdoch's most loyal Thatcherite mouthpiece carries stuff like that, who can doubt that it comes with the Thatcher/Ingham seal of approval?

That the unfortunate Ridley will be joined in the tumbrel by Sir Bob Reid, chairman of BR, became apparent in the middle of last week. First, the *Daily Mail* carried an NOP opinion poll taken among commuters at stations in the South East, showing that 33% of passengers blamed the rail dispute on management, while only 23% blamed the unions. Then, Normal Tebbit gave a press briefing in which he savaged BR management and expressed "every sympathy with the guy on low pay in BR."

This remarkable outburst was prominently featured in the *Mail* and the *Sun* — the latter adding that, "Mr Tebbit's remarks came as it emerged that Mrs Thatcher was furious with BR chiefs for letting peace talks collapse."

Then the *Sunday Express* carried a front page story headlined "BR bosses face axe after strike fiasco", while the *Sunday Times* commented that: "Some people wonder whether a BR board that could make Jimmy Knapp, the gruff Scots NUR leader, look statesmanlike were the right people to be running Britain's railways."

In the shadow of the guillotine, I can't help feeling just a little sympathy for Ridley and Reid. It has been noted before that when things are going well, Mrs Thatcher claims all the glory for herself, but when things go wrong, someone else is always to blame, but Citizens Ridley and Reid have, in their different ways, been spectacularly incompetent. Perhaps the most appropriate epitaph for both of them is the quote from "one of Mr Ridley's officials" in this Sunday's *Observer*: "The gods do indeed first drive mad those they shortly intend to destroy."

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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## 4 LETTERS



Rebel peasant leader Wat Tyler being beheaded — Magna Carta wasn't much help to him

## Rights? What rights?

### GRAFFITI

Margaret Thatcher's militant philistinism on the question of human rights is becoming legendary.

During the French Revolution celebrations, she compared the English feudal barons' charter, the Magna Carta, to the Declaration of the Rights of Man. That was weird enough. Now take a look at her latest human rights appointment.

Step forward Stefan Terlezki, former Tory MP for Cardiff West, and champion of the return of hanging, the introduction of birching and the introduction of ID cards, not to mention the wholesale phone-tapping of a range of "undesirables" from "terrorists" to trade unionists.

Always one to look after her own, Maggie's found him a new job — representing Britain on a Council of Europe human rights committee!

Is she trying to make some sort of point?

After a year of 'discussion' the government has put together a package geared to "alleviating the homelessness problem".

And, true to form, the proposals define not homelessness as the problem, but the homeless.

So beware! If you follow Norman Tebbit's advice to "get on your bike" and look for work, you'll run the risk of being labelled "intentionally homeless" — and so not eligible for council housing.

Not only that, but benefits will also be removed from people who leave home to search for work elsewhere.

As for homeless young people, "genuine proof" would be demanded of eviction or physical danger at home — an example given would be medical certificates confirming sexual abuse.

Young homeless people would have to go through

the degrading ritual of proving their sexual abuse to a bevy of officials in order simply to be put on the housing list.

Some "solution"!

The official unemployment rate, of 6.3%, masks a rather less rosy picture in the north of England.

In the Liverpool area, for instance, male unemployment stands at 19.7%. In Sunderland the figure is 17.7%, and in Barnsley 15.1%.

In many urban areas it is only the women's unemployment rate which is in single figures. That women's rate only includes those women officially available for work. Married women, who do not sign on but who do want to work are not included, nor are many single mothers.

The general picture is that though unemployment does seem to be declining, it is doing so more slowly and patchily than the official figures would have us believe.

The introduction of privatisation into the NHS has directly led to cases of illness in both workers and patients.

Last March 21 workers employed by Healthtex UK, a laundry firm, were rushed to hospital suffering from chest pains and eye irritations. They had been gassed by incorrectly-mixed cleaning fluids.

At Reading Hospital, the cleaning was taken over by RCO in 1986, who promptly cut staffing levels by 50%. Last year an elderly patient at the hospital died of an infected cut.

An inquiry found that "the standard of cleaning may well have had something to do with it."

Several firms have lost contracts in the NHS due to blatant contravention of hygiene regulation.



There must be something in the shops that people want. Photo: Carlos Guarita, Reflex

## 60 years of odd shoes?

### LETTERS

Stan Crooke of Birkenhead (SO 409) chides me for unscientific thought.

Long after the Soviet Union's system's survival into its eighth decade, long after its expansion across Eastern Europe, China, etc., Crooke insists it is a system with no dynamic at all. Those of us who unscientifically want to call it a class system get short shrift.

But Crooke's scientific argument leaves me a bit bewildered. His argument is, as I understand it:

1. You can't call the state-monopoly system a class system

unless you specify its dynamics (if not "every dot and comma").

2. Those who say it is a class system (a miserable, descriptive, merely 'labelling' task) have not specified its dynamics.

3. (Therefore?) it is not a class system.

4. Anyway, it's a waste of time specifying its dynamics because it hasn't got any.

In the process of elaborating this bizarre logical construction, Crooke of Birkenhead spends much time on the concept of 'planning'. I had contended that some form of planning — but not socialist planning — exists in the USSR.

Crooke's riposte is that some kind of planning might exist in capitalism, or even slave society... "But no one in their right

mind would describe capitalism or slave-owning societies as examples of badly planned economies."

Well, no. But suppose someone had argued that capitalism, due to the anarchy of the market, say, had no economic regulator at all. We would say it does have an economic regulator. If our adversary then proudly proclaimed that — aha! — we thought it was enough to describe capitalism as a "badly regulated" economy, we would conclude that this was not a serious discussion.

I did not and do not and nor, as far as I know, does anyone else in the world, consider it enough to describe the USSR as "badly planned". I was arguing, against Crooke and his co-thinkers, that it was simply false to describe the USSR as devoid completely of a regulator or dynamic. If this were so, I repeat, it would have collapsed long ago.

To reply, as Crooke does, that it produces two left shoes, wrong-size screws, buckets with holes, etc., is merely to restate uncontentious facts. But look, if all shoes in the USSR were no good, no one would have any shoes, would they? If all screws were the wrong size... I don't need to go on. The simple fact is that things do get made in the USSR, and society does reproduce itself, if hopefully not for much longer.

So Crooke also has no coherent, fully-developed theory. It is true that to a large extent the designation 'class society' is arrived at negatively, through criticism of other theories, and it is true that neither state capitalism nor some new class theory in and of themselves are an analysis.

I don't accept that to participate in this discussion, or to criticise rival theories, we have to have a firm opinion. For myself I can see problems with most theories — but Crooke's more than almost all.

I object to the implication that Crooke does have an alternative theory, and it's just the rest of us morons who can't work it out. He does not have a theory, indeed in effect rejects the need for such a theory.

By 'labelling' the USSR a 'class society' we may not be answering a lot, but at least we are defining the questions.

Edward Ellis Southwark

## From Sweden to S. Korea

The extent to which the Policy Review document "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" has misjudged the changed public mood is truly staggering.

Concerned for the NHS, sickened by privatisation, pollution and Poll Tax, more and more people are becoming receptive to Socialism. The 'Cold War' has thawed — yet now we are to keep nuclear weapons! 'Green' consciousness is growing — yet now we are to keep nuclear power!

Incredibly, the Social Democrat leadership of the Labour Party has now outgrown its obsession with Swedish models only to embrace the corrupt cut-throat capitalism of Japan and South Korea! — nations who apparently exemplify the kind of exploitation with which Labour would train British wage-slaves in our 'talent-based economy'.

Relying upon 'regulation' by an amazing assortment of quangos, the plan involves using Social Ownership/Share Ownership as a sort of surgical support for the Market System, instead of using Common Ownership as a springboard for Socialism, to replace the Market System.

There is no positive, practical programme to be found in this 88

page 'New Agenda for Britain'. People will vote against Thatcher, but many are searching for something to vote for. It is comical to see Kinnock parading this pathetic package around, like the Emperor's new clothes. But the consequences could be grave indeed.

Hans Richards, London

### Used policies

As a vehicle for Socialism on the Parliamentary Road, the Labour Party was always something of a slow-coach. Now its new model has been triumphantly unveiled, to a fanfare of "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change". But on closer inspection it is revealed to be only the rusty remains of the old clapped-out Keynesian charabanc, with a rose-tinted respray.

Would a majority of the electorate buy a used car from Neil Kinnock?

Richard Handford, Haywards Heath

# Greek 'Communists' form coalition with Tories

By Ian Swindale

**A**t midnight on Saturday 8 July, the new right-wing Communist coalition government received a vote of confidence from the Greek Parliament, and the Greek Communist Party added yet another to its long list of betrayals of the Greek working class.

The new government, in which the members of the Left Coalition will serve as Ministers of Justice and Interior, has a lifespan of only three months and a programme limited to four basic aims:

(1) 'Catharsis', or the cleaning up of the scandal-ridden political and economic life of the country primarily through the investigation of four scandals which erupted under the Pasok government.

As part of this process, Parliament will vote on whether to lift the immunity from prosecution of the former Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou and five of his former ministers.

(2) The removal of the state apparatus from party political control and the replacement of key Pasok appointees in state and semi-state owned companies by people acceptable to all the parties.

(3) The opening up of Greek radio and TV, and in particular news and current affairs programmes, to all the political parties. Formerly, Pasok had used Greek TV as its own propaganda tool.

(4) The preparation of fair and honest elections. When the present government's three-month lifespan ends, a caretaker government is expected to be appointed to oversee new elections possibly in October or November.

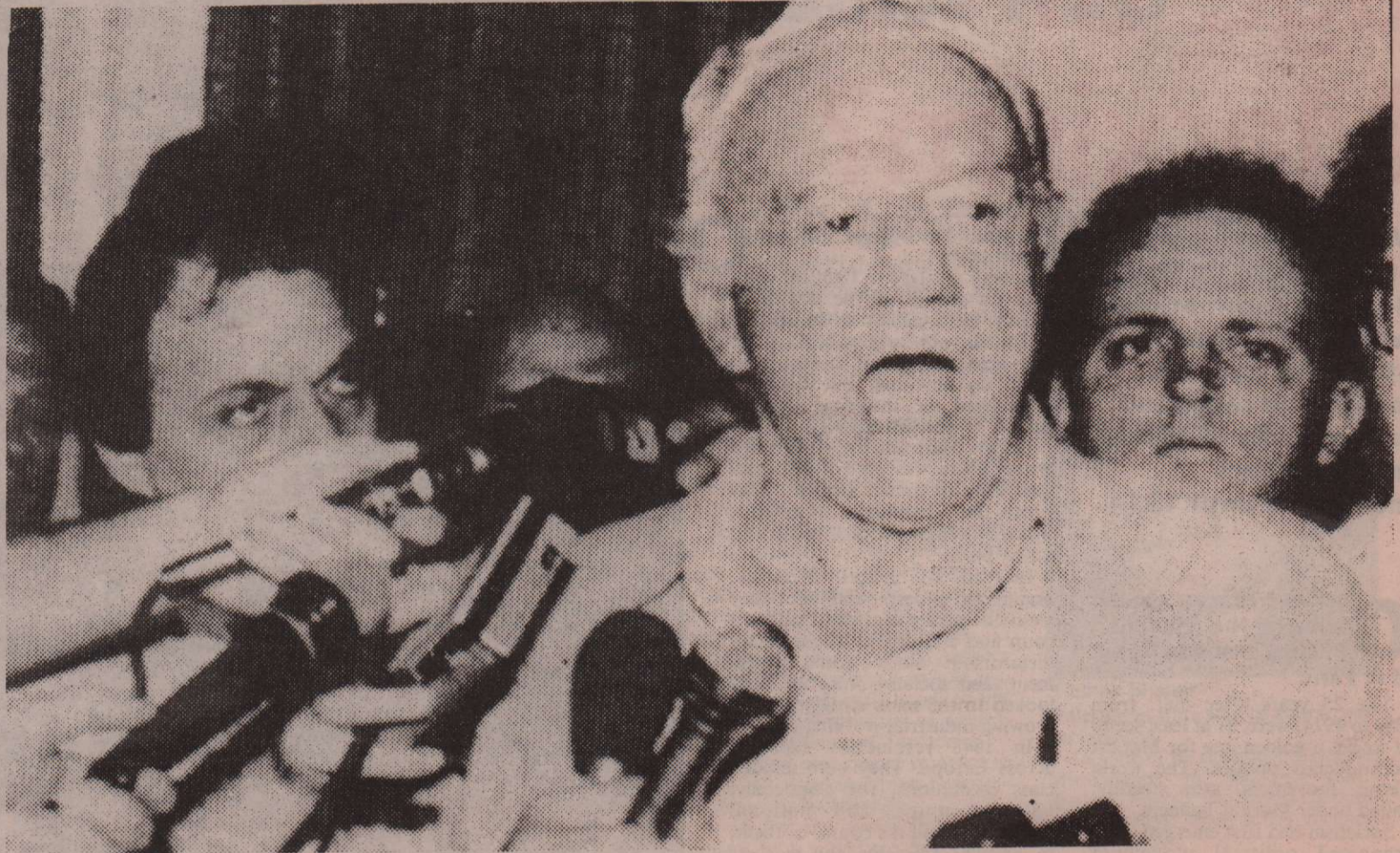
The formation of this government, which has involved comparisons with the Italian CP's policy of 'historical compromise' with the bourgeoisie, was made possible by the indecisive outcome of the elections held here on 18 June. The ruling Pasok party of Andreas Papandreou lost the elections, taking 39% of the vote and 125 seats in the 300-seat Parliament. But the right-wing New Democracy Party of Constantinos Mitsotakis failed to win an overall majority in Parliament, taking 44% of the vote and 145 seats.

The Left Coalition, formed by the Greek Communist Party, the Greek Left (the majority of the former CP Interior) and a few independent left MPs, took 13% of the vote but, because of changes to the electoral system in the direction of Proportional Representation, more than doubled its representation in Parliament to 28 seats.

The leader of New Democracy, Constantinos Mitsotakis, was given the first mandate by the President to try and form a government, and he offered the Left Coalition the Ministers of Justice and the Interior if they would support him.

This was an astute move, because the Left Coalition had made 'catharsis' — the clean up of the scandals in the political and economic life of the country — a central plank of its political programme. The Left Coalition, however, was unwilling to serve under Mitsotakis in person. The mandate was next offered to Pasok leader Andreas Papandreou who had, in the meantime, been admitted to hospital with pneumonia and kidney problems.

Papandreou argued that since the 'left and progressive forces' in Parliament were in the majority, it was clearly the people's will that they should form a government. The Left Coalition, however, refused to form a coalition with Pasok as long as those responsible — either



CP leader Florakis tries to justify his alliance with the Right

criminally or politically — for the recent scandals remained in the leadership of the party. Pasok, however, refused to make any concessions on this point.

The mandate was then given by the President to Harilaos Florakis, the General Secretary of the Greek Communist Party and leader of the Left Coalition. Accepting the mandate, the Left Coalition stated that their aim was to see the formation of a government, acceptable to all parties, whose limited aims would be 'catharsis' and the removal of the state apparatus from party control.

At first neither Papandreou nor Mitsotakis were willing to withdraw their candidacies for Prime Minister in such a government. Eventually both did, but Pasok insisted firstly that the Left Coalition work exclusively with them, secondly that of the four major scandals only the two which did not affect the country's international standing should be investigated and finally, that Papandreou should be left untouched by the investigation. The Left Coalition rejected these proposals.

That left only the right-wing New Democracy party. Since 18 June Mitsotakis has accepted that he cannot form a government unless fresh elections give him an overall majority. But he clearly believes that if the mass media are freed of the Pasok stranglehold and his party receives more equal coverage in the next election campaign, if his party can take credit for cleaning up the scandals and if in the process Pasok can be further discredited, he can win the extra six seats he needs to take power.

For that reason, he was willing to withdraw his candidacy for the premiership in favour of someone acceptable to the CP. At the same time, his party presented him as the selfless, disinterested politician, anxious only to assist in the formation of a stable government and an orderly transition to fresh elections.

The new Prime Minister, Tzannis Tzannetakis, was acceptable to the Communists because of his proven record as a (right-wing) democrat — he was imprisoned and exiled for his opposition to the 1967 military

junta. The Left Coalition insist that they are serving in his government and not a New Democracy government.

Harilaos Florakis, leader of the Left Coalition, summed up the Left Coalition's attitude. The Left Coalition had wanted a democratic and progressive government to emerge from the elections. For this to happen a strong electoral criticism of Pasok was necessary, together with a major increase in the vote for the Left Coalition and a strengthening of the forces of the Left Coalition in Parliament. This would open the way for major developments to the left inside Pasok that would have made possible a progressive government.

However, this was not the result of the June 18 elections, and so a progressive democratic government was not on the agenda. But the issue of 'catharsis' remained an important and live issue, which the Left Coalition believes can best be resolved by the most broadly-based government possible. If a government was not formed and fresh elections had been held immediately, those ministers responsible for the scandals would have escaped punishment. Since Pasok was not willing to collaborate in this government, it was necessary to work with the government of Tzannis Tzannetakis in order to ensure that the process of 'catharsis' was set in motion.

At present it is too early to gauge the effect of this betrayal on the supporters of the Left Coalition. Certainly some will refuse to vote for the Left Coalition in the forthcoming elections because they reject the argument that the Left Coalition is not actually collaborating with a New Democracy government. But the demand for 'catharsis' is very strong and many supporters of the left may be prepared to tolerate this arrangement if it does lead to greater democratisation of, in particular, the mass media. Also, the only voice raising any criticism at all of the new coalition government is that of the now very discredited Pasok party.

But the biggest problem for the

Left Coalition remains the genuine socialists who support Pasok, and who are ashamed of many of the things that Papandreou has done, but who vote Pasok to keep out the right wing. Many of these people have such a hatred of the right, based on experiences from the civil war down to the junta, that they mistakenly characterise the present-day right as fascist.

But this hatred of the right which rules out any form of collaboration with New Democracy can only arouse the utmost bitterness towards the Left Coalition for forming a government with the right aimed at hitting Pasok, particularly since Papandreou is on the list of former ministers to be investigated. Yet these are the very forces which need to be strengthened inside Pasok and brought closer to the Left Coalition if the democratic progressive government which they cherish is ever to be realised.

Betrayal by the leaders of the Left Coalition it most certainly is. But there is no doubt that the public

life of Greece will begin to be transformed in the next three months. All of Pasok's hand-picked directors of state and semi-state industries have already offered their resignations and there are likely to be big changes in Greek radio and TV, the banks and state-owned companies including Olympic Airways, the Telephone Company and the Electricity Board.

What is not on offer to Greek workers, however, is a party which starts from the mobilisation of the working class around its own demands and places the struggle to 'clean up' the system in the context of the struggle to replace corrupt capitalism with working class socialism.

Until such a party or tendency emerges, the working class will be condemned to watch its leaders joining with the main party of capitalism to 'clean up' the capitalist system, with their main critics the corrupt and discredited 'socialist' party of Andreas Papandreou.

## Workers' Liberty

*'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'*

Karl Marx



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# The golden age of Marxism?

**Martin Thomas looks at the history of the Socialist International, which was founded 100 years ago this month and remained an avowedly Marxist mass workers' movement until 1914.**

**O**ne hundred years ago this month the Socialist International was founded in Paris.

The 25 years after that, from 1889 to 1914, were, or at least seemed to be, a golden age for Marxist working-class politics. The world labour movement grew steadily, united under Marxist banners.

Socialism had first emerged as an organised political movement almost 100 years before 1889. The French Revolution of 1788-94 had proclaimed the goal of liberty, fraternity and equality. The bourgeois leaders of the Revolution, however, saw equality only as formal equality before the law.

Some radicals talked about dividing up all the land equally, so that every family could have a little plot. One revolutionary, Gracchus Babeuf, came to understand that not even that division could create real equality in a system based on private property and free trade.

In the competition between producers, inevitably, some would win and some would lose; society would divide into those who owned the land, factories and mines and those

who could live only by selling their labour power.

Babeuf resolved to fight for common ownership of the wealth of society. He organised a 'Conspiracy of Equals'. The police broke it up and arrested Babeuf before they could do anything, but Babeuf's ideas lived on, inspiring a whole current of socialist activity.

In 1847 Marx and Engels joined a group which was part of that current, the Communist League. They wrote the Communist Manifesto, which redefined socialist politics on a new basis.

Instead of secret societies, organising underground until they would be strong enough to launch a coup and establish a revolutionary dictatorship which would implement their socialist blueprint, they looked to the mass struggle of the growing industrial working class.

In 1848 revolutions exploded across Europe. They were middle-class revolutions, for democracy, national unity, and national freedom; but in the course of them, in France especially, the workers came forward with their own demands.

After the revolutions subsided, mostly defeated, many members of the Communist League continued to talk feverishly about organising new uprisings. Marx told them they were dreaming. The working class would have to learn and develop over decades of struggle before it could take power.

Marx and Engels found themselves isolated, while the first mass workers' movement, the Chartists in Britain, dwindled and collapsed, capitalism boomed, and conservative bread-and-butter trade unionists took the leadership of the British working class.

A new beginning came in 1864. A



Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin — leaders of the left wing of the Second International

joint meeting of British and French trade unionists launched the International Working Men's Association, or First International.

Marx was able to play a big role in this movement, but it was never Marxist. The main forces involved were Proudhonists in France, who advocated a sort of socialism based on small worker cooperatives, and the still fairly conservative British trade union leaders.

After the Paris workers' uprising of 1871, the First International fell apart, torn two ways. A sizeable contingent of anarchists rebelled against Marx's "authoritarianism", and the British trade union leaders recoiled in horror from Marx's vigorous defence of the revolution in Paris.

But the industrial working class was now becoming a sizeable force in countries outside Britain. Workers' parties developed in Germany and France. The 1889 congress brought them together.

In fact there were two socialist congresses in Paris in 1889, one hosted by the French comrades of Marx and Engels, the other by the so-called "Possibilist" party, so called because of their emphasis on going for what gains were "possible" within capitalism, especially through trying to get positions in local government.

After much frantic factionalising, the "Marxist" congress turned out to be the stronger, and the "Possibilist" international faded away.

In 1895 Engels wrote his last major political article before he died, an introduction to a pamphlet of Marx's. He could rejoice at the steady and, it seemed, unbeatable progress of what was now the strongest contingent of the world labour movement, the German

Social-Democratic Party. ("Social Democratic" then meant Marxist).

Steadily since 1871, the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) had won more and more votes — from 102,000 in 1871 to 1,787,000 in 1893. "If [the growth] continues in this fashion, by the end of the century we shall conquer the greater part of the middle strata of society...and grow into the decisive power in the land...To keep this growth going without interruption until it of itself gets beyond the control of the prevailing governmental system, that is the main task."

But the way this very article was published signalled ruinous problems ahead. The editors of the German Social-Democrats' magazine cut out passages where Engels indicated that he expected the ruling class to break its own laws to check the rise of the workers' party, and talked of the workers taking to the streets with arms in response. Of course, the editors explained privately, they agreed with Engels; but it was not wise to say such things openly.

In its published version, Engels' article seemed to advocate a purely parliamentary, step-by-step strategy. One leader of the SPD, Eduard Bernstein, drew the conclusion. Around the turn of the century, he started arguing that the SPD should renounce all ideas of revolution and the breakdown of capitalism, and declare itself to be a party of gradual reform.

He had no quarrel, he explained, with the SPD's day-to-day tactics; only with the fact that the SPD leaders continued to talk about that steady day-to-day work somehow leading to a drastic and sudden social overturn some time in the future.

Indeed, one trade union leader

who sympathised with Bernstein nevertheless told him that he considered all the theoretical argument a waste of time. "One does not say such things, dear Ede. One does them."

On the face of it, Bernstein was roundly rebuffed by successive Party congresses. The Socialist International, with the Germans in the leading role, held to class-struggle principles against all the challenges.

In 1904 it condemned a French socialist, Millerand, who had joined a capitalist government, and reaffirmed its principle "Not a man, not a penny, for this system."

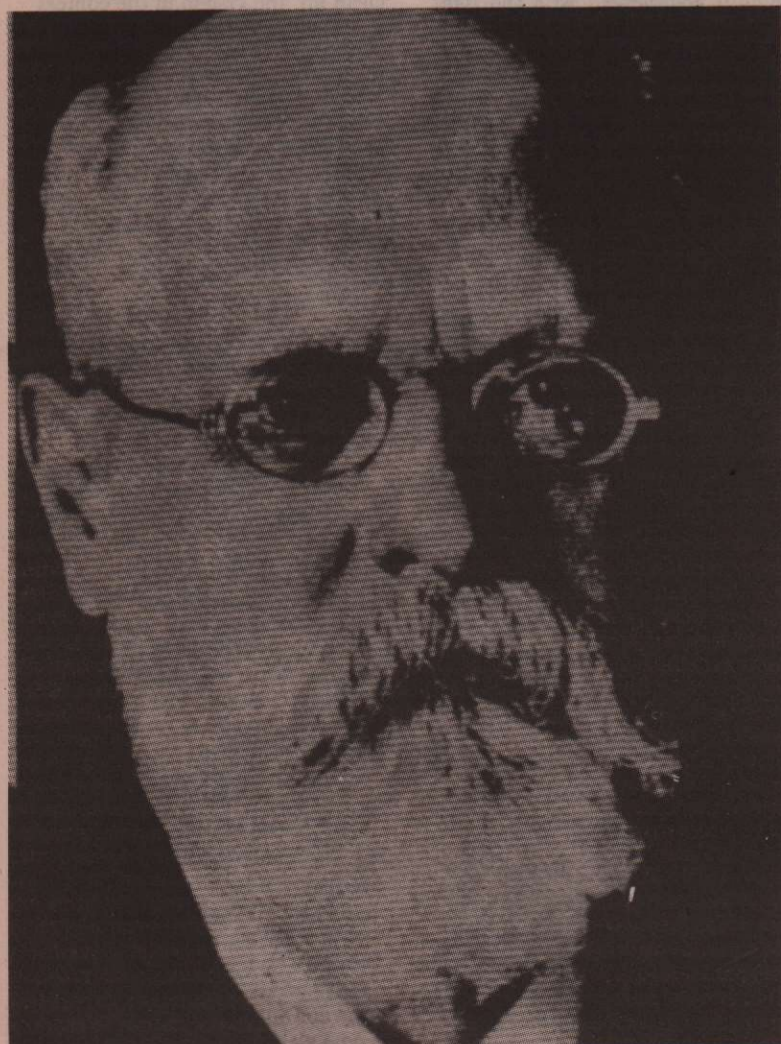
In 1907 right-wingers who reckoned there could be something progressive about European powers holding colonies in Africa and Asia were defeated. In 1912 the International congress passed a stirring resolution against war, committing all socialist parties in the event of war to use the crisis to help bring down capitalism.

All these debates and declarations were more than empty words and wasted ink. They inspired and educated hundreds of thousands of worker revolutionaries.

The Bolshevik party, which was to lead the Russian workers to power in 1917, learned much of its Marxism from those debates. In France, Germany, and Italy, majorities or substantial sections of the socialist parties and their leaders were to rally after 1917 to the struggle to spread the Russian Revolution to other countries.

But in the leading circles of most parties it was different. For them, the revolutionary declarations were mostly empty words.

In 1907 the German SPD had a crisis because, for the first time since the German government had banned the SPD outright in 1878, the



Karl Kautsky, the main theorist of the Second International

# Israel manoeuvres against PLO

**O**n May 14, the Israeli cabinet approved the 'Peace Plan' presented to it by Prime Minister Shamir and Defence Minister Rabin, whose core is the holding of elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Shamir is officially committed to this plan, which bears his name; yet he would shed few tears should the envisaged elections never take place.

Shamir's hope is that the plan will be rejected by the Palestinians, such a rejection would put the Israeli government in a strong diplomatic position, and secure the support of wavering allies in Washington and in the Diaspora Jewish communities. It would also free the government's hands to implement brutal measures of oppression in the Occupied Territories.

No effort was spared in order to make the proposed plan unacceptable to the Palestinians.

It regards the elected Palestinian leaders as a substitute negotiating partner, and explicitly excludes the possibility of negotiations with the PLO. Also excluded is the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

On many other vital points the plan is totally silent. No provision is made for the Palestinians living outside the Occupied Territories — who constitute half of the Palestinian people, and who are, in effect, doomed to eternal homelessness. Nor is there any mention of the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem (which was annexed to Israel) and of their right to participate in the elections.

The holding of 'free and secret democratic elections' is promised — but the plan does not mention any kind of international monitoring, nor does it guarantee the freedom of expression or association during or after the election campaign.

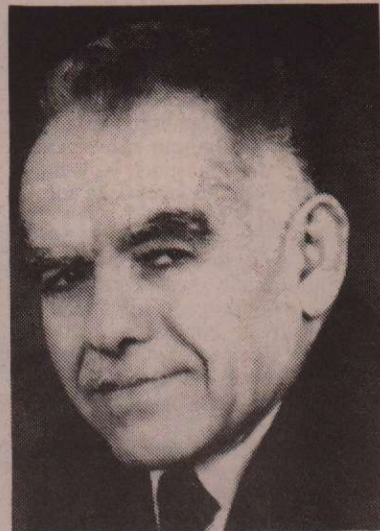
No promise is made to release the thousands of Palestinians incarcerated in Israeli detention camps, who include many leading members of all the Palestinian political factions. Nor is there anything in the plan to prevent the Israeli authorities from arresting candidates for election or the elected representatives themselves — as already happened to the Palestinian mayors who were democratically elected in 1976.

Indeed, Shamir explicitly stated that 'if it turns out that the elected Palestinian leaders are accepting instructions from the PLO, we will stop the negotiations and put the leaders in prison'.

After the elections, the plan envisages a five-year interim period in which the Palestinians will exercise 'self-administration' of 'their internal affairs' — with the Israeli government maintaining its monopoly over 'defence and security'. It could thus continue to employ its full panoply of repression.

(Even the Camp David agreements provided for the 'redeployment of Israeli forces outside the population centres' and the creation of 'a strong Palestinian police force'. Nothing of the kind could be found in the Shamir Plan.)

After the interim period, the plan envisions the opening of peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan; Palestinian representatives are invited to join in — provided they accept the agenda of negotiations, in which the creation of a



Yitzhak Shamir

Palestinian state will, of course, not be included.

In spite of all the anti-Palestinian stipulations in Shamir's plan, Israel's rightist hardliners became quite alarmed when it was adopted by the cabinet.

The settlers in the Occupied Territories expressed their opposition through violent anti-Arab provocations; Ariel Sharon has started to mobilise a considerable internal opposition to Shamir inside the Likud party; the extreme right Tehiya party stated: "Yitzhak Shamir has laid the cornerstone of the Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem for its capital." (*Hadashot*, 15.5.89)

Clearly, these opponents are not reacting to the Shamir Plan as it now stands, but rather to the potential shape into which it might be transformed at the end of a long negotiating process — especially since these negotiations would take place under conditions of ongoing Intifada.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the moderate peace camp — Mapam, Ratz, Shinuy and Peace Now — decided to give the plan the benefit of the doubt, hoping that it would eventually develop in the very direction that the extreme right is afraid of.

Similar considerations also prevail in extensive parts of the international arena.

In London, Madrid and Brussels, the Israeli government's proposals were not rejected out of hand; the US administration welcomed the Shamir Plan, while asking for 'explanations' and 'clarifications' — in order to present these clarifications in Tunis.

For its part, the PLO leadership — though emphatically rejecting Shamir's terms for elections — has shown itself willing to continue negotiations, in order to achieve more acceptable terms.

One thing should be clear, even to the more optimistic supporters of Israeli-Palestinian peace: whichever scenario materialises, a hard struggle still lies ahead.

• Taken from *The Other Israel*.

Since this article was written, Yitzhak Shamir has made important concessions to the Likud hard right, led by former Defence Minister Ariel Sharon. These are:

- non-participation of East Jerusalem residents in any elections in the Occupied Territories;
- elimination of violent Palestinian attacks before any elections;
- the continuation of settlements;
- no Palestinian state.

These points are all Likud policy.



s vote fell. The bourgeois parties had used a colonial war in South West Africa to whip up chauvinism.

The SPD right-wing, the Neil Innocks of the day, argued that the party should drop its damaging opposition to colonialism. The left wing said that, on the contrary, the party should increase its agitation against imperialism, militarism and the drive towards world war.

The central party leadership compromised. They kept the left wing policy of opposition to imperialism — but barely mentioned it in the party's agitation, concentrating instead on domestic bread-and-butter issues.

In 1911 a new storm blew up in the SPD over whether it should agitate for political mass strikes to take forward an upsurge of workers' militancy. The left wing said yes. The right wing said 'General strike is general nonsense'. The centre said yes, in principle, but not now.

The Party congress passed a resolution adopting the political mass strike as a possible tactic under certain circumstances — and the central party leaders secretly assured the alarmed trade union leaders that under no circumstances would they actually use this tactic.

Those central party leaders, people like August Bebel, were not Neil Innocks. Their sympathies were mostly with the left. But their central, all-consuming, overwhelming concern was to keep the party together and keep it going forwards.

In one country — Russia — the party leaders had a different attitude. Lenin approached every argument over strategy and tactics with the aim of not smoothing it over but of reaching political clarity and uniting the movement round

that clarity. People like Bebel saw Lenin as an irresponsible splitter, an impractical dogmatist.

History soon proved that Lenin was the practical one. World War I broke out in 1914. Even before the SPD had taken a position, the SPD trade union leaders had met with the German government and agreed to suspend class struggle for the duration in return for a promise by the government not to touch the unions' funds.

The ambiguities in the SPD were blown wide open. For years the party leaders had balanced uneasily between its formal revolutionary politics and the reformist practice of the SPD trade union leaders, men who had a substantial stake in the existing system and were committed to working within it. Now they had to choose.

Bebel had died shortly before the outbreak of war. His successors went with the trade union leaders. They voted in parliament for the government's war budget.

Almost all the parties of the Second International went the same way. Only the Bolsheviks and a couple of others stood firm for class struggle and workers' internationalism.

The Bolsheviks' tireless fight for political clarity made them into a party able to lead the Russian workers to power in 1917. Elsewhere there were no such parties, and the revolutionary upheavals after World War I ended in defeats for the workers.

The Communist Parties formed after World War I continued the struggle for Marxist politics. They hoped by intelligent tactics and tireless struggle to reduce the traitor Social-Democratic parties to tiny cliques and reunite the militant sections of the working class.

They might have done it — except that within a few years of their founding CPs were already being corrupted and derailed by Stalinism. The Social-Democratic parties revived on an openly reformist basis. The CPs were soon no better.

Before 1914 Britain had been the exception among developed capitalist countries, having a sizeable workers' party (the Labour Party) which was openly committed to piecemeal reform within the existing system rather than to Marxist ideas. By the 1940s that exception was the rule.

Since World War II working-class organisation, as measured by trade union membership and votes for workers' parties, has expanded in a way that the activists of the Socialist International would hardly have believed possible. But the trade unions and parties are almost all reformist, bureaucratic and tied to capitalism.

In a way, we're back to the early 1850s. Both the capitalist classes and the workers' movement have grown a lot and learned a great deal in between times. The working class and its struggles are far more developed — and far more hopeful — today than in the 1850s.

But socialists today do need the tenacity and clarity which enabled Marx and Engels to continue the fight for working-class socialism through decades when the only sizeable industrial working class in the world at the time, the British, showed no inclination for socialism at all.

A renewal of the workers' movement will come in our time, as it came in 1889. And if we have learned the lessons from our forerunners, we can make sure this renewal ends in victory.

## March on 12 August!

**P**lans are now well advanced for the Time To Go march on 12 August.

Leaving from Whittington Park, Holloway Road (nearest tube: Archway) at 11am, the carnival and procession will make its way to Finsbury Park, Seven Sisters Road, arriving in time for the various afternoon activities.

We anticipate a great attendance including Irish community organisations, flute bands, ethnic minority groups, women's groups, Irish sporting organisations and trade union and labour movement organisations. Transport is being organised from all over England, Scotland and Wales.

At Finsbury Park itself, the festivities will include live music from the specially erected stage and sporting exhibitions. Top line attractions already committed include the Hank Wangford Band, Frank Chickens as well as many local Irish bands and a number of surprise guests on the day.

There will be marquees erected on the site for exhibitions, a licensed bar and refreshments. There will also be a creche with a number of activities planned for the children.

On site catering facilities will be extensive with a range of foods available to suit all tastes. Extra facilities such as toilets, etc. are being laid on especially for the day.

Thousands of attractively designed leaflets are currently being printed to publicise the event, along with posters and selective mail shots.

20 years since British troops went onto the streets of Belfast and Derry in August 69 for "weeks rather than months" ... Recognising there can never be peace while Britain remains in Ireland. Surely it's time to go?

**MARCH FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL! TIME TO GO!**  
Assemble: 11.00am Whittington Park, Holloway Rd (nearest tube: Archway)

**CARNIVAL** Finsbury Park, Seven Sisters Rd Music on stage: 2.30pm - dusk

**AMAZING** Irish bands, Rock bands, Non-stop music, sounds to protest by, Walk-outs, Poems, Stalls, Tent city.

**WRITE** 12 August Group, BM Box 5365, London WC1K 2XL

**SATURDAY 12 AUGUST 1989**

## Release Martin Foran!

Martin Foran, who has been in jail for five years after being convicted solely on the evidence of an alleged confession which he denied, has been granted legal aid to sue prison doctors for negligence.

The Board of Visitors have made formal complaints against the doctors to the Governor and approached the Home Office.

Through denial of any treatment, Martin Foran's medical condition is desperate, with stomach acid and tapeworms leaking from a deliberately botched colostomy which was further damaged in a brutal assault by prison hospital staff three years ago. He has been

deliberately moved around the country since then in order to deny him any treatment, even going so far as denying him painkillers and proper clothing.

The West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, which was responsible for getting Martin convicted, has since been disbanded, and complaints against it have been made over many other cases.

The Martin Foran Defence Campaign is demanding that Martin be released immediately into proper hospital care.

Contact the Defence Campaign at BM Foran, London WC1N 3XX.

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system - a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

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

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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



## Bunch of ignoramuses

### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



**B**ritons and Americans have an interest in science matched only by their ignorance. This is the finding of a survey of the knowledge of 2000 Britons and 2000 Americans, published in *Nature* last week but summarised in several newspapers.

The pollsters, led by John Durant of the Science Museum, Britain's first professor of the Public Understanding of Science (PUS), asked people which topics they would prefer to read about in newspapers. The respondents consistently and spontaneously expressed more interest in science and medicine than in any other topic.

The pollsters then asked people simple questions, to measure their knowledge of scientific terms. Some of the results of these were less than satisfying.

I have adapted some of these questions so that science column readers can test their own knowledge. Together with the answers, I give some of the findings of the PUS poll. In general, though, younger Britons knew more than older ones; males more than females; and middle-class more than working-class. The better informed, the more positive the attitude to science and scientists.

The reasons and the remedies I will leave to you to come up with.

### Science column mini-poll on scientific knowledge

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Natural vitamins are (a) more nutritious than, (b) as nutritious as, (c) less nutritious than, synthetic

vitamins.

2. You put (a) calcium carbonate, (b) sodium chloride, (c) calcium chloride, on chips.

3. DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is (a) the 'blueprint' for a living thing, (b) a recently discovered vitamin, (c) a chemical that is damaging the ozone layer.

4. Electrons are (a) smaller than, (b) the same size as, (c) bigger than, atoms.

5. (a) the sun goes round the earth, (b) the earth goes round the sun, (c) they both go round each other.

6. Whichever is the answer to 5 takes (a) one day, (b) one month, (c) one year.

7. 'Acid' rain is partly caused by (a) coal-fired power stations, (b) nuclear power stations, (c) CFCs from spray cans.

8. Antibiotics, such as penicillin, kill (a) bacteria and viruses, (b) viruses only, (c) bacteria only.

### Answers

1. 70% of Britons questioned in the Public Understanding of Science poll thought (a) was the answer. In fact it's (b).

2. 30% thought (a) (chalk!) was correct. Once again, it's (b) (common salt).

3. If you didn't answer (a), you weren't paying attention when you read last week's science column. Half those in the PUS poll didn't know either.

4. The answer is (a). Atoms are thousands of times bigger than electrons (at least). 43% of Americans in the PUS poll knew this, but only 31% of Britons.

5. The most reasonable answer is (b). Smart alics who have studied A-level physics will know that the sun and earth go round their common centre of gravity. Since this is close to the centre of the sun, there is little practical difference between answers (b) and (c), so both will be accepted. About a third of those in the PUS poll thought (a) was the answer, so if Galileo had been burnt as a heretic, he would have died in vain, as far as they were concerned.

6. The answer is (c), more or less. This is why the year is the length that it is. Only one third of Britons knew this, compared with half of the Americans.

7. (a) is the correct answer, but half the Britons in the PUS poll thought nuclear power stations were the cause. Not so!

8. (c) is the answer. Antibiotics are completely useless against virus infections, such as colds, 'flu and many types of sore throat.

2 or less correct: You would have done better to guess.

3 correct: You were guessing.  
All correct: You can write the next science column article.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Thursday 20 July**  
Workers' Ireland Forum: 'The Protestants of Ulster', debate with Geoff Bell and John O'Mahony. Lucas Arms, Kings X, 8.00

**Thursday 20 July**  
Nottingham SO: 'A Summer of Discontent?', speaker Rob Dawber. ICC, Mansfield Rd, 7.30

**Friday 21 July**  
York SO: 'A Summer of Discontent?', NUR and NALGO speakers. The Priory St Centre, 7.30

**Wednesday 26 July**  
Bristol SO: 'Socialism, Europe and 1992'. Shepherds Hall, Old Market, 7.30

## 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

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## Chinese Solidarity Campaign founding conference

Saturday 29 July  
10.30-5.00

County Hall, London

Get your union branch, Labour Party or Students Union etc. to delegate you  
Delegates: £15 union branches; £5 smaller organisations. One delegate plus one or two observers per organisation

Send details of your delegation and fee/donation to:  
CSC, 68 Shaftesbury Ave, London W1  
phone 01 836 8291



# A Charter for the Unemployed

This Charter has been published by the National Combine of Unemployed Centres. They believe it can provide the basis for unity of employed and unemployed workers. Discuss it in your Labour Party or trade union branch, and send responses to: Merseyside TUCURC, 24 Hardman St, Liverpool L1 9AX

## A political commitment to full employment

Large scale unemployment is not inevitable, but results from political choices about the economy, the structure of the labour market, education and training standards and the nature of work. An institutionalised commitment to full employment should include:

**A programme of public sector-led investment in inner cities and rundown rural areas, meeting criteria of job creation and social need.**

Research shows that local authorities could create 300,000 jobs directly within expanded service provision, generating another 42,000 jobs in the private sector. These jobs would be part of a wider investment programme, encompassing not only housing, schools, social services, education and training, but also hospitals and general infrastructure.

**A 35-hour working week and an end to systematic overtime.**

For the week ended 15 October 1988, 15.46 million hours of overtime were worked by operatives in manufacturing industries.

Dividing the hours overtime by 35 hours gives an estimate of the possibility of job creation to be approximately 442,000 jobs. The issue of overtime, of course, cannot be separated from the issue of low pay and the above calculation is only a crude indicator. However, some 6,101,000 (29%) of employees regularly work overtime and 2,841,000 (13.5%) regularly work unpaid overtime.

## Equal opportunities for all — an end to discrimination

**A strategy for creating full employment must recognise that alongside job creation there has to be support programmes and legislation to combat the widespread discrimination existing in the labour market.**

One in three employers still actively discriminate against job applicants from Afro-Caribbean and Asian backgrounds.

23% of people with disabilities were unemployed compared with the national average of 10% unemployment rate.

Many employers will not even consider the long-term unemployed and older workers.

Part-time workers, mainly women, should have the same legal protection, conditions and rights, as full-time workers.

## Full maintenance for the unemployed and underemployed

"But the greatest single factor in



Photo: John Harris

removing many sources of poverty was, and is, the ability to maintain full employment." (G Chandler, *History of Liverpool*).

This Charter calls for:

**A non-discriminatory, non-means tested benefit payable to all including 16 and 17 year olds.**

Such a system of 'social insurance' would be payable to all who are unemployed and also end the discrimination against women's rights to independence.

**A doubling of child benefit.**

It is still predominantly women and not men who withdraw from the labour market to care for children. Even in 1985 child benefit would have needed to be £19.25 per week per child, in order to maintain its equivalent 1946 Beveridge recommended level.

**All housing cost to be met, coupled with the adequate provision of low cost housing.**

Rent arrears due to cutbacks in housing benefits and rate arrears due to the requirements to pay 20% of rates and all water rates, are pushing more unemployed people further into debt and poverty. Good quality housing benefit and a house building programme must reflect this need and right, and also end the increasing incidence of mortgage re-possession.

## Full rights for the unemployed and underemployed

**The right of all to join and participate in a trade union.**

The right to join a trade union without fear and the ability of a trade union to act on behalf of its members becomes more important as Europe moves towards a single capital, goods and labour market. The theoretical justification of the government's trade union laws, linking unionisation and lower productivity, is now shown to be seriously flawed. Trade unions give benefits and protection to in-

dividual members and make a positive contribution to the smooth running of many industries.

Without the protection and organisation of the trade union movement, unemployed workers are left in isolation. They are open to exploitation, often being pressurised into low paid jobs. This weakens and undermines the strength of organised labour and is a recipe for forcing down wages and also a deterioration in employment conditions and protection.

The unemployed need to be organised alongside those in work and be able to play a full role at all levels of their trade union.

## No work conscription

**An end to work for benefit schemes — Workfare.**

Many trade unions and local authorities are boycotting the Employment Training Scheme as it involves unemployed people working for their benefit, plus £10 per week, with:

- no guarantee of quality training;
- inadequate funding;
- job replacement — cheap labour;
- no link to employment;
- no link to skill shortages.

The Charter is campaigning on five key needs in training:

- participants are offered a quality training;
- pay the rate for the job;
- are completely voluntary;
- participants have employee status;
- approval from trade unions.

## Guaranteed access to quality training and retraining

"The labour market remains the glaringly weak link in the British economy, in large part because of the inadequacy of the training system." (C Leadbetter, *Financial Times*, December 5 1988).

## Guaranteed access to quality training.

In areas of high unemployment any training can be undermined by there being no jobs at the end of the training period. As well as linking closely with labour market and skill needs, any training structure also needs to link in with employment planning. This is the key issue for trade unions when training is part of their collective bargaining procedures.

## Guaranteed access to quality retraining.

- Four reasons for retraining are:
- new technology or product;
  - multi-skilling;
  - skill shortages;
  - alternative to redundancy.

Britain remains near the bottom of the international training league table with 50% of all employees receiving no training in 1986/7, and 33% never receiving any training.

## Adequate provision of care for all dependants

**The provision of nursery and crèche facilities to meet the**

## needs of all those with childcare responsibilities.

An expansion of childcare provision will create many jobs and open up opportunities for work for those with children. The allowance brought in by the West German government to make it easier for one parent to take parental leave in the first years of a child's life, will provide up to 300,000 jobs, filling in for parents taking such leave. While in the UK:

- having children can cost a woman up to half her potential lifetime's earnings;
- public provision in nurseries for under-fives is only available for 1% of the children who may require it;
- almost half of all employed women who are pregnant do not qualify for a statutory right to return to work following the birth of their child;
- over two-thirds of all child care arrangements made by working women their pre-school children is on an informal basis only;
- no statutory entitlement relevant to family needs, paternity, flexible working, workplace childcare facilities, parents and family leave are available.

## Which way forward for the left in the unions?

**A national conference for the left in the trade union movement organised by Socialist Conference**

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November  
Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union  
Pond St (opposite rail station)

Saturday: registration 10.30am, conference 11.00am-5.00pm; Sunday 10.00am-4.00pm

Credentials: £6 waged, £4 unwaged from The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG

# Who are the real oppressors?

## CINEMA

**Kevyan Lajevardi**  
reviews 'Do the Right Thing'

**S**pike Lee's third film 'Do the Right Thing', is intended to put the issue of racism on the American agenda again.

It will be watched by most young blacks. Given the current level of racism in American society (increasing number of racial attacks and murders, the growth of the Klu Klux Klan, police and state (racism) any film tackling racism should be welcomed.

The film is set in downtown Brooklyn in a predominately black neighbourhood, on a sizzling hot weekend.

We are introduced to the young and old characters who live on the street — an old alcoholic who's lost all his family, rival Latin and black neighbours, the stuttering black man who makes a living by selling pictures of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, the huge 'Radio Rahim' who is continuously touring with his ghetto-blaster, the recently arrived Koreans who run a corner shop and, at the core of the plot 'Sal's famous' pizza joint, run by Sal and his two sons.

Sal has been in the neighbourhood for 25 years. Lee himself plays the part of the pizza delivery boy.

One of Sal's sons is antagonistic to blacks and hates his job. He takes his frustration out on Lee.

There's never been any real trouble at Sal's until a young radical



Are inner-city white shopkeepers and workers really the enemy?

demand that Sal removes the pictures of American/Italian heroes from his wall and replaces them with black heroes. Sal refuses and our radical attempts to organise a boycott.

He finds it hard to draw up support for this in the community until he convinces Radio Rahim — who has been offended by Sal telling him to turn off his music before he could order a pizza — to go with him to Sal's.

They enter Sal's with music blasting. Both parties shout at each other, until Sal takes a base ball bat to the music box. Rahim pulls Sal over the counter and in the ensuing fight the police arrive.

Trying to restrain Rahim, the police murder him and then pull out, leaving behind a stunned crowd. At this point Lee throws a metal garbage can through Sal's window — which is the signal for the crowd to destroy the restaurant.

The police arrive again in huge numbers and round up everyone in the street.

The film ends with Lee demanding his last weeks' wages from a battered Sal. The closing credits show 2 quotes — one from Martin Luther King about the evil of violent means, and a second one from Malcolm X about necessary

violence against the 'oppressor'.

Neither of the quotes really relate to what happens in the film. Italian pizza house owners are not really the white oppressor in the states.

In fact the reaction of the crowd was difficult to explain given the circumstances of Rahim's killing — ie murdered by the police.

On the whole, the film is worth seeing. It's full of humour (if mostly macho) and is shot extremely well.

## Caring cops, no! Liberal lawyers, yes

### TV

By Belinda Weaver

**I**t never rains in *LA Law*. Set in Los Angeles, the show is a glossy series about a swanky law firm, where no-one ever gets a hair out of place or a wrinkle in their designer clothes.

But I like it. I think it's one of the best shows to come out of America for a long time.

For a start, it's liberal. That's not much really, but when you look at a lot of the other shows coming out of the USA, sit coms awash with stereotypes, dramas riddled with cliché, liberal starts to look better and better.

In the presidential election, George Bush called his opponent Michael Dukakis a liberal, as if the term were utterly damning. *LA Law* is up front and proud of being liberal.

The law firm, Mackenzie Brachman, is ethnically balanced. One of the partners is a Jew, another a Latino, another a woman, while one associate is black. The firm employs a retarded man, and tries very hard to make him feel involved and important.

Grace and Abby, two single women, play strong roles — Grace as a prosecuting member of the District Attorney's office, Abby as a single mother trying to make it on her own as a lawyer. Many of the judges who appear are played by

blacks or by women, frequently both.

Yet it doesn't smack of tokenism, since the characters are nicely developed. Even in the AIDS era, the gay issue isn't dodged. Gay characters are always presented positively.

The show tackles a variety of issues, usually through the medium of trial cases, but also through the private lives of the characters. The lawyers wrestle with moral dilemmas and with their own consciences, and they go through humbling experiences. They live.

Recent episodes tackled euthanasia, racism in court, anti-gay discrimination, workplace safety, drug dealing, the right of retarded people to vote, the refusal of a hospital to treat a poor, dying, black woman, and many other important issues.

The show consistently tries to air the liberal arguments, the right of women to work and autonomy, the right to live free from discrimination of any kind and it tries to blow the whistle on corporate wrong doing of any kind, from corruption in high places to dirty dealing on construction sites.

Some of the characters are more self serving than others, but the show consistently underlines the wrongness of their position, not in a heavy handed way, but believably, so that you still find the characters interesting despite their selfishness or narrowness.

The show was created by the makers of the liberal cop show *Cagney and Lacey* but I think it's miles out in front of that show. I've never been a fan of cop shows, even

of the liberal cop shows, because they present such a distorted view of cops. Dirty Harry was more truthful — a cop who enjoys being a bully and a thug.

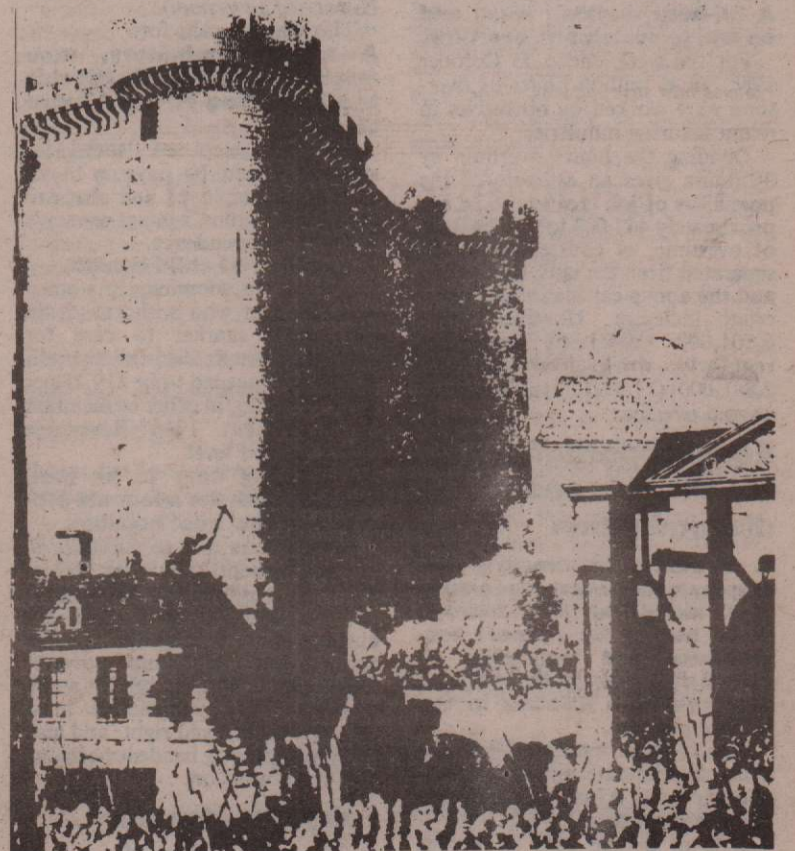
*Cagney and Lacey* is a 'caring' cop show and a con. The women are always chasing child abusers and drug dealers, the kind of crims we want to see put away, and they never go around harassing trade unionists on picket lines, thumping demonstrators, or hauling in black youth for the fun of it, the way real cops do. Those shows show cops as saccharin sweet, as moral, as necessary to society. I don't buy that.

*LA Law* isn't about cops; it's about justice. Quite often, the bad guys win the way they do in real life, but the show is unequivocal about condemning them. The rich and powerful play with a stacked deck; it's hard for the little guy to beat them.

It also goes for fluff sometimes, as a bit of light relief, and gets very Californian. Recently Roxanne, one of the firm's secretaries who was suffering misery on a diet, assaulted a thin woman in her diet class who was moaning about a non-existent weight problem. In another recent episode, a kid sued his dad for smacking him.

Everyone tried to talk him out of it, but the kid stood up for himself, and revealed the real issue — that his dad was so busy being a corporate big guy that he neglected his family.

Not all stories end up happily, but *LA Law* wants them too. It's a show with its heart at least somewhere near the right place.



## Bastilles

Two hundred years on from the day  
They levelled down the wall  
Of the glowering empty grim  
Bastille,  
There comes to us by long relay,  
This plainest truth of all:  
The class which lives by what it  
steals  
Yet runs Elysee, Bank and Dáil  
Proves tyranny does not depend  
upon a prison wall.

The bourgeoisie soon learned to  
kill  
New freedom in its caul;  
The moneyed tyrants rule today,  
Class law, recast, enslaves us still,  
It did not die, or fall;  
And Liberty's fight goes on, I say,  
It ceases not at all:  
And freedom won is more, much  
more, than the absence of a  
wall.

Sean Matgamna

# Quite a lot going on

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**W**e don't seem to hear quite so much about 'post-Fordism', the 'end of the working class' and so forth, these days.

Possibly it's because those awkward workers will insist on going on strike and spoiling all the fine theorising of the clever folk at Marxism Today. Well, perhaps the actions of the dockers, the railworkers, and the London Tube and bus workers can be written off as the last desperate throes of an anachronistic manual labour force.

But what about that other group presently at the forefront of the so-called industrial struggle — the white collar local government workers organised by NALGO? Surely they are the epitome of the 'post-Fordist' worker? They are non-industrial, have

little traditions of solidarity or militancy, most don't even regard themselves as 'working class' at all. And yet the NALGO action has, so far, been remarkably solid, and even 'militant'.

This phenomenon is all the more remarkable when you look at the history of NALGO: its origins go back to 1896 and the 'Liverpool Municipal Officers' Guild' founded by a town clerk called Herbert Blain. The Guild's original aims and objectives were "to provide a means for social intercourse amongst its members; to encourage their improvement, advancement and recreation" and to "provide a knowledge of the principles of local government".

Until 1961 the union's constitution did not even contain a provision for calling strikes. It was not until 1964 (after 43 years, 12 conference debates and six membership ballots) that the union finally agreed to affiliate to the TUC. There was no official recognition of, or encouragement for, shop stewards until 1978. Until last year there was no political fund.

And yet now NALGO is at the forefront of the anti-Tory industrial offensive and its dispute is probably the

most overtly 'political' of all the current round of strikes. How has this happened?

Partly it can be explained by the unprecedented attacks on local government as a whole, driving down wages, conditions and morale amongst even the most senior local government officials and pointing towards a municipal 'year zero'. But also, the make-up of NALGO's membership has changed dramatically: during World War II 31% of the union's NEC were Chief Officers; by the late '60s this was down to 3%. Currently a third of NALGO's members are officially 'low paid'.

But there are still big problems with NALGO: even during the present strike action a major factor in maintaining the high level of solidarity has been the large number of members who have taken holiday leave to cover themselves during the strikes. In rural areas, especially, the Brotherhood of the Secret Handshake remains an important force within the union (as it is within local government as a whole). The mainstream 'left' within the union is still heavily influenced by the Morning

Star, which currently has three NEC members, which is happy to denounce the right-wing 'new realists' but in practice sides with them more often than not.

NALGO's other big problem is that it is very much a federal union, and big branches (usually in Metropolitan areas with a genuinely left-wing leadership) find it easier to withdraw into local militancy, isolated from District and national affairs.

So while in the Metropolitan areas, left-wing branches are conducting a militant fight, general secretary John Daly and his deputy Alan Jinkinson prefer to play down the union's agreed commitment to industrial action and to attract previously unorganised workers with insurance and mortgage deals, cheap holidays and 'fringe benefits'.

But still, the present action has killed off, once and for all, the old joke that NALGO's initials stand for Not A Lot Going On. Perhaps it is too much to hope that it will make the Marxism Today crowd rethink their ideas about the end of the working class.

## CPSA ballot

By a Notting Hill DSS CPSA member

**T**he results so far from the strike ballot of CPSA members in 75 Department of Social Security (DSS) offices in London have been contradictory.

Good results in London South and a number of traditionally less militant offices have been offset by poor results elsewhere.

The ballot is over the relocation of 21 London Social Security Offices ('Moodie'). The most surprising result has been in Ealing, the first 'Moodie' office. CPSA members there have been on unofficial strike for the past week, yet voted 5:1 not to take official all-out strike action.

The strange outcome in Ealing, and votes against a strike in many other 'Moodie' offices, can be put down to the fact that the union's DHSS Section Executive vigorously campaigned for a vote against strike action.

However, the fight against 'Moodie' will continue. As offices become 'Moodified' conditions inside them get progressively worse (this sparked the strike at Ealing) and sporadic disputes are likely.

The task of London activists is to ensure that the 'Moodie' fight does not die. On Monday 14 July the all-London reps meeting agreed to continue to meet. It is vital we do so to ensure a co-ordinated response to any strike action which occurs.

The biggest lesson of the 'Moodie' dispute so far is that activists will have to argue that ordinary CPSA members should have confidence in their own power to take strike action regardless of the Section Executive.

The SWP and Militant supporters in London DSS still believe the Section Executive can be forced to lead a fight; but the Section Executive have proved beyond all doubt they will not be moved. The vote in London DSS offices was not a vote in favour of 'Moodie' or against strike action. It was a vote of no confidence in the Section Executive.

## Oil: a fight for recognition

**A**wave of unofficial strikes have been sweeping oil platforms in the North Sea over the last two months.

The dispute over safety, pay and conditions is fast turning into a battle for union recognition throughout the industry.

The strikes are organised by an unofficial rank and file body — the Oil Industry Liaison Committee, or OIL, but they have the tacit support of local union leaders.

The disputes began with contract workers who want guaranteed pay and conditions under the Offshore Construction Agreement. At present bosses cancel the agreement when rigs hook up and begin oil production.

Most construction workers are employed by contractors, on worse conditions than permanent staff and up to £100 a week less pay. Constructors Press Offshore won a bid for two million man hours in the BP Forties field, but refused to pay higher rates because the field was already on stream. A dispute started and other issues quickly arose.

The strikers demanded union safety reps, inclusion under Health and Safety legislation, and the Health and Safety Executive (instead of the Department of Energy) to monitor safety. There are also calls for a single industry-wide union.

The strikes spread to other platforms in the Forties field and to Shell's Alpha Platform, Brent Charlie and Brent Delta structures.

When management drafted in scab labour a sit in began at the Safe Felicia flotel on 20 June.

Management tried to stop the spread of strikes by cutting off communications between platforms.

Oil workers' wives demonstrated at both BP and Shell's Aberdeen HQs, demanding to be able to talk to their husbands. They demanded reassurance about safety in the industry.

## Tube strikes continue

**L**ondon tube workers staged another successful 24-hour strike on Tuesday 18 July.

A mass meeting of drivers last Thursday decided to continue with weekly 24-hour strikes, at least until later in the year.

Tube drivers launched a series of unofficial strikes over their demand for a £6.43 hourly rate with no strings. After the introduction of one person operated (OPO) trains, drivers wanted a share in increased productivity. Guards would make up their pay packets too through differentials.

These strikes boosted the confidence of station staff, who voted heavily for official strike action over management's attacks. Tube bosses wanted a mandate to victimise under a package called 'Action Stations' — which would have rip-

ped up all conditions of service and channels of promotion.

It is good that tube workers have been striking alongside each other. Tube bosses have the same plans for all their workers in the run-up to privatisation.

At last Thursday's mass meeting, some tube workers argued to wait until the autumn before the strikes would bite harder, carrying on with one strike a week until then. But in order to break the stalemate, action needs to be stepped up.

At the very least a plan for escalating the strikes should be drawn up — building up to all-out action if necessary. Otherwise there is the danger of endless one-day actions sapping morale.

Tube workers do have tremendous power. Boosted by the latest climbdown by BR, there can be no better time to stop tube bosses in their tracks too.

## Docks: make it an active strike!

**D**espite the claims from the bosses or the Tory press, the national dock strike is still strong.

The key ports, Southampton, Hull, Tilbury, Bristol and Liverpool, are all out.

More surprising than the weak spots in the strike is the failure of the bosses to get more results from their drive to divide and split up the strikers with local deals and sacking threats.

What is needed now is a strategy to make the strike bite.

First of all, Ron Todd should reaffirm what he said to the port bosses at the T&G conference: "If you sack any dockers, you will have a dispute the like of which you have never seen...there will be no resolution of our dispute until every dockworker is reinstated and an agreement is negotiated nationally."

That is the way to answer the sacking threats.

Secondly, to ensure the success of the strike, it needs to be an active strike. More strikers need to be drawn into the picketing. The idea that has come from the Bristol dockers for an effective mass picket at Avonmouth should be taken up elsewhere.

Lorry drivers, seafarers and railway workers must be approached for solidarity action, in particular for a clear refusal to handle strike-breaking cargoes.

Non-registered dockers should be drawn more effectively into the action. The Felixstowe stewards' refusal to handle re-directed cargo this week gave an important boost to the strike and, what's more, no writ has yet appeared despite the fact that the action was clearly 'secondary'.

The dockers are in a stronger position than the media and the Tories would have us believe.

## Docks round-up

- Shop stewards at **Southampton** report that their brothers at **Felixstowe** have refused to unload 250 containers from the Quality which was diverted from Southampton in an attempt to beat the strike. Felixstowe also voted last week not to handle any cargo diverted from the nearby port of Ipswich.

- Dockers at Felixstowe also last week threw out by a 2-1 margin an 8.2% pay offer linked to 'flexible' working practices. Now would obviously be the time for Felixstowe and other non-Scheme ports to come out over their own demands.

- The port bosses are trying to present the strike as a battle the dockers can't win. However, the **Lloyds List** — the average ship owner's early morning read — thinks differently. In an editorial last week they warned the port employers: "It will be a tragedy if the strike is allowed to become the protracted and bitter conflict that was seen with the miners and the Dover ferrymen."

- "A long term user of a big container terminal will probably be prepared to grit his teeth and tough out a short dispute...but one should not overestimate the patience of the customers to put up with expense and inconvenience."

Many port employers are secretly worried that their strike-breaking plans — in which containers are unloaded at continental ports and come into the UK via ferries or smaller vessels — could backfire against them and lead to a permanent shift in trade to the continent.

- At British Steel's **Immingham** docks, British Steel management have been training to break the strike by unloading iron ore. The T&G has asked for the steel union to boycott any supplies from Immingham. However, all of the Immingham dockers, except the T&G stewards, went back to work on Monday 17 July.

- Over 1,000 dockers have received threatening letters from Associated British Ports telling them that they face the sack unless they break the strike.

- In **Bristol** bus drivers collected over £100 for the dockers only to be told by local T&G organisers that they shouldn't have raised the money as it was against the law! Mass pickets are planned at Avonmouth to stop the movement of petrol.

## LT: engineers fight on

By a London bus worker

**A**s we go to press it looks like the busworkers' ballot, held on 14 July, went in favour of accepting the pay deal.

This deal offers just 1% more on the basic pay than the original offer, against which we voted 5-1 in favour of strike action.

The fact is, the London Bus Committee never intended to use that vote to build for action, but merely as a card in their negotiating strategy with management. And when the bosses told them that they had no more money to offer, they threw the towel in, despite the fact that by now they had a 6-1 vote in favour of strike action.

The bus engineers, however, are fighting on alone, holding stoppages one day a week. The second of those was on 17 July.

Both days have caused severe disruption to bus services. Although there are enough foremen to make up a legal skeleton shift, there are not enough to service all the buses in the garages, so a lot don't go out on the road, or enough to go out to those that break down on the road.

Now is the time to build links between bus crews and engineers. In the past they have fought separately, even crossed each other's picket lines.

Engineers in many garages this time are not putting up picket lines. If they did, the response from bus crews would be patchy unless the union leadership gave an instruction not to cross.

We should use this dispute to build up a history of solidarity between engineers and crews by holding collections in the canteens to cover for the loss of pay suffered by the engineers and by holding joint branch meetings to discuss other

ways of supporting their action, such as doing a mechanical check on every bus leaving the garage on the days of the engineers' dispute, ensuring that very few go out as many would be found to be unfit.

In the meantime, the busworkers on London Country South West voted last week 3-1 in favour of strike action over a package of conditions imposed on them by their management.

The package takes away practically all conditions bus workers have been used to over the last 40 years or more, as well as taking away negotiating rights of the union.

Four months ago the union tried to persuade the membership to fight the introduction of this attack on their working lives but could not get a vote for action. Now that it has been imposed and members can see and feel the implications in practice, coupled with the general upturn in struggles around them, they have changed their minds.

As one union activist, who wishes to remain anonymous because of the danger of victimisation, put it: "When you've been driving for ten solid hours in weather like this, it helps to concentrate the mind."

The union activist said: "The idea that strikes can win is starting to get a hold again, and what's more, busworkers aren't so frightened at the continued threats to close the firm down...it sounds more like a promise than a threat and what's more, drivers know that if the company did close, a new one would be set up and they'd be looking for bus drivers to employ, not third rate tin pot managers."

An unofficial strike was held two weeks ago, and was supported by 7 out of the 9 garages covered by the company. And now they will be taking action one day a week.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

Photo: Bob Sugden



### China: don't forget!

# NALGO: all out is the way to win

By Nik Barstow

**A** lot of NALGO members thought we couldn't win the ballot, thought we couldn't get the members out, thought we couldn't keep up the action.

All of those predictions were proved wrong.

Because, despite their divisions, the employers are waiting to see "what next?" — a lot of members are now worried about whether we could deliver on a ballot for all-out action.

The experience of the action so far shows that we could — that NALGO members have done more, and done it better, than anyone could have expected before the action started.

The alternatives on offer to "All Out" have real problems too. More one, two, or three-day strikes could just start draining the life out of the action which has, so far, been building up.

Ideas about selective action where 3 or 5% of the members are backed with large strike pay to fight everyone's fight sounds OK — if it's someone else doing it — but don't really unite the members in national action.

No-one in their right mind wants all-out indefinite strike. But what we all want is to win our claim and to do that as quickly as possible. All-out is the best way to do that — with the employers already on the ropes it's the knockout punch we need next.

In theory we are trying to force a body of 450 separate employers into agreeing our claim. In practice we are dealing with LACSAB (Local Authorities Conditions of Service Board).

That Board consulted the Councils about their 'offer' before the negotiations on the 6th — and found out that most don't agree with it!

They got replies from 27 local councils to a circular, only five supported the offer, 2 were non-



NALGO demonstration. Photo: John Smith, Profile

committal, and 20 said 'improve the offer' and/or 'drop the strings'.

The employers are starting to crack. Even strongly anti-NALGO leaders like ALA Chair Margaret Hodge are 'working behind the scenes' to get the offer changed —

and themselves out of a mess.

Rumour has it that up to 10 Councils are set to offer local deals on pay to NALGO branches. Ipswich has already offered staff 9% now if they pull out of the national action.

No-one should accept these deals — they might mean more money but they also mean 'the strings' are in force straight away.

That some Councils will make those offers shows how weak their national position is.

**T**he conference of the Chinese Solidarity Campaign, in London on 29 July (details, page 8) must be a great success.

During recent events in China, politically conscious people the world over were glued to their TV sets, as we witnessed first the wonderful, inspiring student demonstrations supported by workers, and then the terrible, tragic slaughter in Tiananmen Square.

The Chinese rulers want the world to forget all that has happened. But we must never forget. The uncounted thousands who died will not have died for nothing if their experience is kept alive, and if we build a powerful solidarity movement to aid them now, and next time.

Activities organised by the campaign so far, from the 24-hour picket of the Chinese embassy, to several demonstrations, have been greatly successful. The conference needs to reflect those successes. There is a tendency after emotionally and exhausting times for activity to die down, as people feel they need a rest. We need to ensure that solidarity activity continues.

Western governments have been reluctant to condemn the atrocities of the Chinese state. We must keep the pressure up on them.

In particular, in Britain, we must demand rights for the people of Hong Kong — to self-determination, to democracy, and to live in Britain if they wish.

It must be a broad-based, open and democratic conference.

### Maura Jones

Maura Jones died on Saturday 8 July, after a nine-month battle against cancer. She was 29. Maura was involved with Socialist Organiser in the early 1980s, and was a member of the paper's editorial board.

We send our condolences to her family and friends, and especially her husband, Peter Allen.

## Rail workers need to continue the fight

By a railworker

**J**ust over an hour before the NUR rail strike was due to begin on 18 July, the union executive decided to reject BR's offer on pay and the negotiating machinery.

On Monday 17th, both TSSA and ASLEF had accepted 8.8%. The NUR has been left alone to fight on against BR's attempts to prepare the railways for privatisation.

ASLEF's role has been bad. They abandoned the joint campaign; decided to go for pay alone; went for an overtime ban (only voluntary overtime, not Sundays or rostered overtime); and abandoned it after a week for 8.8%.

Their ballot on the negotiating machinery will be announced soon and perhaps they will start action again. But accepting 8.8% is a blow to the NUR. So was the TSSA acceptance — though they never took any action.

The NUR membership amounts to more than the ASLEF and TSSA put together, but disunity undermines us.

The issue of negotiating rights is central. We need to win on that in order to get an acceptable settlement. We need to fight on, and we can fight on, even though it will be harder.

Whatever our difficulties, BR have suffered a setback. Up to the middle of June BR had got used to imposing their wishes on the workforce — whether it was wage rises or new working conditions. Sometimes the unions objected, sometimes they complied, but all in all management was getting to like doing as it wished.

That has now changed. And it is undoubtedly a gain from the strike

so far that BR has learned that it will have to tread carefully in future.

They tried to impose 7%. The idea was, last May, that that would undermine the unions' campaign to defend industry-wide negotiating rights.

7% looked good compared to past pay rises. But inflation was higher and the mood to have a go was strong.

When the union won the ballot BR, and to some extent the NUR leaders, were taken aback. A majority vote for 24-hour strike action to defend negotiating rights and to reject the 7% meant it was possible

to take on BR. BR tried the courts and lost.

Action was called and proved 100% effective. Non-union members and members of the scab union, the FPRS, queued up to join the NUR to join in. All BR's propaganda and threats proved ineffective.

All along the line BR has had to back down and abandon its positions. Whatever comes of further talks, the union has gained strength and BR has lost. A watershed has been reached.

The fact that BR were forced to offer more money will also encourage workers in other industries.