

**Students fight the poll tax**



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# SOCIALIST

**ORGANISER**

The main enemy is at home!

- Child benefit frozen
- Cut in real wages for public sector workers
- Unemployment rising
- Eastbourne by-election shows Tories in shambles

## The Gulf slides towards war

By Eric Heffer MP

There is now a very steady move towards a shooting war in the Middle East.

Hospital ships are being sent there. The armed forces are being built up. Guns and equipment are being increased.

Bush's statement that Saddam should be brought before an international court like the Nazis is additional evidence that we're not far off a shooting war.

Any war fought there by Western powers will be an imperialist war fought for oil.

The tragedy is that the anti-war movement is really not getting off the ground at the moment.

From what I could see, the arguments on the Gulf were put at Labour Party conference — although I think they could have been put better by some people — but the machine had already rolled. Anyway you couldn't see the whole debate on TV. Every time a serious debate came up, they started interviewing people off the floor.

Now the US is trying to suggest that there is linkage between the absolutely correct demand of the Palestinians for a Palestinian state and what's happening over Kuwait. The fact is that the UN demanded Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the occupied territories a long time ago, but Israel has never accepted it.

On that basis there is a linkage. It cannot be avoided. There are two decisions of the UN. For one, on Kuwait, there is of course total support by the imperialist powers. As far the other is concerned there is no real pressure being applied at any time by the Western powers to urge the Israelis to accept a Palestinian state.

There'll never be peace in the Middle East until there is a Palestinian state.

# Time to



We can get Thatcher on the run

# go!

The front page of the *Sunday Times* last weekend (21 October) showed a uniformed cop with his baton raised to club a poll tax protester crouching on the ground.

Across the top of the page, under the headline "Super-rich in massive tax 'dodge'", was a sensational story of government-licensed tax-dodging to the tune of £1 billion a year, or 1p in the pound for the 25 million who do pay tax.

The super-rich, people like toothy self-publicist Richard Branson and Mrs Thatcher's friend and protege Shirley Porter, can pay specialists in tax evasion to locate the loops a conniving government has threaded into the much-reduced taxes which Mrs Thatcher has bestowed on them.

Meanwhile, the poor are harassed by the most vicious and indiscriminate tax in modern history. Families are broken up because they can't pay the massively increased local taxes they would have to pay if they stay together. An old man of 75 is sentenced to a jail term for refusing to pay his poll tax!

Massive tax cuts, and then on top of that legalised wholesale robbery for the rich, and the biggest all-round tax increase in history for the poor and the middlingly well-off! And extreme police violence and

Turn to page 3

# Some green, not much red

**Labour's new environment policy, 'An Earthly Chance', leaves a lot to be desired.**

By Les Hearn

Labour has now produced its long-awaited programme for the environment, *An Earthly Chance*.\*

It compares favourably with the Tories' White Paper, *This Common Inheritance*, perhaps because it was finished off after the latter had been comprehensively rubbished.

On the need to cut emissions of "greenhouse gases", AEC goes one better than the government by promising that the emissions will be no more than they are today by 2000, rather than 2005. But this still does nothing towards the goal of reducing greenhouse gases.

There is no hint of CO<sub>2</sub> reductions when it comes to Labour's policy for future energy production, either. It opposes use of natural gas for generating electricity, even though that would result in less pollution, for what are probably sound reasons. It then says that 70% of Britain's electricity would continue to come from coal-fired power stations.

True, it does advocate "clean" burning of the coal but, while this would reduce acid emissions, it would not alter the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> produced.

What of the alternatives? Nuclear power will be less and less important (see below) and so there will need to be a rapid expansion of renewable energy such as wind, wave, geothermal etc. But this is not dealt with in AEC. Surely our leaders

know that nothing significant will happen on the renewable front unless governments encourage it.

Another way of discouraging CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is the so-called carbon tax, advocated by some environmentalists. This is rejected by Labour on the grounds that it would harm the living standards of those with little alternative but to use energy to heat their cold houses, like the elderly.



Kinnock looks green, but is he really?

So Labour's solution to the long-term, and perhaps not so long-term, problem of global warming boils down to... energy conservation. This is precisely the solution advanced by the Tories. Its inadequacy lies in the fact that, even with reduced energy demand, there will still be too much CO<sub>2</sub> being

emitted. And it merely postpones the time when fossil fuel resources will run out.

However, conservation is a good thing, and AEC promises to place duties on energy companies to invest in insulation, conservation and efficiency. This will no doubt harm the privatisation of the electricity industry, as profits tend to depend on selling as much of something as possible.

On transport, AEC advocates taxing large cars more, ending all subsidies on company cars, and experimenting with road pricing, tolls and schemes to encourage car-sharing. But, while it promises a "review" of the Tories' £12 billion roads spending plans, it is rather vague about its plans to encourage public transport.

To get things done, Labour will appoint a Minister for Environmental Protection, who will not however have a ministry. There will also be an Energy Efficiency Agency, a Food Standards Agency, and an independent Environmental Protection Executive. The EPE would set pollution standards taking health risks to children, rather than to the average member of the public, as their yardstick.

The EPE would have the power to set fines, and these, unusually, might be payable to the Executive itself, to be used to further its work. But the problem here is that the big polluters will be able to afford such fines with ease, just sticking the odd penny on their prices.

Most of these and other proposals in AEC have been broadly welcomed by environmentalists — in marked contrast to the reception afforded to *This Common Inheritance*. But there has been some criticism on the question of nuclear power.

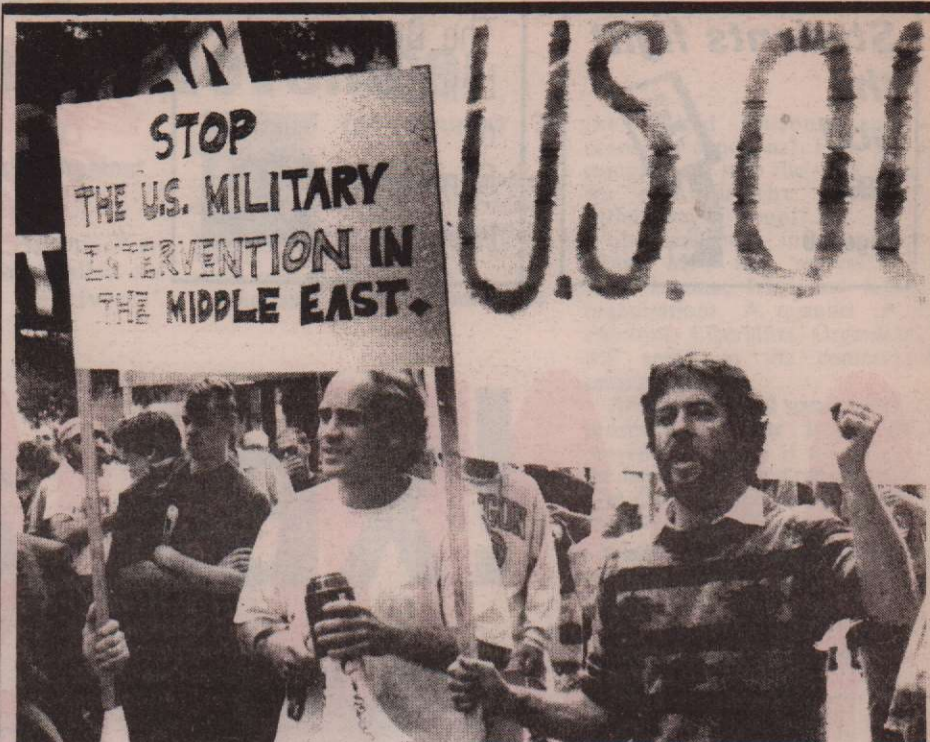
Labour will not start new nuclear power stations and will wind down existing ones by some unspecified date. However, no commitment will be made on Sizewell B on the grounds that it will be nearly finished by the time of the next election and it would be a waste of money not to use it.

Again, Labour intends to keep the THORP nuclear fuel reprocessing plant at Sellafield going, despite financial over-runs, design faults and safety fears. Both these points are against existing Labour conference policy.

Many other suggestions and proposals are contained in AEC, another interesting one being the "green" mortgage. The cost of energy conservation improvements would be added to the mortgage loan, providing a cheaper way of financing the work. This, of course, would do nothing for the large number of people, usually less well off, who live in rented accommodation.

Overall, the verdict has to be "Good in parts, but could do better".

\* *An Earthly Chance*, Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT. £2.50.



## Bush's warmongering loses support

President Bush is on the campaign trail for this November's US Congressional elections, and using it to sell his preparations for an oil war in the Gulf. Opinion polls show a remarkable drop in support for Bush's Gulf policy. There was widespread opposition in the Black population right from the beginning. Opposition is spreading. Only a month ago more than three in every four Americans would back Bush in war. Now it is just over 50 per cent. Some of this drop reflects a feeling of anti-climax because of the prolonged build-up. But it must also indicate a real sobering-up. The Americans have had one Vietnam war. Now more and more of them are saying that they do not want to risk getting bogged down in another.

## Gays organise against violence

Attacks on gay men are on the increase. This year 15 gay men have been murdered, and hundreds more have been beaten up, some very badly indeed.

Many attacks take place on gay men leaving nightclubs, usually by gangs of young men who have been waiting for a victim on his own.

Gay men have been stabbed, beaten and in one case repeatedly hit with home made clubs with nails sticking out of them.

The situation has become so bad that some lesbian and gay organisations have asked the police to monitor the attacks, in the same way

racial attacks are monitored. The metropolitan police are 'considering' the request. One difficulty in monitoring the attacks is that the police are apparently shy of asking assault victims if they are gay.

A bigger problem is that gay men are likely to be unwilling to admit to their sexuality. Homosexuality is illegal for under 21s and the police have stepped up arrests and prosecutions of gay men and lesbians for 'indecent behaviour'. Last year the police brought 2022 such cases — the highest number since 1955 when homosexuality itself was a criminal offence. The police themselves are often less polite when dealing with lesbians and gay men and

many lesbians and gay men report abuse and harassment from the police.

Lesbians and gay men in New York have begun to tackle the same problem by setting up a vigilante group (the 'Pink Panthers') to patrol the streets at night. Greenwich Village (a gay area of New York) already has a lesbian and gay police unit, but the Pink Panthers say more is needed. Anti-gay attacks have more than doubled in the city in the last 12 months.

The British police are against such vigilante groups being set up here. They feel that an openly gay presence on the streets could just become another target or draw attention to gays, making things worse!

It seems that the police have an answer to everything, and that answer is if you keep the closet door closed tightly you won't get hurt.

Instead of hanging round public toilets hoping to trap some poor bloke into 'indecent' the police would do well to hang round the dark alleys near gay venues. Even PC Plod might be able to spot gangs with home made clubs — as long as he wasn't looking the other way of course.

## A bent inquiry

By Mike Shankland

The West Midlands Serious Crime Squad was disbanded in the summer of 1989 following a series of allegations of police malpractice, with local juries becoming reluctant to convict in cases brought by its officers.

Officers from the West Yorkshire Force are now investigating SCS cases over the previous three years along with selected cases dating as far back as 1984.

One such case is that of Roy Meads, sentenced to fifteen years in 1984 on a charge of robbery. The Prosecution evidence rested on the inconsistent testimony of a supergrass, whom the Judge advised the jury to ignore at the trial. Roy Meads was interviewed earlier this year by members of the West Yorkshire Force. He requested that he be given a copy of his statement to

them. This was refused, as the Police deemed this to be 'not in the public interest'.

However, this policy is inconsistent.

Another complainant Tony Wellington — who is serving a ten year sentence for a robbery he denies and who had this charge imposed on top of charges he pleaded guilty to in January 1988 — was interviewed by the same West Yorkshire officers in November 1989. He has been allowed a copy of his statement.

A fair number of complaints allege that the police make up statements and add to them.

If complainants are not allowed a record of their comments this shows that the PCA is first and foremost concerned with protecting the police and keeping lids on, controlling things and so on.

Talk of the 'public interest' in this context is ironic. The inquiry is being conducted in secret and neither the complainants nor the public will see its findings.

## CPs go for new names

By Neil Cobbett

Both Italian and British CPs are attempting a face lift.

The Italian PCI has changed its name to Democratic Party of the Left (catchy eh?) and has a new logo which looks to me pretty much like the same old Stalinist flag under the remains of a mad cow's brain!

The Italian Socialist Party pipped them to it by changing their name to Socialist Unity, jeering that what takes Occhetto (CP leader) years, Craxi (SP/SU leader) does in a



The Italian CP's new logo

day. Precisely. Britain's CPers have a new fortnightly, *Changes*, (yes, but what to?) As they quote Gordon Brown approvingly on Labour's 'supply-side socialism' (free-marketism to you and me), I can only assume its subtitle 'renewing progressive politics' is really intended tongue-in-cheek.

## NEW PROBLEMS NEW STRUGGLES



A handbook for trade unionists by Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty £1

£1 plus 24 pence p&p from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA



# The phoney peace

Nearly three months after Iraq invaded Kuwait, a tremendous army has been moved half way across the world to confront Iraq.

Iraq is the target of a world-wide trade boycott. It is surrounded by

hostile armies and navies, and by armed air power said to have the strength to shatter Iraq's industry and oilfields.

Iraq continues to churn up the Kuwaiti society that existed before the invasion — looting plant and medical equipment, and killing in the style to which Saddam Hussein

has accustomed his own people. Bush and Thatcher talk about bringing the head of the Iraqi government to trial for his crimes.

Yet we still have peace. War has not broken out. There is talk of the present impasse continuing for months. Plainly there is hope in Washington and London that a

military coup inside Iraq will settle Saddam Hussein. That is the purpose of talking about bringing him to trial: to convince the Iraqi army that they face disaster unless they chop Saddam Hussein and withdraw from Kuwait.

Does the delay mean that war is not going to break out? It may well reflect the pressure of American and other capitalists who dread the probable world-wide economic chaos that would most likely follow a war in which the Gulf oilfields are devastated.

Yet the likelihood of the present pressure making the Iraqi army do what the US wants cannot be big; and the chances that the huge armies will pack up and go, admitting failure without a fight, are probably close to nil. Bush is as little attracted by political suicide as

Saddam Hussein is by the fate that awaits him if he fails.

The drive is still towards war — and it has a momentum of its own.

In the US support for Bush's war has dropped dramatically, by 20 per cent in the last four weeks. The organised campaign against it is growing.

In Britain we must fight against the inevitable lulling effect of the present "phoney war" in the Gulf. There is no rational ground for believing that the US and its allies will not go to war if they decided that the military and economic blockade is not working. We need to build an anti-war movement commensurate with the looming dangers.

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

## Tories: Time to go!

### From front page

jail for those who take to the streets to fight back. That's Mrs Thatcher's class war Toryism summed up!

The revolt has spread to even such a natural breeding ground for middle-class Tory smugness and boneheadedness as Eastbourne. The local Tories were instructed by their Central Office to tell voters that unless they voted Tory they'd be letting the IRA — who killed the former MP, Ian Gow — affect the composition of the British Parliament.

It didn't work! It probably backfired.

This government is now freezing child benefit for the fourth year running — reducing its real value by the amount of inflation, now 11%. It has declared it will limit public

sector pay rises to 7%, which means cuts in real wages of 4%. Unemployment is already rising, and the government is well aware that its entry into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism will increase it further. And the economy is in a mess.

For many years the great tragedy of the British working class — and of the majority of the British people — has been that it lacked an opposition party worthy of the name, a party able and willing to lead and organise the resistance of the majority to the Thatcher government. Instead of organising a fight, the Labour Party leaders have cringed and toadied to the Tories.

After the large scale riots in Central London in March, when the police behaved like thugs out of control, Labour leaders Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley went on TV spluttering like two Tory dames from the shires in their indignation — against the poll tax demonstrators who had defended themselves. It was the crowning event so far in their ignominious careers as creeps and understudies for the Tories.

Yet it could have been radically different. Labour could, by organising the opposition to the Tories, have shaped "public opinion" against the Tories and all they stand for. Instead, they have reshaped themselves and the Labour Party to fit the public opinion shaped by Thatcher.

Despite that, the Tories are sliding towards electoral defeat. Their going could be speeded even now if the Labour leaders organised a campaign to force this discredited minority government to call an immediate general election.

## Gorbachev's Nobel Prize

Yes, Mr Gorbachev probably does deserve some sort of a prize.

As the second reforming Stalinist Tsar, he has hacked away vigorously at the vital organs of the system which nurtured him.

He hacks away blindly. He creates chaos. He zig-zags. Abolishing the "party" monopoly of initiative at every level of society, he has also concentrated more formal powers in his own hands than even Stalin.

Yet he is the man who, elected to the crowing pinnacle of the bureaucracy, began to demolish the slowly heaving bureaucratic mountain on which he stood.

He set out to carry through limited economic reforms, long overdue and frustrated when they were tried earlier, in the '60s. Blocked by the bureaucratic inertia

of the system, he then started using "glasnost" (openness) to batter the time-servers and die-hards.

He has walked backwards towards each change, face to the furious problem he is backing away from. He has moved reluctantly, but then boldly faced the consequences.

He is now openly in favour of engineering the development of capitalism, though on this, too, he seems to be walking backwards.

Gorbachev's politics are not our politics. We do not want capitalism in the USSR. Nevertheless, there is one great overall gain from what Gorbachev has done. It has allowed the working class of the USSR and Eastern Europe to begin to think and organise.

Gorbachev's decision not to send tanks to back up the old satrap "Communist Parties" in Eastern Europe allowed the oppressed peoples there to regain their liberty.

The bourgeoisies of the West have most reason to be grateful to Gorbachev. He is increasingly their man — and so they reward him. But they have made a mistake in giving him the Nobel Peace Prize. The US build-up to war in the Gulf is only possible because of the collapse of the USSR's pretensions on a world scale.

We are glad that those pretensions are collapsing. But peace is not what Gorbachev has brought.

**W**e are still in the process of setting up an "Advisory Editorial Board" for *SO*.

Those who have so far committed themselves are: Vladimir Derer; Terry Eagleton; Eric Heffer MP; Alice Mahon MP; Joe Marino (general secretary of the Bakers' Union); and Peter Tatchell — all in a personal capacity.

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA  
Newsdesk: 071 639 7965.

Latest date for reports: first post Monday.

Editor: John O'Mahony  
Published by WL Publications Ltd, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.  
Printed by Portobello GP.

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.  
Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of  
Socialist Organiser, and are in a personal capacity  
unless otherwise stated.

GRAFFITI

# Bambatha's Children

By Steve Battlemuch

The real story of South Africa's townships, performed by people who are active in the struggle themselves — that's *Bambatha's Children and Comment*, two plays currently touring Britain.

The performers are members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) here to raise support, financial and political, for their 5½

year dispute with the British-based multinational BTR.

*Bambatha's Children* starts with the 1906 rebellion against the Poll Tax in South Africa, looks at the battles against white landowners, and concludes at the beginning of the BTR dispute in 1985.

*Comment* covers the return of political exiles to South Africa today, the release of political prisoners, and the fight against the Inkatha death squads. One of the most powerful scenes is where a group of workers put forward their demands for the negotiations on the future



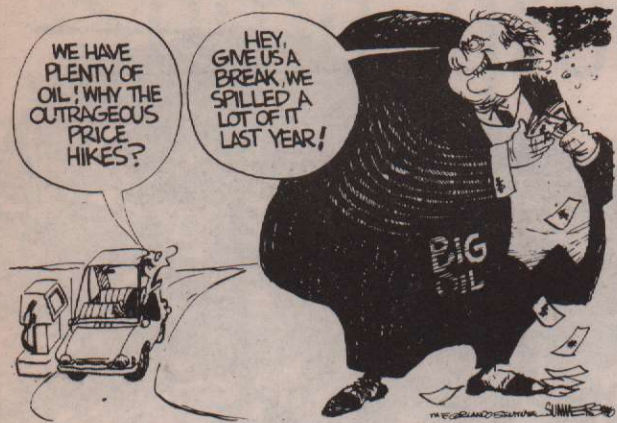
Chief Bambatha calls for the poll tax to be beaten

of South Africa.

The tour: 26 October, Manchester; 29 October, Liverpool; 1 November, Huddersfield; 3 November, Leeds; 4 November, Hull; 6 November, Chesterfield; 7 November, Lowestoft; 8 November, Peterborough; 9

November, Cambridge; 10 November, Ipswich; 11 November, Norwich; 13 November, Doncaster; 15 November, Wallsend...

Contact BTR Workers' Support Network, PO Box 328, Cambridge CB1 2RQ.



## A shareowning oligarchy

### GRAFFITI

Everything Mrs Thatcher touches turns to ashes department...

Increasing inflation, sky-high interest rates, and chronic balance-of-payments problems are destroying the myth that Thatcher has radically regenerated the economy.

Now the bosses' "trade union", the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), has published figures which refute the Tory claims to have created a "shareowning democracy" or "people's capitalism".

The claims are a mixture of lies and balderdash. The CBI's report, "A Nation of Shareholders", shows that the proportion of shares held by individuals has not expanded but contracted.

The number of people owning shares has trebled in the '80s, to eleven million, but what they own as a proportion of share wealth has halved! 15 years ago individuals held 38 per cent of total share values. Now it is 20%.

The men and women in the street who bought into privatisation shares didn't know anything about the Stock Exchange system, and don't have enough capital to do anything sensibly with shares except sell out for a quick profit or hold on to their few shares for a rainy day. The power associated with shareowning is still confined to a tiny elite.

None of this is surprising. There was mass share-owning in the US as long ago as the 1920s. The little shareholders were like midges clustered around the water buffaloes and rhinoceroses of monopoly capitalism. It meant very little — just an extra source of capital for the big monopolists, and a source of confusion about the nature of capitalism for lots of others.

What the tale really shows is the power of ruling class propaganda, lies and gimmicks — and the importance of having a socialist press to put a different viewpoint.



I've just been told about the Jasper Carrott way of dealing with "racist" jokes, that is, jokes which depend for their effect on the idea that some group of people is intrinsically stupid (Irish), mean (Scots and Jews), or whatever.

You find such jokes everywhere. What are "Irish" jokes in England and "Polack" jokes in the USA and "Kerry" (as in County Kerry) jokes in Ireland. People need to let off their malice and to project their

sense of the absurd on to a picture target.

If you can't convince them to stop it, join them. Recycle the jokes, so that they begin: Did you hear the one about the Sun reader?

No — that could be construed as anti-working-class. Start it: did you hear the one about the Sun staff writer?

The dingy Sun surpassed itself last week when its main front page "news"

(second only to a picture of Princess Di hugging a long-eared rabbit: no, one with fur... see what I mean about innocent victims of free-floating malice?) was a story about a cheque written by 18 year old Rachel Kinnoch which bounced, and was then honoured.

Yuk! Another statistic testifying to the quality of life in Thatcher's Britain: seven out of ten British children play truant at least once a month.

How does the idea of killing and eating Prince Charles and his mother grab you?

Charlie's ears cooked like pig's trotters or cowheel? No? A bit old-fashioned and not a little barbaric, you think. We haven't done such things in England since before the Romans came and flogged Queen Boadicea into madness.

Yet we used to. Everyone who has read books like Sir James Fraser's *The Golden Bough* — which is on every "recommended list" of important books I've ever seen — knows that originally kings were selected for a short time and killed and eaten at the end of it. Something to do with seasons and encouraging the crops, I believe.

It does come as a bit of a surprise, though, to be told that we still go in for the ritual killing of our royals.

The widow of King George IV, the once "much-loved" Queen Mary, was, it has been revealed, "put down" by her doctors so that she would be well dead and "mourned by the nation" before her grand-daughter Elizabeth II was crowned. To let her linger on was to risk her dying at a time that would interfere with the festivities of the glorious Coronation in 1953.

So, like a tired old horse in the Queen stable taking up space needed for a fresher filly, the "much loved" Mary was hustled to her end ten weeks before the Coronation, in good time to do the mourning without the Great Royal Funeral show encroaching on the really big event, the Coronation.

According to a new book by Gordon Winter and Wendy Kochman, the dutiful lady asked her doctors to put her "to sleep", afraid like a good trouper of overrunning her act, and concerned that "the show must go on".

Maybe. But the story of how ruthlessly things were managed does have an authentic ring to it. It's not all glitz and children's nursery to Buckingham Palace fairy stories.

## The voice of dangerous stupidity

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Have you ever noticed the way that newspaper columnists like to give themselves catchy little titles like 'Man of the People', 'Voice of Sanity', 'Plain Speaking with...' etc, etc. And have you noticed just how inappropriate most of these tags turn out to be?

None is less appropriate than 'The Voice of Reason', Woodrow Wyatt's weekly tirade of right-wing prejudice, intolerance and bigotry in the *News of the World*.

This Sunday's offering ran true to form: praise for Kenneth Clarke ("he's pressing for huge increases in NHS spending"), John Major ("there's hard evidence that he'll be on the ball this time"), Lester Piggot ("a magical entertainer") and of course, Mrs Thatcher who "gets better with age" claims Wyatt, who goes on (uniquely amongst even right wing commentators) to describe her conference speech as 'superb'.

Then there were gentle raps over the knuckles for silly Patrick Nicholls who got caught driving over the limit and Israel for embarrassing America and Britain at the UN by gunning down Arabs at an inopportune moment.

No Wyatt column would be complete without something about the trade unions — often advice to AEU members on how to vote in their postal ballots (which does not, of course, constitute 'outside interference'); this week there were no AEU elections coming up so Wyatt was freed to content himself with a fairly routine attack on Arthur Scargill and the NUM.

All this was thoroughly predictable stuff, reflecting as it does the usual right wing themes.

What was surprising was that Wyatt didn't use his col-

umn to play another favourite cause of his — left wing "bias" in the broadcasting media. Together with Norman Tebbit, Wyatt has long held the view that the BBC, in particular, is thoroughly infiltrated by left-wing subversives. Wyatt was the main force behind the recent campaign against Brian Redhead the Radio 4 *Today* programme (Dominic Lawson commented in this week's *Correspondent*, "Mr Redhead is too restrained to say, as he might, that the real absurdity is Lord Wyatt proclaiming himself to be a crossbench 'independent' in

the House of Lords when in fact he has a closer political relationship with Mrs Thatcher than almost any peer on the government benches").

It would be easy to write off this preposterous, vain old hypocrite as an amusing eccentric. Easy, but wrong.

He is the main instigator of the government's present efforts to gag TV and radio by enforcing a spurious "balance"/"right for reply" rule under the Broadcasting Bill. Such a rule would make controversial or "personal viewpoint" broadcasting virtually impossible by enforcing an immediate require-

ment for another programme or studio discussion outlining the 'opposite' point of view to that just shown. Presumably, after John Pilger's recent expose of British government support for the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot and Douglas Hurd should have been given immediate air-time to put their point of view?

But still the question remains; why hasn't Wyatt used his 'Voice of Reason' column to plug his latest hobby-horse? Could it possibly be because someone might just ask for equal coverage?

## Turning Porsches into buses

A couple of weeks ago a person wrote to the *Evening Standard* complaining about how buses block London's roads.

"How easy it was to drive through the city during the bus and tube strikes", he wrote. Ha! For the majority of public transport users — women — all the streams of cars, each containing one man, are just another reason for the bus being late.

Public transport has recently become one more environmental issue. Buses, trains and tubes are less environmentally damaging than yet more trucks and cars. But public transport is also a vital issue for women.

Women, particularly working class women, are the major users of public transport. Yet it serves us very badly.

There is no form of public transport which is possible to use easily with a child, a buggy, and a bag of shopping. No seat belts are provided for kids, and there are hard edges everywhere to cause cuts and bruises.

Nothing would be easier than to provide a kids' coach on Inter-City trains with soft seats and plenty of storage, where kids could play in safety. In tube stations, escalators and lifts should go right down to platform level and barriers should be wider — both of those things would

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

make it far easier for both parents and disabled people.

In New York all the buses have platforms which can be lowered and raised to allow wheelchairs and buggies on. In London, only a few do. Why?

At least in the big cities there is transport. In rural areas women without cars are often isolated, and unable even to get to the next village, or to decent shops, libraries or playgroups. Young women cannot get to social events without complicated "arrangements", or even stay for after-school clubs, because there is only one bus, and it isn't safe in quiet lanes after dark. The Tories have "deregulated" public transport out of existence in many areas.

Even in towns, poorly staffed, infrequent public transport stops many women daring to go out alone at night. Recently I went out with colleagues for a drink after work, and at going home time was confronted with the choice of a half-hour wait at a gloomy bus stop, shelling out up to £10 for a taxi, or taking a lift from someone who had been drinking! Frankly, it's easier just to go home at six o'clock and watch the telly.

Increasingly, anyone who has the choice buys a car. So the pressure from the articulate and well-off is for more and better roads, and to hell with the rest of us.

Thatcher's dream will come true when everyone is isolated in their own greasy little box, cutting up other drivers and paying for the consequences of any little slip with private health insurance. For then no-one will get together at bus stops for a good moan.

People, especially women, will lose another chance to meet each other and cement the communities which the Tories so hate. Excellent public transport would do far more than get people to work on time — it would save a fortune in resources, and help bring society together instead of fragmenting it.

Never mind turning swords into ploughshares, what about turning Porsches into buses?

# 75 year old fighter the Tories tried to jail



By Pat Markey

They said it would never happen — that no-one would ever be likely to go to jail for not paying the poll tax.

Now a jail sentence has been handed down for non-payment of poll tax — against a hard-up 75 year old working class man.

75 year old Cyril Mundin was forcibly taken from his Northampton home by bailiffs on 11 October. They chose a time when other poll-tax campaigners who might have tried to stop them were occupied in court elsewhere.

Cyril Mundin was taken to court, found guilty of non-payment, and given the choice of either paying his tax within 14 days or going to jail for 14 days.

Jail has been avoided by the *News of the World* paying Cyril Mundin's fine — without consulting him and against his wishes. Cyril Mundin here explains his reasons for defying the courts, and his philosophy, in a statement.

*"Being a poorly paid pensioner, one of millions, I am only trying to defend my living standards.*

*Ever-increasing bills are nibbling away the food supply of those people on low incomes, and I for one do not like it. I was born that way."*

But he is not concerned only with himself. *"In their struggle to survive most people are forced (by need) to become the paid puppets of others, with little freedom, simply because cash is king. It is the prop of life.*

A one-time member of Communist Party, he is bitter against political parties.

*"All we humans who walk this planet look to the governments and the law to protect us, not to attack our living standards. Between them they have transformed this world into a jungle where everyone is out to deprive others of their money, to prop up the lives of Number One. Lack of trust and conflict are the order of the day until death catches up with us."*

What should we do?

*"We electors, collectively, must look for an alternative to this present jungle by building a civilised society based on compassion and armed with the understanding that all life is precious.*

*Such a civilised move would enable the daylight to break through the dark shadows that hang over our lives, bring into being a compassionate environment that would cause us all to become dazzl-*

Cyril Mundin faced 14 days in jail until the *'News of the World'* paid his fine against his wishes

*ed by the brilliance of our own achievement. For in times of trouble, it's nice to have good friends around — they must be one of humanity's greatest needs."*

With the anti-poll-tax campaign in mind, he makes this appeal:

*"For a say in your own destiny, so long denied you, please support the people's movement!"*

## Black Sections' struggle is wider than Conference resolutions

By Roger MacKenzie (Labour Party Black Sections)

The Labour Party National Executive's change of position, to accept the principle of black self-organisation, is a step in the right direction.

But that is essentially all it is — a step. It is entirely due to pressure from Black Sections.

For a long time Black Sections have been organising inside the trade union movement. We have set up black members' groups within unions, adding to the pressure on the National Executive to accept the Black Socialist Society. The Conference and National Executive decision is really only half the story.

Black Sections have no illusions about the Black Socialist Society.

### Campaign

We still want Black Sections within the Labour Party. We will continue the campaign within the Labour Party and the black community for the recognition of Black Sections. Even so, we are pleased by Conference's decision.

The "official" recognition of Black Sections (as opposed to the Black Socialist Society) would have been the recognition of the struggle waged over the last eight years. Why shouldn't black members have the same rights as women to organise within the Party?

While we welcome the Black Socialist Society, it simply does not have the same status within the Party as women's or youth sections. That status is what we're calling for.

Black people within the Party see our struggle as wider than just Conference resolutions. We're extending the work of the Labour Party right into the community. The Labour Party forgets (or chooses to ignore) that the community also includes the black community. That black community is besieged today.

### Goal

Our goal should be to address the aspirations of the black community and to put the black agenda at the forefront of Labour Party policy-making. At the end of the day, we are socialists, and we campaign on good socialist politics. Even the name — Black Socialist Society — says that. It's a breakthrough getting the Party to accept the name — people get banned for using the word, like *Socialist Organiser!*

We are interested not just in structural change, but in political change. Politics — socialist politics, and our right to campaign as black party members — is what the struggle is all about.

We are determined that the Black Socialist Society will be representative of and responsive to the black community. We will be working out very clear ideas about its structure, and the Party will find it very hard just to impose their ideas on us. We want it to deliver representation at all levels of the Party — up to and including the National Executive.

## Poll tax battles spread

By Tony Dale

Strikes in Greenwich, Liverpool, Kirklees; cuts in Sheffield, North Tyneside, Manchester, Haringey.

Local councils are in turmoil. The disputes and the cuts have one root cause — the poll tax.

Through the poll tax the Tories are putting the squeeze on local councils. The councils — many Labour-controlled — have in turn hammered services.

Now, several Labour councils have shifted gear and are trying to



We can beat the Tory courts

break local organisation by the Town Hall workers' union NALGO.

The Greenwich dispute started about pay and conditions for workers in poll tax collection. Since July the strike has turned into an anti-union lockout. The council made moves to victimise nine strikers.

In Liverpool, a dispute over

deductions from pay for strikers led to NALGO organising a half-day council-wide strike. The council's response was to use the Tory anti-union laws to get a writ against NALGO. It was the first time a Labour council has resorted to using the Tory anti-union laws against its own workforce.

The attempts to break NALGO have failed. The Greenwich dispute has remained solid. Greenwich NALGO, with official national support, has escalated the strike. Further escalation is likely if the council does not back off.

Liverpool NALGO rode out the threats from the courts and went ahead with the half day strike. The council dropped the court action and settled the dispute.

Those disputes were over pay and conditions before the councils escalated them into major confrontations with NALGO. When the poll tax was implemented, there were many disputes over its introduction — over regrading claims, staffing bids, and job descriptions.

The NALGO leadership was opposed to non-implementation of the poll tax, and got their way at the union conference. That left branches with non-implementation policies isolated, and one by one those policies fell or collapsed. Instead, council workers' anger over the poll tax translated into disputes about pay and conditions around its introduction. The

disputes continue. In Southampton workers are refusing to cooperate with poll tax collection.

The poll tax has also spelled disaster for council services, with thousands of jobs being axed.

Nationally, NALGO has backed a policy of "no compulsory redundancies", and is willing to sanction strikes to enforce it. But, because of the high turnover of local government staff, a line of "no compulsory redundancies" is not sufficient to defend jobs and services. Councils have chopped services through voluntary redundancies and redeployment.

The number of disputes over the introduction of the poll tax shows that council workers are willing to take industrial action to protect their pay and conditions. The task now is to develop a national strategy to protect services and jobs from poll tax cuts.

50 social services workers in Wandsworth are on indefinite strike over cuts. Recently the Wandsworth teachers had a one-day strike. The Wandsworth strike over cuts may well be the start of a counter-offensive to defend jobs and services. It is a crucial dispute. A victory in Wandsworth, and fighting cuts will become popular.

The third "NALGO Against the Poll Tax" conference is to be held in London on 8 December. It will be an ideal opportunity for the left in NALGO to organise a defence of jobs and services.

## Beating the bailiffs

Bailiffs were routed by anti-poll-tax campaigners in Beeston, Nottingham, last Friday 12 October.

They came to harass non-payers, but failed even to get out of their car, while local kids set about the car with vaseline and rotten vegetables. They couldn't move their car, either, because it had been blocked in on both sides by other cars.

The police came to the bailiffs' rescue 30 minutes later, but only to help them leave the estate, not to enter non-payers' houses.

This victory gave a boost to the local campaign which we needed after two setbacks in the courts. Local magistrates have refused to allow non-payers to have "Mackenzie friends" (non-

professional advisers) in court, since one was used in Nottingham's first contested case in August, and the case took 1½ hours to complete.

And the council is now applying for costs of £20 for every 15 minutes that a non-payer appears in court, in an effort to stop people challenging liability orders.

Nottingham's Labour council is acting just the same as neighbouring Tory councils.

Notts County Council has just announced a one per cent cut in all budgets — and some are quick to blame the cuts on non-payers. The first cuts are to be the closures of 13 old people's homes. How much use is the "dented shield" to old people thrown on to the streets?

Nottingham Trades Council, along with NUPE and NALGO, has launched a campaign against the cuts.

# Ten reasons why students should support Socialist Organiser

By Richard Love (MANUS convenor, personal capacity)

**1** If you are sat reading this copy of Socialist Organiser on a coach heading for the 24 October student anti-poll-tax demonstration, it is worth knowing who organised the march: Mike Fenwick.

Mike is convenor of West Yorkshire Area of the National Union of Students. He contributes to and sells *Socialist Organiser*.

Every year for the last five years people associated with *Socialist Organiser* have been central to the organisation of the first student demonstration of the academic year. Last year 10,000 marched to oppose loans in Manchester.

We have helped fill a gap which national NUS has always (deliberately) left at the start of the first term.

The right-wing Labour 'leaders' of NUS know the value of starting the year with a big demonstration: if the new first year students see their local student union taking part in a militant demonstration in the first weeks of the first term they will be more likely to get permanently involved in their union. But that is why they never organise demonstrations at the start of the year.

*Socialist Organiser* argues for building strong, active student unions — and the paper and its supporters play a big role in doing that.

**2** A number of people associated with *Socialist Organiser* are NUS Area Convenors. One of their particular concerns, encouraged by the paper, is to build student unions in Further Education colleges.

The NUS right-wing are aware of the danger FE youth pose to their passivity, and jobs, and they oppose, wherever they can, policies to draw the FE sector into action. For instance they recently opposed opening the doors of NUS to sixth form students — "too expensive".

*Socialist Organiser's* policy is to work for a united and powerful student movement. It mirrors our strategy for the labour movement. We have no interests separate from and opposed to the mass movement.

**3** Some political currents — like the Labour right — have their activists occupying only the 'top' positions in NUS: the National Executive and sabbatical posts in the university student unions.

Such people are terrified of mass action and mobilisations of the rank and file. They want a peaceful time 'at the top' before they go on to £20,000 a year jobs.

Their mirror-image opponents — *Socialist Worker* — advocate rank and file action "to stuff the Tories". That is fine, as far as it goes.

But it does not go far enough: rank and file action from student activists must be tied to a strategy to transform the student movement. Old, right-wing leaders must be replaced by people willing to lead a fight; the union must develop policies that are capable of winning.

Just as it mattered to the miners' union that Arthur Scargill (rather than Eric Hammond) led the NUM during the '84-'85 strike, it matters



Chinese students fought for liberty against bureaucratic tyranny in 1989

to the student movement that a *Socialist Organiser* supporter, Emma Colyer, is National Secretary rather than a right-winger.

It matters to the women's campaign and the FE sector that Janine Booth is NUS Women's Officer and Steve Mitchell is Vice President Further Education — they are *SO* supporters too.

Together with other currents the paper has been central to developing most of NUS's domestic policy. Policies developed in the columns of *Socialist Organiser* on the Poll Tax and loans, for example, were passed at the Winter 1989 Conference.

Those policies have been ignored by the NUS right-wing. They have been fought for by Left Unity, an activist organisation which *Socialist Organiser* supports and promotes. Left Unity fights (as its name suggests) for a non-sectarian NUS left.

**4** *Socialist Organiser* has always argued for activists to orient to the Labour Party.

We aim to help the left in the student unions and trade unions to get their organisations into fighting shape. But the paper argues not only for the defence of workers' and students' living standards but for the working class and its allies to take the positive step of replacing capitalism with its own democratic rule.

The 'positive step', the decision to fight for socialism will not be imposed on the working class. The workers' movement will learn through the logic of struggle.

Even a right wing Labour Party is still, clearly, the political wing of the mass labour movement: the fight for socialism must develop through a fight to win our movement to socialist policies.

*SO* also promotes and publicises the moves by 'Labour Party Socialists' to organise the Labour student left. LPS is fighting to stop the domination of the National Organisation of Labour Students by the Labour right, and for students to get active in the Labour Party and to vote Labour.

## LSE students demonstrate against Tebbit

By Jenni Bailey

**B**etween two and three hundred students at the LSE demonstrated their objection to Norman Tebbit when he came to address the Conservative Student Association at the LSE last week.

As the Conservative students cheered and clapped, Tebbit repeated snide comments about black and Asian people in Britain 'failing the cricket test'. Many more students were incensed at the racist and purposely provocative comments.

As he was leaving Tebbit's car was attacked by anti-racist campaigners from the student union.

Clearly Tebbit has the right to address the rabble at the CSA meeting but equally the students he offends have the right to picket and protest at his obviously racist — and clearly silly! — points of view.

Anyone who enjoys cricket, wherever they originate, and

understands the game, couldn't fail to admire the quality game often played by Pakistan, India and the West Indies.

Of course Tebbit's comments have nothing to do with cricket and plenty to do with whipping up nationalist support and inciting racism against the black and Asian communities in Britain.

The Tories have been responsible for some of the worst racist immigration controls. Deportations have increased drastically over the last decade and the number of racist attacks are growing.

NUS London is running an anti-racist anti-fascist campaign this year and will be targeting the FE sector with an Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist roadshow week beginning the 11th November.

The idea is to raise the issue of anti-racism and anti-fascism campaigning and to draw new activists into the work.

Clearly, it is not just the crude and foul ideas of the NF or BNP that we have to confront. It is also the 'jolly good fun' sort of racism that we see from Tebbit and his ilk. It is no more acceptable.

**5** *Socialist Organiser* is not a sectarian paper. Yes, it is often polemical or forceful about putting ideas across!

But our aim is always the development of the movement as a whole.

**6** What is *SO* controversial and polemical about? What is special about its politics?

We believe that socialism comes from below; socialism comes from workers, acting in their own interests.

Many groups see liberation given to workers by the action of the Russian army, the Labour government or a 'socialist' group standing way above the class.

We stand for the liberation of the working class by its own efforts and for a renewal of socialism and socialist ideas. In other words, *SO* is a Trotskyist paper.

**7** When the Soviet tanks rolled into Afghanistan in 1979,

*Socialist Organiser* was one of the very few Trotskyist papers in the world which demanded a Soviet withdrawal.

On issues such as Ireland, the Middle East and the USSR our editorial line is completely different to the rest of the left. And the range of our debate on such issues, too, is much wider.

Which other left paper has open debate? Which other left paper has actively sought to develop Marxist ideas in the late 20th century?

The unfortunate fact is that papers like *Militant* and the *Socialist Worker* are content to mix a common anti-Toryism with low-level politics that have remained unexamined for years.

**8** As the great Polish-German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg put it: democracy is always for the other person, for the one who disagrees.

We believe that socialism needs democracy. Stalinism was and is not any form of socialism, but an alternative form of class exploitation. We are for free speech, free association, and consistent democracy in relations between na-

tions and communities.

When *Militant* supports the Rumanian government crushing peaceful demonstrators, or *Socialist Action* claims that East Europe's democratic revolutions last year were "the biggest defeat for the working class since World War II" — we should call their politics by their proper name: *degenerate*.

Such ideas are Stalinist not Marxist. We stand for workers' liberty.

**9** Oppression by nation, race or gender is linked to, but not identical with, class oppression.

For instance, capitalists benefit from women's domestic labour, working class men also benefit marginally from the subordination of women.

How do we begin to tackle all the suffering in the world, all the world's oppression and misery?

*Socialist Organiser* argues that one of the main lessons of history is how complementary and interlinked the struggle of workers and other oppressed groups can be. For instance, during the British miners' strike, Women Against Pit Closures helped the male workers struggle but also furthered the cause of women's liberation by demanding women's equality. Their battle proved that men's sexist ideas could be successfully challenged.

*Socialist Organiser* is for a workers' revolution which is also a 'carnival' of all the oppressed — a liberation of all the oppressed.

**10** The bottom line is this: we live in a stinking, unequal, unfair world. It is a world which needs utterly remaking in the interests of working people.

That will take a revolution against all the entrenched power of the capitalists and Eastern bureaucrats. They have many weapons at their disposal: an army, police force, prisons and judges — a whole system is moulded by their interests and wishes.

The British capitalists also have a stable and reasonably plausible set of ideas rooted in their system. They say they are the champions of democracy and that the system is basically fair.

Activists need a socialist paper to expose, analyse and cut against their ideas. And the paper needs activists. Read, sell, contribute to, support *Socialist Organiser*!



Remember the barbarity of the Khmer Rouge!

British involvement in Cambodia

# Deceit and lethal games

By Neil Cobbett

While the British government plays out its diplomatic charades at the UN over the future of Cambodia, disturbing information is coming to light — largely via John Pilger's 'Cambodia — the betrayal' TV documentary and the newspaper discussion it has started up — of Britain continuing, underhanded, undercover, support in practice for the barbarous Khmer Rouge. (KR).

According to Pilger,

Douglas Hurd's assurance in the Common's debate last November that Britain never had and never would give support to the KR was deliberately misleading.

Britain, of course, openly supported the KR as Cambodia's rep at the UN from 1979 to 1982 and has never voted against the KR at the UN.

More recently Hurd and the British government have supported the idea of a 'coalition' government involving the current Phnom Penh government of Hun Sen with the dubious 'coalition' dominated by the KR. This is justified as being a way to contain the KR — who would have the armed power!

In fact, it offers them a lifeline to return to power,

with all that may entail for the Cambodians.

But more. Pilger plausibly asserts that apart from diplomatic support there is also direct British military support for the KR. When Hurd made his November '89 Common's speech denying British Government support for the KR, he knew that SAS troops had been operating on the Thai/Cambodian border since 1985, to help bring down the Vietnam-backed Hun Sen government.

This SAS presence had been noted by *Jane's Defence Weekly*, an authoritative source of military information. On November 14 1989, Foreign Office Minister, William Waldegrave had implicitly admitted the SAS involvement.

The problem for the Tory government since then has been how to 'manage' the situation after having been caught lying.

They have done it by throwing out a smokescreen of smears and innuendoes. Both Douglas Hurd and Derek Tonkin (former British ambassador to Thailand during the period of British military support for the KR) have published replies to Pilger in the *Independent*.

Hurd and Tonkin claim that Pilger's evidence is thin, flimsy or 'directly from the world of fantasy'. They ignore the fact that much of the evidence for the SAS's presence with the KR comes from officials of the Ministry of Defence and senior officers of the SAS who, although not directly involved are, Pilger claims, speaking on behalf of colleagues who are.

Pilger quotes "a senior SAS officer" thus: "We hate being mixed up with Pol Pot... we are soldiers, not child murderers".

In his reply to the programme, Hurd also tries to smear Pilger as a sometime apologist for Pol Pot. He does it, ridiculously, by linking Pilger with Noam Chomsky. Stalinist tactics in fact! But then the Stalinists learned most of their tricks from the bourgeoisie.

Pilger replies by citing Hurd's evasions and unwillingness to appear on the Cambodia programme to debate the evidence against the government he pretends to consider so 'flimsy'.

Pilger can name the M16 Bangkok station chief who directed Britain's operations in Cambodian involvement. He was removed following the November '89 Commons debate. Let Pilger have the final word: "(I) have reported Cambodia's nightmare for many years; and we believe that the British people understand and care a great deal about the issues and deserve more, much more than deceit and lethal games played by their representatives with the future of a nation that has suffered so much".



Letter from Melbourne

## Australian telecom workers face repeat of Mercury battle

Australian telecom unions face a repeat of the battle that British telecom unions faced over the introduction of Mercury as a private competitor to British Telecom — only the government making the moves to privatise is Labor, not Tory.

Richard Lane reports

The Labor Cabinet has pushed the 'Beazley option' through the 24 September special Conference of the Australian Labor Party. After a fairly tame debate, the vote was 58-43.

The proposal is for a regulated duopoly. AUSSAT (the domestic satellite telecom business, \$1 billion in debt) will be sold to a consortium (probably foreign) which will compete across the board with Telecom. Telecom and OTC (the international business) are to be merged.

Union officials had threatened to refuse to interconnect the competitor, but are now unsure of the timing of any campaign.

As a telecom trade unionist, I think an immediate, escalating campaign would have the best chance. We need to 'strike while the issue is hot'. Otherwise, our members and the public will tend to accept the decision as a fait accompli.

Others argue that we can refuse to build the equipment needed for interconnection (more than \$1 billion worth) instead of taking them on now, which will be a completely political action — a dispute with the government to change their decision.

A third possibility is to build the gear for interconnection and then refuse to connect. This is suicidal — once the gear is there and the competitor is up and running, the pressure to connect will be intolerable.

We risk 'death by a thousand cuts' as each bit of equipment comes on line.

The financial debacles continue apace. The Victoria State Bank has a merchant bank subsidiary, Tricontinental, with \$2.7 billion of bad debts — 60% of its loan book!

So, it has been agreed to sell it to the federally owned Commonwealth Bank, and to sell 30% of that to private investors.

Interest rates are still ruinous — 16% on a home loan, wheat and wool markets are diabolical, unemployment has grown 65,000 in five months.

With high oil prices acting as a trigger for an international recession, Australia looks in terrible shape.

The ALP is polling 30%.

Liberals, Nationals 47%, Democrats 13% and 'other' (largely Greens) 10%. If this is reflected in an election, Labor would be slaughtered.

The left here has mobilised against the imperialist military build-up in the Gulf, and Australia's part in it.

Unfortunately, some groups have tied their anti-imperialist position to a pro-Saddam position.

The ISO (Australian sister group of the British Socialist Workers' Party) had a pretty bad Arab-Nationalist article recently — calling on Iraq to 'break the blockade, attack Israel and arouse the Arab masses against imperialism'!

I got a letter published in their paper which pointed out that:

"Saddam's troops have already shipped 10,000 Iraqi dissidents from Kuwait to Baghdad to face torture and death. Anti-imperialist and Arab nationalist rhetoric is used as a cover for Iraqi expansionism.

Armed by the West and the USSR as a counter-weight to Iran. Saddam has fallen out with his one-time backers. Iraq wants to be a fully-fledged regional power. So the present conflict between US (and other) imperialism and the ambitious Iraqi sub-imperialism is a quarrel among thieves.

To say that "Indeed, we actively want Iraq to break the blockade, attack Israel and arouse the Arab masses against imperialism and their own rulers" has nothing to do with the 'independent working class stand' of which the ISO has been so proud.

It is a 'two-campist' analysis where the world is seen as two simple blocs — the imperialist and the anti-imperialist — and the working class is ignored. Rather than Marxism it reminds me of crude Stalinist approach or the lunatic anti-semitic ravings of the SLL" (Australian offshoot of Gerry Healy's WRP).

The Democratic Socialist Party (an ex-Trotskyist group, now Gorbachevite) organised a 'Socialist Scholar Conference' at the end of September. Well over 1,000 attended, so it was pretty successful.

They had Robin Blackburn, Ralph Miliband, Elizabeth Wilson, Giovanni Arrighi, Frigga Haug and a Russian economist among their international speakers.

The DSP didn't want any real debate, and tended to slow handclap Trotskyists whenever they got up to oppose the speakers — who were saying things like "Stalinism is part of the family of Marxism" or "we need to have good look at Kautsky", and showing more fear and worry than joy about the fall of Stalinism in Eastern Europe.

I sold a lot of copies of *Workers' Liberty* and intervened in some debates.

# Hungary: workers revive labour movement

By Michael Laslett

Change is sweeping through the labour movement in Hungary, as it is throughout Eastern Europe. New trade unions and workers councils, independent of the old, formerly state-controlled Hungarian union federation, have sprung up. Even the old Hungarian unions are attempting to regain credibility among the workers they sold out for 45 years.

When the Communist Party was swept from power earlier this year, the former official trade union federation, the National Association of Hungarian Workers (MSZOSZ), lost its access to the inner sanctums of government. To save itself from extinction, MSZOSZ has begun taking tentative steps toward acting like a real union. Last December, for instance, MSZOSZ supported a strike of railroad workers over wage demands, excessive overtime, and poor safety conditions.

Because of past legislation requiring membership in the official trade unions as a condition of employment, MSZOSZ still represents 60% of Hungary's five million workers.

The largest workers' organisation in Hungary other than MSZOSZ is the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (FSZDL). It was founded in December, 1988, as the coordinating body of five predominately white-collar unions, and last year received \$50,000 from the US Free Trade Union Institute.

FSZDL supports the transition to a free market economy. It argues that privatisation is the only way to revive the Hungarian economy and improve Hungarian workers' standard of living. Because of its desire for a free enterprise system and its friendliness with the new government, FSZDL downplays economic demands which conflict with the privatisation process. Rather, it argues for worker participation in decisions about privatisation.

FSZDL includes over 40 unions. It claims to have over 80,000 members, more than two-thirds of whom, it says, are blue-collar.

According to official government statistics, unemployment in

Hungary has jumped from 5,000 in 1988 to 30,000 so far in 1990. Inflation is about 30%. Even these figures probably drastically understate the growing unemployment problem.

When asked about the accelerating impoverishment of Hungarian workers, due in large part to the introduction of free market mechanisms and the lifting of state subsidies, FSZDL representatives speak optimistically of the "transitory" nature of these difficulties. They believe that Hungary will make the transition to a free market economy within five years, and that private business will eventually employ all workers laid off by state-run enterprises.

FSZDL is not the only new labour organisation in Hungary. In January 1989 the Hungarian Workers Solidarity Union was founded, naming itself after Polish Solidarity. Hungarian Solidarity represents about 3,000 skilled workers, claiming to be the union of "intelligent workers and working intelligentsia." Only 10% of its membership is blue-collar. It sees itself as carrying on independent labour traditions which were stifled in 1945. Solidarity also supports a market economy, convinced that skilled Hungarian labour deserves western-level wages.

The only new workers' organisations which have an industrial base are the emerging workers' councils. These councils have sprung up in response to worsening conditions and accelerating lay-offs.

For instance, workers at a large foundry near the north-eastern city of Ozd have formed a council and are fighting MSZOSZ to be recognised as the legitimate voice of the workers.

Many workers' councils have a different concept of workers' power from the FSZDL model of government lobbying and collective bargaining — they demand rank-and-file control over the enterprise. Some of the council leaders are veterans of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising which was crushed by Russian tanks, and many workers feel more comfortable with the concept of a workers' council, reacting against the badly tarnished reputation of unions. The number of workers active in these councils is unknown, but they have organised two nation-wide co-ordinating meetings so far.

(Reprinted from 'Labor Notes')



Workers' councils briefly took power in Budapest in 1956. Now they are emerging again.



A Kurdish village razed by Iraq, 1988

**The Kurds are one of the biggest oppressed nations on earth: over 25 million people, occupying an area about as big as France, divided between Turkey (14 million Kurds), Syria (one million), the USSR (a few), Iran (8 million) and Iraq (4 million). Michel Morel reviews the attitudes of five Kurdish nationalist parties to the Gulf crisis.**

"No-one can want a war now", says Ahmad, of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan in Iraq, "because there will be thousands of civilian deaths.

"But can Saddam be dealt with without war? If so, no-one is against it, but personally I don't believe it. Sanctions will not budge the dictator.

"We are ready to collaborate with the devil to get rid of Saddam".

In Iraqi Kurdistan there is nothing left. Thousands of villages have been razed; one and a half million Kurds live in camps surrounded by police. No people, says Ahmad, except perhaps the Jewish people, has suffered as much as the Kurdish people. There is no family that has not had at least two children tortured or killed.

"The invasion of Kuwait is an opportunity for the Kurdish people. Once Saddam Hussein is overthrown, all possibilities are open".

"Saddam Hussein will be even more dangerous in five years' time if he is allowed to get away with it", says Bayar, a representative of the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan.

"The DPK is a peaceful party which situates itself between socialism and communism, but we defend the rights of the Kurdish

# What the

people; we have not chosen to take up arms, but we have been forced to".

"There are only two ways to get rid of Saddam Hussein. Overthrow the regime from within, or deal with the problem by military intervention. The second possibility cannot be rejected".

But Bayar is against the permanent presence of foreign troops in the region, and says he has no illusions about the imperialist powers. The Kurdish people are in the front line of the victims of imperialism.

A real wall — no better than the one which came down last year in Berlin — separates the Kurds of Iraq and of Turkey.

There are thirty kilometres of no man's land, where the villages have been razed, the trees chopped down, and the sources of water blocked up. Troops have orders to shoot anything that moves.

Azad Hoguir, an official of the National Liberation Front of Turkish Kurdistan, condemns Saddam's expansionism and the invasion of Kuwait. But he believes the imperialists are using that as an excuse, and their intervention has nothing to do with enforcing international law.

"When Baghdad showered Kurdistan with chemical weapons in recent years, there was no protest. And the problems of the region will not be resolved now by military intervention. On that level, the policy of the imperialists will be no better than that of the Iraqi regime".

Only the progressive forces of the region can contribute to resolving the Palestinian question, the Lebanese dilemma, or the Kurdish problem, says Azad Hoguir. Unfortunately they are too weak, and do not offer an alternative to the existing governments.

Consequently the mass protest movements in Jordan, in Egypt, in Syria and in Palestine against the foreign troops in the Gulf in fact fall in with the policy of Saddam Hussein. "Nevertheless they do express a legitimate anti-imperialist sentiment, and they must be supported".

The occupation of Kuwait may create favourable opportunities for the struggle of the Kurdish people. If Saddam falls, for example, the intifada in Turkish Kurdistan led by the militants of the National Liberation Front can be supported by the Kurds of Iraq.

In Turkey, the Front supports the movement against military intervention, in the same way as it supports and participates in the demonstrations organised in Europe. "The Turkish state is preparing for war. It is going to take advantage of the landing of the Western armies to strengthen its links with the West, to get new credits, and to justify its own fascist-state policy in Kurdistan".

In April, there were decrees censoring the press and banning strikes. About two hundred and fifty villages have been destroyed, burned down; fighters, men, women, and children have been assassinated, and the people of the area deported.

On 23 August, Turkey sent a letter to the Council of Europe saying that these decrees "could entail derogation from the obligations of the European Convention of Human Rights" since Turkey was at war in "south-eastern Anatolia". The word Kurdistan is banned.

The Ankara dictatorship uses the same methods against the Kurdish people as Saddam Hussein, against whom it sends its troops alongside the imperialist armies. It still covers the Mosul region, in Iraqi Kurdistan, with its oilfields yielding





# Kurds think

top-quality oil.

According to Abdullah, an official of the Kurdish Workers' Association in France, there is no justification for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

"Saddam Hussein must be forced to withdraw from Kuwait by economic sanctions. Otherwise his regime will be strengthened. But as far as I know, the UN has not approved the sending of troops to the region. The US jumped the gun".

He stresses the hypocrisy of the Western countries which financed and armed Saddam's regime for years, and supported it in its war against Iran. With torture and hangings, Saddam Hussein has brutally crushed all the democratic forces in Iraq. Against the Kurdish people he uses war, genocide, destruction of villages, and deportations.

"You can neither be on his side, nor support the policy of the United States". Abdullah favours negotiations to resolve the conflicts in the region, for armed confrontation has never solved anything.



Saddam Hussein

However, those who talk about negotiated solutions completely ignore the Kurdish question — including the UN, "which is, after all, surprising", since it advocates the right of peoples to self-determination".

The Kurds of Iran have waged war against the Teheran government for ten years now.

Five thousand peshmergas [guerrilla fighters] have died in the struggle, and 50,000 civilians have been killed. Iranian Kurdistan is the last bastion of liberty in the Islamic Republic. But the media puts up a wall of silence.

"The European public has not had the right to know about the struggle of the Kurdish people", says Azad, an official of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan.

"In principle, we are against any annexation, but look, how can the world mobilise for an emir's family?"

"If they really wanted to defend human rights, there are 25 million Kurds, and we are the prime victims of Saddam's policies. The current rapprochement between Iran and Iraq worries us.

"The West is making a huge mistake". Its hatred for Iraq is leading it to normalise relations with Iran. It will thus allow the Teheran regime to do what it likes against the Kurds. "The West is willing to forget all the regime's crimes, the political prisoners, the massacred oppositionists".

Maybe Teheran will fight Saddam. But it is, says Azad, the worst regime in the region — even worse today than it was ten years ago.

The massive build-up of Western troops "is a very dangerous game. All the peoples of the region will

pay the price. War will signify the absolute ruin of Iraq".

And getting rid of Saddam is not the answer. "It is personalising a political problem which will not be removed by getting rid of the individual. And we cannot even imagine the consequences which would result from a concerted attack against the Islamic Republic of Iran. After such a war, Muslim fundamentalism would grow everywhere, like mushrooms, in the ruins".

The KDPI has not participated in the recent peace demonstrations. "For us, condemnation of the war must be linked to the solution of the Kurdish question. If the demonstrations pose the question of international negotiations to resolve the problems of the Gulf, then we will support them".

This survey shows that there is not one uniform Kurdish response to the Gulf crisis, but different strategies and tactics coming from different countries and different parties.

The two main Iraqi organisations are the only ones not to rule out supporting a war. Their long confrontation with butcher Saddam's regime probably explains this attitude.

We pointed out to them that they underestimated two inevitable consequences of war. Its repercussions in the region are completely incalculable, and there is every chance that the Kurds will pay the same price, physically and politically, as other peoples of the Middle East.

And all the more so because the Turkish state, which contributes to the armada against Saddam Hussein — and Iran too — will come out of it strengthened, and their policies of bloody repression of the Kurdish people will be strengthened as well.

The conversations should in any case convince us of one thing: in Europe, our mobilisation against the war must also declare and support the right to existence of the Kurdish people, a people against whom all the states involved in the crisis are in league.

Abridged and translated from the French socialist weekly Rouge.

# Islamic reaction in Algeria

By Liz Philipson

In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front has recently swept the board in local government elections. We were there during the elections and just before.

The support for the Islamic Salvation Front was quite widespread — mainly, as far as I could see, from the young, from the middle classes, from people generally in the north and in the cities. At the universities, the bookshops were full of Islamic books. Those staying with the National Liberation Front (which has ruled a one-party state since independence in 1962) seemed to be mainly the old, and people in the desert areas of the south.

We were not able to talk to any women separately about their political views. When we asked women about politics, they deferred immediately to the men.

The growing support for the Islamic Salvation Front seems to go hand in hand with more people going to the mosque. Two young men we spoke to told us about an Islamic Salvation Front election meeting in their town square. It was a huge, crowded meeting. They both told us that at the end of the meeting people had seen Allah written in the sky. One of them said he had seen it himself, the other was a bit more sceptical.

The Islamic Salvation Front supporters we spoke to did not seem to see Iran, or anywhere else as a model. Much more they were saying, "We'll find our own way with Allah's help".

They felt shut out from everything else. Socialism — or what they've been told was socialism — has given them nothing. They call the National Liberation Front bureaucrats, the fat cats. One of the ISF supporters we spoke to lives in a household where eight adults and five children share three small rooms. That's not unusual in Algeria. He showed us

huge, beautiful villas on the hill overlooking the town, and told us: "Those are what the government people have as their second homes. That's socialism in Algeria".

A lot of inequality is visible in the cities, though there aren't the beggars on the streets you see in Morocco or Egypt. Many areas are very poor, but in Algiers particularly you can also see a lot of money around. I saw women in Algiers wearing expensive, French-cut suits going down to the floor — not traditional clothing, but a sort of modern version of fundamentalist clothing.

In the casbah there are shops with hardly anything in them, but not far from there is a whole street of jewellery shops.

But the revolution against the French is still very alive, even for young people. And they see it as rejecting capitalism. People also talked about Fortress Europe and 1992. They feel shut out of everything, and that's why they see Islam as the only way forward.

The Islamic reaction seems to be stronger and more bitter in Algiers than elsewhere. In Algiers I was refused admittance to hotels, presumably because I was an infidel woman. All the women disappeared at night, and trying to find something to eat was really difficult. I have rarely encountered so much antagonism. Even though I was with a man, when we walked into any cafe there was a wave of hostility. It was horrible.

Outside Algiers, even in other cities, we had no trouble, and we were greeted with traditional Arab hospitality, invited into people's homes. And in the desert, people were not particularly concerned about the election. They have not been much touched by Algeria's failed attempt at industrialisation and by the population explosion in the north.

But in Algiers and the north, the failure of the National Liberation Front's attempt at 'socialism' and at industrialisation is bringing a very bitter reaction.



Celebrating independence — Algiers, 3 July 1962

# Israel and the politics of the last atrocity

## AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



There is a well-known expression in Irish politics for the swings of public opinion which follow the latest horrible deed of the British Army, the Protestant paramilitaries, or the Provisional IRA — “the politics of the last atrocity”.

It means reacting with raw natural feeling to the immediate impact of an event, and forgetting about the overall picture.

In response to the terrible slaughter in Jerusalem by Israeli police of Palestinian demonstrators armed only with stones, the feelings of socialists, or even decent liberals, will line them up with the Palestinians. And it really doesn't matter if the organisers of the ugly Palestinian assault on Jews at prayer did it deliberately to create a “diversion” on behalf of Saddam Hussein, which is what the Israeli government claims.

The Palestinians are entitled to use what allies they can find. (The *wisdom* of allying with Saddam Hussein is another matter). They are entitled even to use suicide tactics if it will further their people's liberation.

The Israeli government doesn't seem to realise what a picture it paints of itself and its policies when it accuses gunless demonstrators of deliberately “provoking” the Israeli police to shoot them down.

It matters, but not fundamentally, that those shot down were part of a murderous mob lobbing stones at praying Jews: Jerusalem is in the grip of an ongoing rivalry between ultra-religious fanatics of Islam and Judaism, and the Jews seem to be the aggressors. The Palestinians, now, are the victims,



Temple Mount

and we side with them.

But when all that is said, raw feeling is not enough. As if to prove that the politics of the last atrocity are not enough, came last Sunday's (21st) rampage in Jerusalem by a 19 year old Palestinian shouting “Allah Akhbar” (“God is great”) and wielding a bayonet with which he killed three people and wounded others, including a 13 year old boy. He was seemingly one of the growing current of Muslim fundamentalists, Islamic Jihad, the bearers of a “holy war” to make Islam dominant in the whole area, including Israel.

One of those bayoneted to death was an armed Israeli policeman who shot the Palestinian in both legs and might have killed him had he disregarded orders not to shoot to kill.

Such an act, by a half-crazed member of a beaten and oppressed people, is not the strict equivalent of what the Israeli police did at Temple Mount. It does show up the awful background.

There are vast numbers of Palestinians who have sympathy with such actions. The Israelis pursue a policy of savage retribution which is as indefensible as it is counter-productive. In Palestine the Jewish and Arab peoples have related to each other like that

for many decades. The first large-scale violence between Jews and Arabs was sparked by clashes very like the recent clashes at Temple Mount, 71 years ago.

The notion that these two peoples can immediately solve their conflict by agreeing to live as common citizens in a “secular democratic state” is bizarre. Yet it is still probably the most common view on the left.

It is just not possible! For the left, the idea functions as a framework which allows support to be given to Arab chauvinists and Muslim bigots committed to the destruction of Israel: it is Israel's intransigence, so the reasoning goes, which stops such a united and harmonious secular democratic state coming into being, and so it is just that Israel should be destroyed.

Events like last weekend's killings prove that it is not just Israel that makes the “secular democratic state” inconceivable. The Palestinian Arabs do not support Saddam Hussein hoping that he will win and impose equal citizenship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine!

The Israelis, like the Palestinians, have a right to their own state. It will be a tragedy if the Temple Mount massacre — via the “politics of the last atrocity” — reinforces the widespread, though not always explicitly

formulated, belief on the left that we should support the destruction of Israel.

The politics of the last atrocity blind the left to the real lesson for Israel of what is happening in the Middle East now.

War, as Lenin said long ago, strips away peacetime frauds and pretences, revealing things and people for what they really are. The mere preparation for war in the Gulf has done that in the case of Israel. The left which for decades has both demonised Israel and seen it as no more than a tool of Western imperialism should look at what's going on and learn from it.

Now it is no longer only the honest left-wing supporters of the Palestinian Arabs, and the long-time left-wing critics of Israel's remorseless savagery towards them, who denounce Israel. The mainstream press, and even mainstream bourgeois politicians, now do much the same.

For these long-time supporters of Israel, everything is now subordinate to the needs of keeping their Arab allies against Iraq in line. Everything is subordinate to the looming war for cheap oil.

The killing of the 21 Palestinians at Temple Mount threatens that alliance by making things difficult at home for America's “moderate” Arab allies. And it is a godsend for Saddam Hussein.

Those who haven't done anything in decades for the Palestinian Arabs get busy spouting indignation, and their press starts churning out atrocity propaganda against Israel. Are they outraged by the killing on Temple Mount? Like hell they are! America's new ally Syria presided over the routine butchering of a few hundred people in Lebanon, the week before last. Nobody noticed. They are concerned with politics, not the “politics of the last atrocity”.

How does this all fit into the dominant left-wing picture of Israel as the irreplaceable tool of the Western imperialist bloc?

Imperialism does not “depend” on Israel — it has Arab allies. It secures its interests through its Arab allies, from the Gulf and Saudi feudalists to the Egyptian bourgeoisie. Israel is now a liability, not a reliable ally.

Thus the hypocritical and orchestrated outcry about the 21 dead from people whose real concern is to smooth their way to the tens and hundreds of thousands of dead at the end of the war they work towards.

On the other side of the relationship, Israel has understandable fears that the US is now arming its future opponents, Saudi Arabia for example. For the basic relation of forces puts the right to exist of Israel — surrounded by vastly larger hostile Arab and Islamic states — under threat.

The left should resist the “politics of the last atrocity”. The left should face the fact that its politics on this question amount to demonising Israel as a “bad nation” and taking sides with Arab revanchists and even Islamic chauvinists.

The solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict is to advocate self-determination for both peoples — the withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank and Gaza and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Two nations, two states! Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza!

## Who pays for their party?

Is the Tory Party bought and paid for? That was the question raised by the recent Panorama study ‘Who pays for the party?’

Of course there is no public auction. Nobody says “We have a life peerage for sale today. Can we start at £30,000 please?” But there is remarkable trade all the same.

One of the Prime Minister's first actions in 1979 was to announce she was restoring the system of political honours. Since then she has clocked up the fastest honours rate of any Prime Minister since Lloyd George, who was also as bent as a nine bob note.

By 1988 eleven industrialists were elevated to the House of Lords and 82 given knighthoods.

The companies of these men contributed almost £8 million to Tory Party coffers. Three quarters of the industrialists honoured by Thatcher were directors of companies that made hefty contributions. So arise, Sir Paul Girolami, chairman of Glaxo Holdings, and thank you again for the £255,000 you have donated to the cause since 1979. It really does work as crudely as that.

Of the top 110 companies of the last decade, 50% donated to the Tory Party and 50% did not. Directors from the half that did donate got two thirds of the honours.

And of course those who render their services in other ways are not forgotten either. So arise Sir Larry Lamb (Sun), Sir John Junor (Sunday Express), Sir David English (Daily Mail) and so on.

Of course there are other forms of currency besides peerages. The donating company or individual can expect a healthy return on their investment — for that is what it is — in other ways.

It was alleged by the Panorama



## THE POLITICAL FRONT

Alan Johnson

programme that the brewing industry used its financial leverage over the Tory Party to block legislation. The industry gives £120,000 per year. The biggest donor is the Allied Lyons group which alone this year gave £90,000.

In 1989 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommended that the monopoly of the top six brews be broken up, that they be limited to owning only 2,000 pubs and that independent and real ales should be allowed into pubs more easily. Lord Young declared his support and said the proposals would “set the pub free”. But then, in the words of Allied Lyons Chairman, Sir (of course) Derrick Holden-Brown: “We made strong representations and the DTI listened to our arguments”.

They did indeed. When the government published its proposals it had more or less caved in to the brewers, who denied their threat to reduce or delay donations had any bearing on the decision. In Parliament Bryan Gould attacked “A government bought and sold by its major financial backers”.

Not only favours are for sale to the wealthy in return for cash. The register of ‘extra parliamentary activity’ shows that many MPs are too. In 1986 a survey by Labour Research showed:

- one in three non-government MPs were directors, with over half of all Conservative MPs now on company boards;

- one in four of all MPs and two-fifths of Conservative MPs are consultants for commercial organisations.

- 31 MPs — all but one Conservative — are directors or consultants to PR/Lobby firms.

Ministers have to wait until they give up their portfolios and Daimlers before taking up directorships. Thus they do it with a vengeance, usually with the very companies they have just privatised while in office — Tebbit and Telecom, Young and Cable and Wireless etc.

As Gordon Brown expressed it, this is indeed the government's very own Restart scheme for ministers — ‘Action for Jobs: Matching the Ministers without Companies to the Companies without Ministers’.

There is a revolving door between government and boardroom. Through it pass MPs, civil servants, favoured businessmen, political advisors. And as they do, say many people, the horse trading goes on. Peerages for cash. Amendments dropped or reinstated. Confidential information from a Select Committee. Directorships. Consultancies. Retainers. Palms are greased and mutual favours exchanged. Arthur Daley, I think, would use the expression ‘nice little earner’.

No doubt the Select Committee on members' interests is working hard to clean the MPs act up. More power to its chairman, I say, Sir Geoffrey John Smith. I'm sure he is right on top of the matter... when he isn't pursuing his interests in London Weekend Television (Holdings) Ltd, Brands Hatch Leisure plc, Tatlor Laden Ltd, Glengate Holdings Ltd, MDA (Benelux) SA, Eagle Star Group, and Phillips Business Systems.

CANADA

# Canada's "Labour Party" wins Ontario

Last month the New Democratic Party, Canada's equivalent of the Labour Party, won the elections for the legislature in Canada's biggest province, Ontario, for the first time ever. This article by Barry Weisleder reports and comments from the viewpoint of a socialist active in the NDP.

The election of the first ever NDP provincial government in Ontario presents more than just parliamentary history in the making.

It opens a little wider the road to political action for hundreds of thousands of working people, women, natives, youth, visible minorities and other oppressed layers of the population.

But there can be no reliance on this government, formed by an arch-reformist party. Already NDP premier-elect Bob Rae has gone out of his way to issue abundant assurances to big business that they have nothing to fear from the new provincial administration.

Most business leaders understand this quite well, without being told; nonetheless, business will fight tooth and nail against every mild reformist initiative of the new government. They will seek to vilify and isolate the NDP, and hasten the return of their more reliable political representatives, their big business partners of first choice, the Liberals and the Conservatives.

And within the state apparatus, long-tenured and powerful mandarins, bureaucrats, jurists and police chiefs will apply the brakes and pull every lever to stymie and smother every attempt at minor reform.

How did the NDP victory come about, and what does it mean for labour, the social movements and left in Ontario?

The NDP victory was not the result of a mass radicalisation. But it does reflect the deep dissatisfaction of the working class with governments that have increased taxes, diminished social services and undermined job security.

Many people have noticed that "free" enterprise does not distribute opportunity, much less wealth — it merely concentrates both.

Then there's the resentment of arrogance and manipulation, triggered by the premature election call. It turned what was to be a droll summer exercise into a rather prickly political experience.

Moreover, the rejection of the Liberals, who were elected in 1985 as a minority government, and in 1987 with a majority — both times on the promise of sweeping reform — indicates a basic change in the political atmosphere. Today many workers are prepared to test political alternatives hitherto considered too "risky" because they are very familiar at, and distrustful of, the familiar politicians they have come to loathe.

And then there's the crisis of the federal state. When the Meech Lake Accord [over the status of Quebec in the Canadian federation] died, something snapped in the ideology of the ruling class. Since then the psychological shackles have been slipping badly across the country. This is especially apparent in the rise of Quebecois and aboriginal



Edmonton, Canada: Haida Indians demonstrate to reclaim land which they say was stolen from them by European settlers

people's struggles. Images of armed social and political polarisation. Quebecois nationalist sentiment at its peak ensure that the summer of 1990 will not soon be forgotten.

It is also a question of growing social and political polarisation. The recession is upon us. Thousands of jobs have been lost in industry. Capital is relatively mobile. Yet the majority of the population wants social justice and an interventionist government to bring it about.

On the far right, too, forces are gathering for the struggle ahead. In fact the NDP was only able to capture many constituencies because parties like the anti-French Confederation of Regions Party, the anti-abortion Family Coalition Party and the fanatically free enterprise Libertarian Party took tens of thousands of votes away from the Conservatives. The Green Party took far fewer votes away from the NDP, and generally trailed the far right parties. But the total vote of the minor parties surpassed 7% — triple their 1987 figure.

So what should the NDP do? Clearly, it should move to bolster its narrow base — and expand it — by taking bold and decisive actions in the interests of the working class and oppressed.

The NDP should seek to mobilise those who stand to gain by the reforms it has promised: increasing the minimum wage, improving welfare benefits, strengthening the rights of workers and their unions

(especially in terms of work place safety, injury compensation, and the scourge of strike-breaking), and putting a halt to land speculation and rent-gouging.

The NDP could rally hundreds of thousands to a campaign to make the corporate rich pay for major improvements in childcare, public housing, social services, education and environmental protection. The party would inspire and involve even more people by democratising the electoral and policy-making processes, by leading a mass campaign of protest and non-compliance with the [indirect] federal Goods and Services Tax, and by refusing to enforce any new federal anti-choice abortion law.

The NDP cannot succeed by being content to "rule from above", much less by abandoning its commitment to implement progressive and significant social change.

Yet... the day after his election Bob Rae reneged on his opposition to Toronto's bid to host the 1996 Olympics — which would have meant underwriting outgoing Premier Peterson's commitments to cover deficits in the billion dollar range, devouring funds projected for the expansion of social programmes.

The same day, Rae seemed to put in doubt the NDP's pledge to phase out the expansion of nuclear power. He also played down the bite that the promised new corporate tax would put on business.

This is a prescription for alienating the social and labour movement activists who helped the NDP catapult to victory on

September 6.

Later the world learned that instead of a much publicised \$23 million surplus, the Liberals bequeathed to the NDP a \$700 million deficit. This sets the stage, in the context of hard economic times ahead, for a confrontation between workers and the government.

The trade union leaders are already trying to head off any such confrontation by issuing "their" party a blank cheque for its first term in office.

Nonetheless, struggles will occur — outside the NDP, in the streets, on the campuses, in the plants and communities. It's already evident.

The industrial scene vividly demonstrates the restiveness of workers. More than 36,000 are now on strike at companies in the auto, steel, transportation and forest products sectors.

There will probably be struggles in the NDP itself. The party will attract many new members over the next couple of years. Some will join in order to feed at the governmental trough. Some will want to ride the popular bandwagon. Yet many will be inspired by visions of a socialist Ontario.

Even among the large new flock of NDP MPs, some 25 — one third of the total — have been active in the labour movement, and there are several left wing local movement activists who accepted nomination never expecting to be elected.

We may include in this latter group several of the 19 NDP

women MPs — a record high for female representation in the Ontario legislature. The NDP left will soon have a wider audience. Not just inside, but outside the party as well.

The commercial media will be only too happy to amplify internal as well as external criticism of the NDP government.

It is important that left critics couch their criticism of the NDP leadership in the framework of criticism of the capitalist system and the forces of big business and the growing right wing.

Nonetheless socialists must maintain a critical and independent stance while agitating for socialist policies and extra-parliamentary mass action inside the NDP.

In the period ahead there will be much better opportunities to build a class struggle current inside the NDP and the unions. Such a current, also drawing on leading activists from the other social movements, will furnish a broader basis for the revolutionary alternative to social democracy.

But those forces on the left which, on the one hand, abstain from the struggle to feed this alternative inside the NDP, or on the other hand, dissolve into the NDP without maintaining an independent socialist structure and programme, will both miss and weaken the greater possibilities that the new situation presents.

Abridged from *International Viewpoint* magazine.



## Cork City, 1920

*Those who do not learn the lessons of history are likely to repeat it*

In 1920 Ireland was at war with Britain. In the November 1918 election the people had given a majority to MPs who favoured Irish secession from the British state. In January 1919 they met in Dublin and declared Ireland a Republic.

But British officials, civil servants, police and soldiers still ruled the country, refusing to recognise the democratic government. Soon they tried to suppress it. The Irish fought back. War escalated. By 1920 Britain was losing control in the South, and had organised a special squad of licensed terrorists, the so-called 'Black and Tans'. They went around the country burning and shooting. It is sometimes forgotten how extensive was the damage they did. The photo above shows some of what they did when they burned down the entire centre of Cork City in retaliation for a British defeat in the countryside at the hands of the Army of the Irish Republic.

# So much blood

## TV

By Mick Ackersley

In appearance the strikingly handsome, haunted-looking woman might have been either an Israeli Jew or a Palestinian Arab.

In fact she was Israeli. One night Palestinian gunmen landed from the sea near the house where she lived with her husband and two small daughters.

Knowing they would be killed if they fell into the hands of the Palestinians, the family divided and hid, each parent taking one child.

The smaller went with the mother, too young to understand, but old enough to be terrified. The mother had to stifle the little girl's cries. They were not discovered.

The man and the older girl were captured, and taken down to the beach from which the raiders disembarked.

They shot the man cleanly through the head. Then — perhaps not considering her worth a bullet — they battered in the little girl's skull with repeated blows from the butt end of a revolver.

The other child died too. She was suffocated by her mother's desperate efforts to silence her and save both their lives. Only the poor woman with the haunted Israeli-Palestinian face was left.

The good things in *Terror* (Channel 4, Monday 16th: the first of a "three part analysis of modern terrorism") were all like that — stark and raw encounters with the human reality of terrorism, both its victims and its perpetrators.

A Palestinian nurse, jailed for leaving a bomb in a crowded cinema (it didn't go off) was proud of it — a blow in the struggle against "the Zionist enemy".

"I did not experience fear, delight, grief. How can I regret what I did when I see my people killed every day? Why do you call what we did terrorism?"

In this case Palestinian terrorism has been the desperate, dehumanised weapon of the utterly defeated

and crushed — of people slaughtered not only by the Israelis, but by the rulers of Jordan and Syria too. It has been the response of people treated with merciless savagery and indiscriminate terror by the Israeli state.

The prospects are not for things to get better: quite the opposite. "So much blood, a great river of blood", separates the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis, as the woman whose husband and daughters died put it.

The most chilling and repulsive people in the programme's memorable parade of victims and militants were the educated Jewish and Muslim religious bigots. Articulate, logical — from crazed premises — and coherent, they mirrored each other in their dogmatic religious certainties and their inhuman chauvinism. Their influence is growing on both sides.

The bad thing about "Terror" was its gross bias. The facts of Israel's treatment of the defeated Palestinians over decades add up to

a massive indictment of Israel. To put those facts in their proper historical context and geopolitical framework, and to avoid obvious distortion of the facts of history, is not to make the story less horrible. Those who want to indict Israel don't need to cheat. The makers of "Terror" did.

You wouldn't know from their account that in 1948 the Israelis were the victims of an armed Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian invasion to destroy their state and drive them out. A large sea of Arab animosity and desire to destroy Israel — that is the context of Israel's savagery.

Worse, when the educated religious bigots were on camera, the Jew went on about the claimed Talmudic authority for his brand of rabidly chauvinist politics, and that was allowed to stand as explanation for Israel's behaviour to the Palestinians — rooting it in the fundamentals of Jewish religion, and not in what recent history and the present danger has done to the Jews.

## A hidden massacre of revenge

### Books

Ron Vandy reviews "Other Losses: An investigation into the mass deaths of German PoWs at the hands of the French and the Americans after World War 2", by James Bacque.

Barbarism is contagious — or as somebody once put it: he who fights dragons becomes a dragon.

Mr Bacque's book contends that at the end of the Second World War, the French and American victors killed as many as one million German prisoners of war by neglect and starvation. It was done, he says, deliberately, or as near as

makes no difference to deliberately. It is, he says, one of the great dark unrevealed secrets of the Second World War.

At war's end in May 1945, five million Germans surrendered to the Americans. Nobody wanted to surrender to the Russians, whose routine ill-treatment of Germans was widely known.

By January the following year, 800,000 had died of starvation and neglect in camps that had come to resemble the Nazi Dachau or Belsen. The Germans had been kept through the winter on starvation rations and in open compounds, with only burrows they dug in the ground to give them shelter.

Bacque makes detailed allegations that Red Cross food convoys were turned away and Red Cross inspections of the camps refused, despite the stipulations of the Geneva Convention.

The French took, or had transferred to their keeping by the Americans, nearly one million prisoners. By November 1945, a

# Leonard Bernstein

## Music

By Jim Denham

It is somehow appropriate that Leonard Bernstein's last major public appearance was last Christmas morning in Berlin, when he conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in celebration of the destruction of the Wall.

Bernstein always believed that "serious" music could and should be popular and relevant. His characteristically flamboyant and passionate treatment of the Ninth was entirely in keeping with the emotionally-charged occasion, and he had no hesitation about outraging the "purists" by substituting "Freiheit" (freedom) for "Freude" (joy) in the choral finale.

Yet Bernstein, as a Jew (and a proud one at that — early in his career he had refused to change his name, declaring "I'll do it as Bernstein or not at all") might have been forgiven for harbouring a few reservations about the prospect of German reunification. The fact that he didn't (or rather, that if he did it was obviously overshadowed by his empathy with the German people and his joy at the end of the cold war) was typical of him.

Bernstein's politics were a reflection of his approach to music — he was a populist, but a serious and honest one. Like many American intellectuals and artists of his generation, he occupied the political ground between the radical wing of the Democratic Party and outright socialism.

He was a firm supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, and opposed the war in Vietnam. But he was personally and politically committed to the Kennedys and their type of Democrat pseudo-radicalism. At his 65th birthday party, Bernstein even persuaded Teddy Kennedy (and Liz Taylor!) to wear nuclear disarmament armbands... But he showed genuine courage in the '60s, by "coming out" as a gay.

His musical achievements are too numerous to list here. Suffice to say that unlike other "populists" who sought to break down the barriers between "serious" and "pop" music, Bernstein always maintained the highest artistic standards. *West*



Bernstein was a populist — but a serious and honest one. He supported the Civil Rights movement and opposed the Vietnam war.

*Side Story* is probably his masterpiece, an enduring contribution to the American musical tradition and worthy of placing beside the best of Rogers, Hart, Hammerstein and Cole Porter (though it is often overlooked that the "book" was by Stephen Sondheim).

Certainly there is no comparison between Bernstein's "popular" works and the nauseating pastiche churned out by, say, Mr Andrew Lloyd Webber, or the pretentious inanities of Mr Phillip Glass. Song like *Maria, America*, and *Somewhere* (There's a Place For Us) still stand up on their own, even when performed by pop groups and stodgy dance bands.

And unlike some would-be eclectics from the world of "serious" music, Bernstein knew his stuff when he turned to other fields. Asked to produce a jazz album for CBS in the mid-'50s, he displayed unerring taste and judgment in hiring the likes of Buck Clayton, Coleman Hawkins and Lawrence Brown. He even "depped" for pianist Nat "Prince on a couple of numbers!

Bernstein had many faults: he was vain and not always very brave. He kept his head down during the McCarthy witch-hunts of the '50s for instance. But he was not phoney. We are all the poorer for his passing.

Critics of Bacque argue that the evidence he cites is accounted for by initial miscounting of the prisoners and make other far-fetched and unconvincing suggestions.

I don't know. That German were grossly ill-treated is a fact of history, whatever the truth of Bacque's allegations. There was a tremendous wave of chauvinist propaganda against them.

Pseudo-learned theories, akin to the Nazis' own race theory, were propounded to explain "the nature of the Hunnish Germans", and so on.

And then the horrors of the Nazi concentration and death camps were revealed, and in a world over- ed with horrors people still had difficulty believing the truth. Ill-treatment and even the murder of Germans would have come naturally to a lot of those responsible for the PoWs.

The only question is, was the scale of the decimation of POW what Bacque says it was, and was it deliberate.



Raul Julia, Bonnie Bedelia, and Harrison Ford star in "Presumed Innocent"

# When the victim is presumed guilty

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Presumed Innocent'

'Presumed Innocent', the movie, is much harder on women than the book ever was.

Carolyn Polhemus, a prosecuting attorney working mainly on sex crimes and child abuse cases, takes up with different men at different times. She's ambitious, so the men she chooses can usually help her career along. When she tires of them, she moves on. She doesn't

get involved.

That upsets the men in her life. One man in particular, Rusty Sabich, another prosecutor, falls hard, becoming obsessed with her.

When she is found raped and murdered, he is put in charge of the investigation, but it's not for long before he's the chief suspect, entangled in a web of evidence that looks set to drag him down.

It's a classic thriller plot, and we want to know the outcome. Did Rusty do it? Will he go to jail?

But the thriller overrides a lot of what was interesting in the novel. The book was about corruption and justice as much as obsessive love. The American brand of law, where lawyers sell their souls to be elected

District Attorney, where favours are bought and sold, and where friendship means nothing, was also on trial.

Frustratingly the film only shows us glimpses of this, of Sabich's boss Horgan selling him out, of the corrupt, self-serving twosome, Molto and Della Guardia, who have wrested power from Horgan by running a dirty campaign.

Most of the characterisations are anaemic compared to the book. Only Raul Julia as Sandy Stern and Paul Winfield as Judge Larren Lytle really connect with the audience. They bring some real style to the movie.

The film needs it. Harrison Ford as Sabich is disfigured by a prison-looking haircut, and he's so glum that we soon get tired of him. We also get too much of Bonnie Bedelia as his insecure wife Barbara; a little bit of her goes a long way.

The central character, Carolyn, is missing. We get the old tantalising glimpse, but nothing more. She never exists for us as a woman; we only see her through the eyes of the men who slept with her, the men who couldn't understand her.

She's reduced to one dimension — the sex bomb no man could hang on to.

Yet the book was about her as much as Rusty Sabich's efforts to clear his name. The book reveals both what he found out about her, and why he was obsessed with her.

But the film ignores all that — her abused past that led her to take up the cudgels for the victims of rape and violence, her marriage, her son — in favour of doozy scenes with Sabich and his wife and son.

This tips the balance in a way the book never did. We felt we knew Carolyn, and that we knew what was lost when she died. In the film, there's none of that, just a lingering, offensive moralism that says "She asked for it — she got what she deserved".

Ironically, Carolyn is the only character never 'presumed innocent'. In this movie, a woman who sleeps around is guilty from the start.

The film reduces to clumsy shorthand what took long pages to spell out, then, most mistakenly of all, spells out the enigmatic ending in a disastrous scene that belongs on the cutting room floor.

For all that, I enjoyed seeing it. Having read the book filled in comprehensible bits in the movie. It could have been a better movie, but it's not a disaster.

# What capitalists really do

## Books

Martin Thomas reviews 'Barbarians at the Gate', by Bryan Burroughs and John Helyar (Jonathan Cape, £15.95).

Little about economics and finance, but much about what capitalists *do* day to day, is to be learned from this book.

It tells two stories. In the first, one Ross Johnson climbs his way to riches and to the top of a giant US corporation, RJR Nabisco. In the second, Johnson coins the idea of a 'leveraged buy-out' (LBO) of the corporation (which will make him even richer), but, after many twists and turns, is scooped by a slicker LBO from the Wall Street finance house KKR.

An LBO works by borrowing money to buy up a company's shares, then selling off bits of the company, chopping frills like research and development or worker benefits, reducing the company to a core of cash-spinners, and finally selling shares again at a profit. Easy credit in the 1980s, especially in New York, made it possible for a small groups of averagely-rich managers, or tiny firms like KKR, to take over huge corporations.

Johnson did not rise by being good at developing new products. Almost all the new products he came up with were disasters.

Nor was he any good at making production processes more efficient. He was hardly interested. He was definitely not interested in cutting costs. He moved RJR Nabisco's headquarters from one city to another for no reason other than that he was bored with the first city, leased new premises and decorated the executives' offices at huge expense ("it was the only company I ever worked for without a budget", gasped a gleeful contractor), gave away the original offices, then had to lease them back when he had another brainstorm.

His theory of management was to reshuffle everything every six months. "keeping the company and its officers in a constant state of reorganisation... 'If my boss calls', went the joke, 'ask him for his name and number'."

Johnson seems not even to have been specially interested in exploiting workers. All that boring stuff could be done by relatively lowly production managers and personnel managers. Johnson's key to success was backstabbing and manipulation in the boardroom. Scattering vast amounts of cash in perks and expenses to bribe supporters as he went, his skill was at knifing other bosses and getting a bigger share of the loot for himself.

"Under the old order", write Burroughs and Helyar, "big business was a slow and steady entity... managed by 'company men': junior executives who worked their way up the ladder and gave one company their all, and senior executives who were corporate stewards, preserving and cautiously enhancing the company.

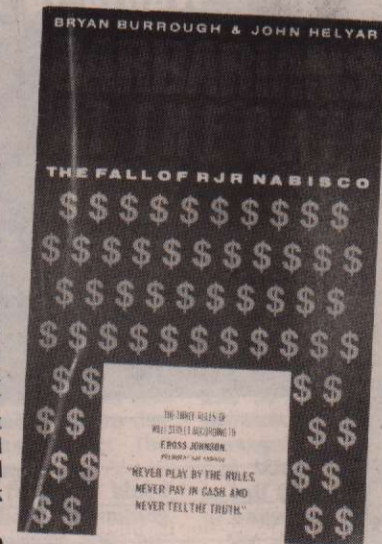
"Johnson was... one of a whole breed of non-company men who came to maturity in the 1970s and 1980s: a deal-driven, yield-driven nomadic lot... Of all the noncompany men, Johnson cut the highest profile".

He met his match when he

clashed with Wall Street sharks like KKR boss Henry Kravis — "the kind of young man who, at his thirtieth birthday party, rode one of his gifts, a Honda motorcycle, around his Park Avenue apartment".

According to this book — and the authors, financial journalists, describe the LBO battle in hour-by-hour detail — the life of those Wall Street sharks is a constant uproar of ear-splitting joviality and conspicuous consumption, covering feverish backstabbing and confidence trickery. Deals are always being done in 4am shouting matches or in phone calls from airplane to limousine to restaurant to bedroom.

They are a special breed of capitalist. They have constant dealings with each other and frequently *have* to work together on big projects; they are almost all, at least ostensibly, on best-friends first name terms. At the same time, they are in the most cut-throat competition, not limited as it would be among industrial capitalists by the needs of a common front against the workers (they do not deal directly with any workers apart from a few secretaries) or by company loyalty (individuals can and do swap companies from one day to the next). Greed and skulduggery reach unparalleled heights.



Developing new products, making processes more efficient, raising productivity, all the things that "free enterprise" is supposed to be so good at, play no part at all in the concerns of these, the samurai of the capitalist world. Each one's concern is solely and exclusively to get a bigger share of the loot for himself (it is *himself*: of the 68 'players' listed at the front of the book, only one is a woman).

Their 'leveraged buy-outs' strip out research and development from companies, putting everything else second to short-term cash flow. Their vast fees and expenses and rake-offs divert a good chunk of what could be productively invested into their own luxury living.

The book is about *American* capitalists: if it were Japan or Germany there would surely be more glimpses of the textbook sober, careful, investing capitalist. But it is not just about America. As the scope and reach of the credit system spreads wider and wider, it is a story about the future of capitalism everywhere.

The capitalist of the future, and increasingly of today, is utterly unnecessary and useless for everything other than making himself rich. The sooner he's got rid of, the better for us all.

# A how and why

## Books

B J Siddon reviews 'Toxic Shock' by Sara Paretsky (Penguin £3.99)

If, like me, you are a sucker for crime novels, you should go to your nearest bookshop and buy this book at once. The same is true if you like feminist fiction, but are terrified of buying yet another badly written, badly plotted 'story' which reminds you of a bad day in a student union without the excitement.

Sara Paretsky's detective (Vic Warshawski) does not use all the right-on language, nor is she horribly 'supportive' or sickeningly political. Equally she does not leap tall buildings with a single bound. Like all the best pleasure-giving fictional detectives she is skilled, but human.

Warshawski does not describe her female clients as having 'good' legs and she moans about having to wear high heels and a suit to impress people. She does not patronise the working class or stereotype working class individuals but at the same time she does not idolise working class communities.

Because the left politics and feminism are understated they are effective. You can get on with the

story, confident that there won't be any throw-away sexist, racist or downright stupidly offensive remarks to put you out of sympathy with the protagonist.

'Toxic Shock' is about the cover-up of industrial pollution, and particularly the effect of a new chemical on employees health. But the book also deals with child abuse, and it does it very well, with howls of outrage from Warshawski, and self-justifying silence from those who let the abuse go on.

Like Ross MacDonald, Sara Paretsky follows a mystery back into the past, finding the truth along the way, bit by bit. 'Toxic Shock' is not a 'whodunnit', more of a 'how and why'. But the mystery is mysterious and you do want to find the answers.

There is violence too, and not all of it from the bad guys. Warshawski, like Lew Archer, Spenser or the Continental Op uses violence where it's necessary and in defence of herself and her clients or friends. Unlike those (male) detectives, she does not feel the need to have pangs of guilt about it afterwards. Her violence does not need to be justified by the author to make her human or sympathetic — Warshawski is obviously both. She is not callous, just rational.

I have said many good things about this book, and I could say many more. It's not Ross MacDonald but its not a bad substitute. Lew Archer would be very comfortable with Vic Warshawski and what finer praise could there be?

# A plague on both houses

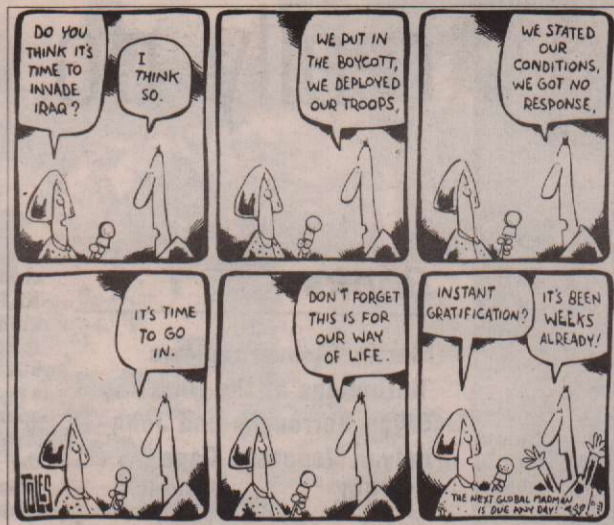
## WRITEBACK

Dear S.O.,  
You've done it again!  
Your recent article on the  
Gulf Crisis by Gerry

Write to SO, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA

**G**erry Bates (SO 460) sees the Gulf crisis turning into "an attempt by the United States to effectively conquer Iraq... a huge imperialist military presence in the region, sparking mass revolts".

He uses this scenario to justify defending Iraq if war breaks out. But Iraq is not a small defenceless country. It is not a Panama or a Grenada. It is a powerful sub-imperialism with an army one million strong. In its expansionist bid for regional domination it has run up against the imperialist interests of the United States and Britain; the result is a reactionary battle for regional control.



SO has quite rightly called for US and Britain out of the Gulf, Iraq out of Kuwait. However, editorials have gone from that to speculation to justify a position of defending Iraq if war breaks out. Speculation and scenarios have replaced and obscured concrete analysis.

There is no evidence that the aim of the US and Britain is to conquer and subjugate Iraq. The *Economist* magazine, cited in SO 459 as such evidence, asserts only "the need to cripple Mr Hussein's ability to be a more efficient aggressor next time". It believes that a

"clear cut victory" would involve "the downfall of Saddam Hussein" — but "let the line be drawn there... The West cannot guarantee a benign ruler; it can only remove a malign one. It has no interest in imposing a government on Iraqis" (*Economist*, 6 Oct.)

Defeats for the Iraqi army may well lead to the fall of Saddam Hussein. The role of socialists in Iraq would be to utilise the crisis, to capitalise on the defeats, to mobilise workers to hasten his downfall. The main enemy for Iraqi workers is also at home.

According to SO 457, "The US intervention is more like 19th century colonialism than the imperialism of free trade which characterised the '50s, '60s and '70s". Such a possibility cannot be ruled out, but to view it as inevitable is ridiculous.

The ghost of Vietnam still haunts the US corridors of power. Financial crisis is causing problems for the US's present involvement, never mind a long-term role as colonial master.

US imperialism may well change tack. But before socialists conclude that fundamental change has taken place, concrete evidence is required.

Saddam Hussein is using pan-Arab demagoguery to try to widen his support, but it would be a mistake to view him as the champion of a fight by the Arab masses against US imperialism. He is using Arab nationalist rhetoric to mobilise support for his landgrab and his bid for regional power. Socialists oppose both these aims, and so in this context Arab nationalism is not playing a progressive role.

The conflict is over regional power and control of oil. For workers on either side — the main enemy is at home.

**Tony Dorman,**  
Manchester.



## Trotskyists in the USSR

### LEFT PRESS

**T**he latest issue of *Bulletin in Defence of Marxism*, a socialist monthly published in New York, contains an interesting report from Marilyn Vogt-Downey on the beginnings of Trotskyist discussion in the USSR.

Leon Trotsky — a leader of the Russian Revolution who fought against the Stalinist counter-revolution, and was consequently exiled from the USSR in 1929 and murdered by a Stalinist agent in 1940 — has not yet been officially "rehabilitated". That is, unlike other victims of Stalin's show trials in the 1930s such as Nikolai Bukharin, he has not been officially cleared of the ludicrous charges against him.

"However", Marilyn Vogt-Downey reports, "more and more of his works, and more and more of the truth about him, are appearing — from both official and unofficial sources."

"For example, in June 150,000 copies of... a selection of writings by Trotsky was published by... the official publisher of political literature in Moscow. [It] includes 'Results and Prospects', excerpts from 'How the Revolution Armed Itself', 'The New Course', 'Lessons of October', more than 100 pages from 'History of the Russian Revolution', and other works".

"Such an approach is a 'good nation, bad nation' approach that ignores the working class."

**Matthew Saunders,**  
Canterbury.

publication of a discussion bulletin that would be open to Trotskyists in the USSR and on the organisation of an international conference in Moscow during 1991. Their plan is to invite representatives of the various international groups which consider themselves part of the world Trotskyist movement, and not just supporters of the WIRFI as the conference initiators had intended...

"Despite the factional goals of the conference organisers, it was a valuable opportunity for activists who consider themselves Trotskyists, revolutionary Marxists, left-wing anarchists, and socialists in the USSR to meet openly for the first time, to exchange views and discuss perspectives..."

Vogt-Downey also publishes extracts from her notes of what people said at the conference. Here are some extracts from the extracts.

**Dmitri Zhvaniya:** A revolutionary party cannot be created overnight. It takes time.

Now the revolutionary movement in the USSR is at the stage of tiny grouplets, and is outside the workers' movement. Those who consider themselves revolutionaries are trying to take part in the strike movement of the workers... But this is still not enough. The stage of tiny grouplets is a normal stage in the development of the future workers' party...

**Sergei Biets:** Yesterday I spoke out against those from the USSR. Today I will scold our visitors from abroad.

You, with your splits and bickering, have wiped out the left... Everyone is trying to be the big fish in a small pond. Ambition, old grudges, this is what has led to the disunity of the Trotskyist movement...

We don't need splits. The rebirth of the Fourth International lies through unification of all Trotskyist groups...

**Alexei Gusev:** The collapse of Stalinism today is obvious. But a capitalist alternative to Stalinism will hardly be acceptable to the Soviet workers. The free market, competition, and other attributes of capitalism will leave us in the situation of a Sudan or Bangladesh, where all these factors dominate the lives of people. And the living standard in these places is much lower than ours.

There exists another alternative to Stalinism... We must help to make it happen...

## The ideas Walworth Road wants to ban



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## Iraq out of Kuwait!

**K**uwait is not a nation. The mass of the workers there had no allegiance to Kuwait, being from other countries.

However, that does not settle the question of what we say about Kuwait now. The Iraqi state is one of the most anti-working-class in the world, operating a massive terror machine against its own people and the Kurds.

Compared with Iraq, even the neo-feudal rentier state of Kuwait offered more space for workers and oppositionists to operate. Some opponents of the regime had recently been released from prison in Kuwait. Their equivalents in Iraq face certain death, as do the Iraqi political exiles in Kuwait. If for that reason alone, we must call for Iraq to pull out of Kuwait.

But some on the left

argue that to raise the demand is to side with US imperialism. This is very familiar logic-chopping; in fact the demand does not mean any sort of support for the US-led military build-up.

In a war that will lead to colonial control, we must support Iraq's right to defend itself against US imperialism. What we must not be drawn into, as those who have dropped the demand for Iraq out of Kuwait before the hot war has started have been, is supporting the Iraqi regime as if it represented an entity whose pull-out from Kuwait under Western pressure would automatically represent a defeat for the working class, even if the US also pulled out.

Such an approach is a 'good nation, bad nation' approach that ignores the working class.

**Matthew Saunders,**  
Canterbury.

## WHAT'S ON

Friday 19 October. No war in the Gulf! Socialist Movement meeting, 12.30pm, Salford University.

Saturday 20 October. Poll Tax march reaches London. Assemble 11am in Kennington Park, rally 2pm in Brockwell Park.

Saturday 20 October. Labour Party Socialists North-West regional meeting, 11am, Manchester Town Hall.

Tuesday 23 October. Campaign Against War in the Gulf meeting, 7.30, TURC, 7 Frederick St, Birmingham.

Tuesday 23 October. Bambatha's Children: play about the 1906 Pigi Tax revolt in South Africa, performed in aid of the Sarmcol workers. 7.30, ACNA Centre, Hungerhill Road, Nottingham. £3 waged, £1.50 unwaged.

Wednesday 24 October. "Poll Tax: don't pay, don't collect!" Student demonstration. Assemble noon, Woodhouse Moor, Leeds. Details from West Yorks Area NUS: 0532 452312.

Wednesday 24 October. Fighting anti-semitism. 8pm, Ilford Synagogue. Speakers: Ray Hill and Graeme Atkinson (Searchlight).

Wednesday 24 October. No war in the Gulf! Meeting hosted by Manchester Area National Union of Students, with speakers including Tony Benn. 7.30, Renold Building, UMIST.

Thursday 25 October. Is socialism dead? Workers' Liberty meeting, with speaker Patrick Murphy. 7.30, Leeds Poly.

Thursday 25 October. The politics of Workers' Liberty. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street, Sheffield.

Saturday 27 October. No war in the Gulf! Demonstration assembles 11.30 at Caborn's Corner, Sheffield.

Saturday 27 October. Labour Party Socialists AGM, Sheffield University Student Union.

Monday 29 October. Forum on the Gulf, 7.30, Conway Hall, London WC1. Speakers from Socialist Organiser and Socialism and Revolution (Iran).

Saturday 3 November. Campaign Against War in the Gulf labour movement conference, London.

Saturday 3 November. March to support the oil workers. Assemble 11am, Allison Place, Newcastle on Tyne. Rally 12.30 at Newcastle Poly Students' Union.

Saturday-Sunday 17-18 November. Socialist Movement conference, Manchester.

Saturday 24 November. Stop the War in the Gulf! National demonstration, London.

# PSA dispute is test case for Tory sell-offs

## We can't afford to lose

By John Moloney (PSA)

Members of CPSA and NUCPS, the two biggest civil service unions, are on strike in London, Croydon, Hastings, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Bristol.

The dispute in the Property Services Agency (PSA) is now entering its third month. PSA, the department responsible for maintaining and constructing Government properties, is being prepared for privatisation. As a first

step PSA must be converted into a company (called a Goco) whose shares will be owned by the government.

To trim the PSA for the sell-off, bosses intend to cut thousands of jobs between now and the Goco date. In order to staff the new company, thousands of PSA employees will be forcibly transferred into the Goco. They will lose their civil service status, and so their entitlement to civil service pensions (among the best in the country) and to civil service redundancy payments.

Of seven unions in PSA,

only CPSA (covering secretarial and clerical grades) and NUCPS (mainly executive grades) have decided to fight. They are looking for the staff made surplus to be given alternative civil service jobs, and for all staff to have a choice whether to remain a civil servant or not.

For both unions, the dispute has national consequences. It is the first time that a whole department has been privatised, and the first time on a mass scale that civil servants will be thrown out of the pension scheme. CPSA in particular has failed to realise

the significance of this attack — and there are no signs that CPSA's right-wing National Executive intends to campaign or lead any action.

The selective strikes are having an effect. The original date for the Goco has been pushed back several months. Bosses have offered CPSA and NUCPS a half-way house deal, which will cover some but not all administrative staff.

The two unions must now decide whether to accept a bad deal, or massively to escalate the action and to fight for a decent deal. It is

vital for the sake of all civil servants that the unions take the latter course.

Activists in both unions can help by:

- Collecting money for the dispute. For CPSA all cheques should be made payable to CPSA and sent to the DoE Section Office, CPSA HQ.
- Pass motions in their branches stating that this is the first attack on the pension scheme, and the first time a government department has been privatised, and that therefore the PSA dispute is a test case which we cannot afford to lose.

### Why I'm standing for the NUM Executive

#### WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

Jack Taylor is retiring, and so the Yorkshire Area NUM will shortly be balloting for a new representative on the National Executive. My name has been submitted.

I have no axe to grind with the Yorkshire Area representatives, but I hope by standing to encourage rank and file miners in other areas to stand against full-time officials.

Certain Areas — I won't hesitate to name them: South Wales, Scotland, and Derbyshire — spend their time making an endless charade of pretending to defend democracy, but all they do is have a go at Scargill and Heathfield.

What we need is unity inside the NUM! We must fight for the rank and file. I urge rank-and-file miners to stand and challenge the representatives in those Areas. The election will take place some time before Christmas.

There are now two vital issues before us. One is the basic pay rise.

Miners' wages have steadily fallen behind. Most miners get about 50% of their take-home pay from basic wages, and 50% from bonus and allowance systems over which management have total control. Miners' wages can be cut in half through manipulation of bonus payments.

We need a decent rise in the basic rate, to bring us up to a decent standard of living.

We should couple this with the demand for a rate protection scheme. Miners' wages are dependent on the job. If a miner has to take a lighter job due to sickness or injury, then wages fall accordingly. So mineworkers start and finish on low pay.

If we couple the demand for a decent basic pay rise with the demand for a rate protection scheme, that would unite miners and we could really start a decent campaign. We could revive the campaigning spirit of the NUM.

The Coal Board is still refusing to discuss the claim with the NUM until we accept minority/majority representation. But we won't accept that. The NUM negotiates for mineworkers; but the Coal Board simply refuses to meet us!

The question as to whether or not we take industrial action will be going to a ballot — as soon as possible, I hope!

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

## Solidarity in DSS dispute

By Steve Battlemuch

DSS (Social Security) Offices across Leicester walked out for the afternoon on 5 October, and over 100 workers occupied the office at Yeoman St, where they have been on strike since Tuesday 21 August.

Bosses had tried to offer overtime to scabs at Yeoman St. The dispute is about staff cuts arising from a new computer system which is being introduced in all DSS offices.

The Government spent

over £2 billion to introduce the computer system, and want almost 20,000 jobs cut to pay for it — despite the DSS's own staff inspector saying that the system *doesn't* save labour!

The strikers want to see a coordinated national campaign of action. Offices in Nottingham and Birmingham have taken action in their support, and walkouts over staffing have also taken place in South Yorkshire.

Donations, with cheques made payable to "CPSA DSS Leicester", to CPSA, DSS, Lower Hill St, Leicester.

## More points of view on the NUCPS/CPSA merger

### Merger would make the union weaker

By Michael Ronan, branch chair, Merthyr Tydfil & District Area Branch, CPSA DSS Section

Firstly, the merger document is a "jobs for the boys" character, and will heap on to CPSA all the most undemocratic things from the NUCPS.

I believe all officials of a union should be elected annually. The merger document proposes that three of the six top union positions will be appointed for life, with no accountability. It also allows NUCPS to elect their Executive Committee members by block vote, instead of the CPSA's workplace ballot of individual members.

The pro-mergerites say that unity is strength and big is beautiful. What nonsense! Ask my members, who have had four strikes, totalling more than 40 weeks, in the last four years.

NUCPS members, with a few notable exceptions, have scabbed on our disputes.

They are management, and they were doing what they thought was their job — which is why we will never get unity.

Another argument for merger is the unions' financial problems. But the two unions don't have to merge in order to share resources. Another cost-cutter would be

to pay our full-timers realistic salaries more in line with the pittance our members receive. (Our grades are paid between £4000 and £9500, our General Secretary well over £30,000).

If CPSA has to merge, it should be with other clerical unions which have aims and objectives similar to ours.

## The reality behind bland slogans

By Mark Serwotka

Socialist Organiser has been correct to oppose the merger between the two civil service unions CPSA and NUCPS.

The Tories are increasing the managerial functions carried out by NUCPS grades, which now include not just annual reports, but also setting targets for work output, disciplinary measures, and merit and performance pay.

Lower management grades like Executive Officers are now responsible not just for the job security of the clerical grades, but also our pay and

conditions.

Sarah Cotterill (SO 462) is right to say that, in general, socialists should support unity. We should argue for unity in action, unity on the picket lines; but day-to-day matters cannot best be resolved in one big union.

Of course NUCPS is not a bosses' or a scab union. People do not become part of the enemy when they become supervisors. However, the fact remains that the best socialist in the world, as a NUCPS member, would still have to make day-to-day decisions that affect the clerical grades.

To put forward bland slogans without examining their consequences does no one any favours.

## Cammell Lairds threat

By Gail Cameron

Cammell Lairds ship yard in Birkenhead, Merseyside, is facing closure.

Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd, who own the yard, say that a new owner must be found in the next two years, or Lairds will close. VSEL also own the country's main defence contracting yard in Barrow-in-Furness.

Many of the 2000 workers at Lairds will have an even shorter future, as the work begins to run out, and redundancies could be seen in the next few months.

Ken Morris, the Confed convenor at Lairds, has pinned his hopes on finding a buyer for the yard, but the prospects are very slim. Emergency union meetings held at the yard may however come up with more realistic ideas.

## Lean and fit the Willis way

Plans for a new-look, leaner, fitter TUC will be unveiled at the General Council meeting of October 24th. That well known proponent of leanness and fitness, Norman Willis, has drawn up a paper proposing a drastic programme of cuts to deal with an expected deficit of £2 million by next year.

The axe is expected to fall on a wide range of TUC Committees (including the printing industry committee, the distribution and agriculture industries committee, the public enterprise committee and the arts and sports advisory committee) and bodies like the European strategy group, the en-

#### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

'head of organisations' the ambitious Brendan Barber giving serious consideration to economies. Many of the above-mentioned committees are notoriously ineffectual sinecures for burned-out bureaucrats and/or useless token gestures in the direction of 'trendy' issues.

But the Willis/Barber plan also involves axing all the organisations that give the rank and file any direct say in the affairs of the TUC, especially those associated with Trades Councils and Centres for the Unemployed, both of which are regarded by Congress House as dangerous repositories of left-wing activism. This would mean the closure of the TUC's youth structures and equal rights committee the abolition of the County Associations of Trades Councils (which link trades

councils on a regional basis and the annual Trades Council's Conference; and financial support for regional organisers for the unemployed would disappear.

These proposals would very conveniently sever all the main arteries of rank-and-file influence within the official structures of the TUC; they would also very conveniently stifle likely left-wing opposition to a 'National Economic Assessment' (read 'Income's Policy') with a future Labour government.

Our Norman is busy licking his cumbersome organisation into shape for a future smooth working relationship with Brother Kinnock. The 'new look' TUC would be dominated by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, which has already approved the plan and to which

the General Council is increasingly but a rubber stamp.

The temptation is to disregard the forthcoming row over the Willis/Barber plan as a bureaucratic wrangle of no consignment to rank and file activists. It is certainly true that many of the TUC bodies now facing the chop were always thoroughly useless. It is also true that even the 'rank-and-file' bodies like the Trades Council structures, are dominated by Stalinists and other failed bureaucrats. But the stakes are too high for us to stand on the sidelines and sneer. If Willis wants cut-backs, let him start closer to home: how about the millions wasted on 'refurbishing' Congress House or the apparently bottomless purse that finances bureaucrats freebies to exotic locations!

vironmental action group and the 'special review body'. Willis warns that the TUC's priorities will "have to be ruthlessly selected by the tests of importance and effectiveness."

In these hard times, no-one can object to Norman and his

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Gulf anti-war conference set for 3 November

By Mark Osborn, joint secretary, Campaign Against War in the Gulf

The Campaign Against War in the Gulf has called an anti-war activists'

conference for Saturday 3 November.

Labour movement and student delegates will join individual activists to plan future campaigns against war, and to air some of the issues created by the crisis.

What should our attitude be to

the United Nations, and to economic sanctions? How do we campaign to stop the war? Should we demand the immediate withdrawal of troops?

Speakers will include Bernie Grant MP, and representatives from Iranian, Iraqi and Kurdish organisations. A member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation will speak at the conference's opening plenary.

Adam Keller will speak about the prospects for the Israeli peace movement. Adam is the editor of the Israeli peace and radical journal *The Other Israel*, and has written extensively for *SO*.

• Details from Mark Osborn, 243 Bellenden Road, London SE15, or 071-639 7967.

# Fight this tax!

## Why students are marching on 24 October

By Emma Colyer (National Secretary, National Union of Students)

Students, along with millions of other people in Britain, are not paying the Tories' poll tax.

Many can't afford to pay it — after massive real cuts, and now a freeze, in grants, the introduction of top-up loans, the exclusion of students from Social Security benefits, and high inflation.

Students are angry! Angry about a second-rate education and training system, with fewer and fewer jobs at the end of it. Angry about the appalling lack of financial support — the vast majority of students receive no help at all. Angry about the accommodation crisis — and, of course, angry about the poll tax.

Already this term students have mounted rent strikes, occupations and pickets. At Sheffield Poly students had a successful rent strike over the issue of housing and cuts. At Teesside Poly students are running a widely supported rent strike. In the Further Education sector, cuts, closures, mergers and job losses as a direct result of the poll tax are being fought.

On Wednesday 24 October, students from all over Britain will be demonstrating against the poll tax in Leeds. Called by West Yorkshire Area of the National Union of Students, the demo coincides with non-payers being hauled before Leeds courts.

Thousands will turn out in Leeds, despite the National Union of Students (NUS) leadership having done nothing to build for it. The Kinnockite majority on the NUS Executive are all paying their poll tax. NUS President Stephen Twigg says he is "proud to pay his poll tax to a Labour council", and Vice-President Welfare Rachel Taylor kindly pointed out to angry students who can't pay that "it is only the cost of a Big Mac a week" (sounds more like the home economics of Edwina Currie than what a Labour supporter should say).

Yet NUS has a policy of non-payment and non-collection,



120 people were arrested last Saturday, 20th, as police piled in to poll tax protesters. The protesters were outside Brixton prison, where four people jailed after the police riot around Trafalgar Square in

March this year are held. They went there after the end of a 10,000 strong march across South London. Fighting later spread down Brixton's main street.

proposed and fought for by Left Unity supporters and democratically passed at a national conference. The Kinnockites on the NUS Executive have chosen to ignore the mandate and have blatantly refused to build the non-payment campaign in the student movement.

The poll tax is extremely unpopular. Millions of people can't afford it. Yet local authorities are seriously considering an average 13 per cent increase in the tax next

April. A mass non-payment campaign, linked to a non-implementation campaign in the trade unions, could finish the Tories off.

The poll tax is the best issue on which to beat the Tories. The tax is hugely unpopular and undemocratic. Students can play an important role in smashing the Tories' poll tax and ensuring their electoral defeat.

The anti-poll-tax unions on campuses should make links, where

they haven't already, with community APTUs. They should build the fight against the poll tax and cuts in education on an Area basis. The demo on the 24th should be used as a means of "relaunching" the anti-poll-tax campaign in the student movement — a way to draw together old and new activists who want to fight the Tories.

From the demonstration we should build for a wave of occupations, pickets and other direct action. It is widely expected that the Queen's Speech will contain proposals for voluntary membership of student unions. The Tories are out to smash NUS and student unionism on campus.

NUS must call a national mid-week demonstration in Central London straight after the Queen's Speech, to defend NUS and students' rights against voluntary membership.

Only by taking up the fight to defend and improve student rights and education, and by involving the mass membership in democratically run campaigns, can NUS possibly defend itself from the Tories' attacks.

For too long the Kinnockite leadership of NUS have chosen to lobby MPs rather than build a fight back in the colleges. For too long the Kinnockites have been prepared to dissipate action in the colleges and wait for a Labour government.

We have to reverse this trend and start the campaign for a fighting union.

## Sales drive gets under way

By Martin Thomas, circulation manager

Friday night pub sale.  
Saturday street sale.  
Monday evening sale at railway station. Two door-to-door sales on estates.

That's the report from a local activist on sales of the relaunched *Socialist Organiser* that she is organising with other *SO* sellers in Nottingham.

Word from sellers all round the country is that they find the new format much more attractive and easier to sell. We need to capitalise with new sales — doing everywhere what's been done in

Nottingham — for the greater expense and effort of the new format needs greater sales income to support it.

I'm also asking *SO* sellers to make a drive to get subscriptions to the paper. Our subscription rates will soon have to go up substantially, to cover the increased cost of postage and of the paper itself, but we're continuing the old rates for a limited period to help attract new subscriptions with the relaunch.

We started at Labour Party conference, and sold several subs there as well as shifting 300 copies of the current issue of the paper.

For copies of the special subs offer leaflet, write to me at PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## 'End the Ban!'

## The campaign continues

By Martin Thomas

Keen they are, efficient they're not, the witch-hunters at Labour Party headquarters in Walworth Road.

On Monday 15th I received a letter, ostensibly a personal letter signed by Neil Kinnock though a close look reveals that the signature is printed, welcoming me as a new member of the Labour Party!

In fact I've been a member of the Party for some 16 years, and all the other letters I've had from Walworth Road recently have been about expelling me from the Party. The letter from the Party's Director of Organisation, Joyce Gould, announcing the National Executive's decision to ban *Socialist Organiser* — the only communication Walworth Road deigned to make with *SO* during the whole process of allegedly "investigating" *SO* and deciding to ban us — was addressed to me personally.

I got the letter signed by Neil Kinnock, I think, because I filled out a direct debit form for my Party subs.

Walworth Road officials' plans about expulsions are still not clear. At the July National Executive Joyce Gould was instructed to report on *SO* supporters in the Wirral and in Nottingham East.

Presumably she is likely to report to the 24 October meeting of the National Executive.

The procedure then is that the National Executive must consider each individual case and refer it to the National Constitutional Committee for action; the processes of the National Constitutional Committee can take a further couple of months; and with the ban on *SO* there are a great number of technical points of Labour Party "legality" which must be resolved before anyone can say that the NEC and Conference decisions mandate any expulsions. There are still plenty of stops along the road.

In the meantime, Conference delegates are reporting back to their Constituency Labour Parties, and "End the Ban!" is still receiving requests to send speakers from CLP meetings.

If you want a speaker from "End the Ban!", or briefing material for your CLP's Conference report-back meeting, contact ETB, c/o Martin Thomas, 12a Canonbury Street, London N1 2TD.

29 Liverpool Labour councillors will be sent to the Party's National Constitutional Committee for expulsion, according to the Guardian (19 October). The National Executive has already suspended them for voting against rent rises pushed through by the right-wing majority of the Liverpool council Labour group, and at its meeting on 24 October will start proceedings to expel them for links with Militant or for "breaking Party discipline".