



Germany: the dream turns sour pages 6 and 7

Lynne Segal on male sexuality



Centre pages

For Socialist Renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!



The demagogue's tale page 12

Vladimir Derer: the case against PR



page 10

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

## Tory snake sheds its skin

### Labour at the crossroads

# What

# now,

# Kinnock?



The Tory snake has shed its skin! They knew they couldn't win the next general election with Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister, so, with typical Tory brutality, the Conservative MPs have sent the

savage old lady packing.

Leaders come and go, the Conservative Party goes on.

As John Major truly said on 'Newsnight' last week: "The Conservative Party is one of the greatest

political fighting forces Western Europe has ever seen."

These hard-faced scoundrels weren't going to fold their arms like the officers of the Titanic and strike noble poses as the fatal election got

nearer. They did what you'd expect Mrs Thatcher's best pupils to do, without scruple or sentiment.

Thatcher is out, Major is in. The Queen is dead, long live the King!

Turn to page 3



The crisis of Stalinism

# Millions of refugees head west

By Dave Curtis

Europe faces massive population movements, the biggest since World War II as a result of the collapse of Stalinism.

The deepening economic crisis of the USSR which threatens to break up the state is set to trigger a massive possible shift westwards as people flee looming famine and mass unemployment.

Officials in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany are making plans to deal with masses of migrants moving westward in

search of jobs, housing and food.

One political scientist has estimated (in an article in 'Die Zeit') a possible first wave of migrants numbering 5 or 7 million!

USSR officials have told the Belgian government that there could be up to 3 million a year moving to Western Europe in search of work.

Germany is already straining to cope with a massive influx over the last eighteen months.

Poland presently has one million unemployed and the number of unemployed may double over the next year as the Balcerowicz Plan bites hard. Yet Polish officials

expect that Poland will bear the brunt of migration west through its 480 mile border with the USSR. They expect 2 or 3 million Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians to move westwards, when Soviet travel restrictions are lifted as they will be.

The Poles assume that western countries will refuse them entrance and so they will congregate in Poland.

In addition perhaps 500,000 Soviet citizens of Polish extraction may demand citizenship and the right to settle. There are 2 or 3 million Soviet, Polish and Romanian citizens of German origin who could demand

settlement rights in Germany.

The Poles say they would not close the eastern border unless the consequences of migration became catastrophic with up to 10 million immigrants.

The Germans are already saying that they cannot take all those who want to move. Immigration is already a question in the German elections. Refugee camps are full to overflowing and barracks and stadiums are being used. Intolerance is breeding fast in the wake of the recent mass immigration from East Germany. Racism against Germany's Turkish and other guest-workers is well-

documented, it now seems set to victimise against Eastern European immigrants too.

Already 40,000 of East Germany's 85,000 Third World migrant workers (mainly Vietnamese and Mozambiquains) have been forced to leave in the face of intimidation and violence.

At a time when the boss class is crowing at the breakdown of bureaucratic despotism and lauding the dawn of a new age of European unity and prosperity it will be the bitterest irony and a most savage tragedy if the Iron Curtain falls only to be replaced by immigration controls that continue to wall off Eastern Europe and Russia.



Poll tax protesters are winning new support. Above: in Nottingham. Photo: John Birdsall

## Bus drivers launch lightning strikes

By Dave Barter

Despite management threats, Manchester bus drivers took the second of a series of lightning one-day strikes on Wednesday 28 November.

Three and a half thousand drivers (TGWU members) are in dispute with Greater Manchester Buses after rejecting a 7% pay offer by 10-1 in a ballot, and a subsequent 4-1 ballot for lightning one-day strike.

Management's response after the first day's strike action on Saturday 24 November has been

Labour Party activists in Manchester have started campaigning for a General Election.

A picket is planned of Stockport Tory MP Tony Favell on the morning of Saturday 1 December, and later that day Rusholme branch is leafleting a local shopping area.

Supporters of Labour Party Socialists are producing large numbers of leaflets for Labour Party wards to use, calling for a General Election.

Labour Parties are also passing resolutions demanding the Labour NEC call a demonstration against the Tories, and for a General Election.

to threaten the withdrawal of the 7% pay offer should any further action take place. Wednesday's strike was unaffected, as Princess Road garage shop steward Phil Kershner told Socialist Organiser:

"We had a meeting this morning on the picket line. From the reaction I'd say this has only hardened our resolve."

The issue of the Labour Party is important in the strike, as the majority of non-executive members of the Board of GM buses is made up of local authority representatives from Labour local authorities!

Socialist Organiser supporters in Manchester are arguing for Labour Party branches to invite drivers to speak at meetings, and pushing resolutions in support of the drivers. Drivers taking up the opportunities existing in the Labour Party will be important in the winning of the dispute.

A third ballot will be taken on Thursday 6 December for all-out action in the event of any driver being disciplined for strike action — a big majority will be important to the maintenance of what strikers expect to be a longer dispute than they have had for many years.

As Phil Kershner put it: "We've been used to disputes lasting a few days — we'll have to learn some new tactics in this one."

## Behind the headlines...

# Stop harassing women students!

By Janine Booth, NUS women's officer

Recent press reports have claimed that an ever increasing number of students are taking up prostitution. The reports began in last Sunday's *Correspondent*, and then hit the front page of Monday's *Daily Star*.

Tory policies have left students desperately short of money. Grants have been

frozen, loans introduced, and entitlement to state benefits taken away.

Students have more and more been pushed into taking jobs in order to get by. Students' work has mostly been as casual, cash-in-hand labour, with no employment rights. Some have taken part in medical experiments for cash reward. The increase in student prostitution is another consequence of the cash crisis facing students.

Many more people drop out of their courses or never

go to college in the first place.

While publicity for the financial plight of students is welcome, there are some very worrying aspects of the press coverage, especially, of course, from the scandal-hungry tabloids.

Their sensationalism will almost certainly encourage increased harassment of women students. The English Collective of Prostitutes recently held a conference at a college in Preston. The local rag published a shock-horror story. As a result, men

began hanging around the college waving credit cards at women students.

It is crucial that the student movement refuses to condemn any woman (or man) who takes up prostitution. This is an issue of Tory education policy, not of morality.

Student unions and NUS should respond by placing the blame on the Tories, stepping up their fight for a decent living grant for all, and providing support and advice to their impoverished members.



## 4,500 jobs threatened:

# British Aerospace stewards campaign to defend jobs

By Paul McGarry

As fears of recession grow, British Aerospace is planning to axe 4,500 jobs at its plants in Kingston, Dunsfold and Preston.

Management is putting its propaganda to the workforce on Monday, and is expected to propose a package of redeployment and voluntary redundancies.

The announcement follows a review by BAe after the cancellation last June of an order from the RAF for 33 Tornado aircraft. Management's excuse is that the new East-West detente in Europe has meant the slowing down of defence equipment production.

Len Brindle, AEU District Secretary, Preston, turned the argument on its head: "We should use the peace dividend as an opportunity to diversify into civil production."

Bert Long, senior shop steward, AEU Kingston, echoed this: "We will be urging to change to civil work."

The way to answer management is twofold. Firstly, arms production should be switched over to the production for civil use. Workers would rather use their skills on socially useful production like kidney machines than on weapons of destruction.

Secondly, the bosses should pay — not the workforce — for the slump which is of their own making. Cut the hours not the jobs, with no loss of pay, and the unions should keep up pressure for the 35-hour week.

The BAe stewards combine has launched a campaign against the job losses. As Len Brindle put it: "The trade union movement has got to go out to the community and build a broad-based campaign over this issue." Quite right. The combine should also be prepared to defend jobs with national action.

# Israeli workers plan general strike

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

Israel's right-wing finance minister wants to reduce the minimum wage and tax the Histadrut pension fund.

The minimum wage is not very high as it is — about 1000 shekels a month, or £250. The finance minister wants to change it so that workers would only get 80% of that minimum for the first six months.

At present the minimum wage is indexed against inflation, but he wants it increased in future by only 75% of the rate of inflation.

The reason for this is to get employers to take on Soviet Jewish immigrants as cheap labour. In theory the minimum wage applies to everyone, including Arab workers from the occupied territories, but in practice Arab workers are often paid less.

The government also wants to tax pension funds, reducing pensions by about 20%, to increase income tax, and to increase and extend the sales tax. The finance minister wanted to cut the military

budget, but in fact it is to be increased.

The Histadrut has called a general strike from Sunday 2 December. An employers' association has gone to court to get an injunction to stop the strike on the grounds that it is political.

The leader of the trade union section of the Histadrut (the Histadrut is a big employer as well as a union) has said that the strike will go ahead anyway. It is not certain it will, but some workers are talking about striking whatever the Histadrut says.

## Stop Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men

March called by Outrage to New Scotland Yard and Winter Pride  
**Sunday 9 December**  
 Assemble 12 noon, Horseguards Avenue, London SW1  
 (Embankment tube)  
 Rally 2pm outside Winter Pride, University of London Union, Malet St  
 Entrance to Gay Pride £5, ring 071-981 3983





Thatcher in tears. She never cried for her victims

# Labour must fight!

## Kick them all out!

From front page

And where does that leave Neil Kinnock's Labour Party?

Kinnock's entire strategy for dealing with the Tories has been a strategy of waiting for the Tories to fall quietly into the abyss, weighed down by Thatcher, and her policies.

But they have now shed Thatcher. They intend to shed or radically change the poll tax.

Labour was winning — so they change the rules of the game and try to wipe the slate clean with a palace coup at Westminster!

So far it has 'worked' for them. Already opinion polls show the Tories bounding

ahead to an 11% lead over Labour!

That cannot last long, of course. It is the honeymoon, new-broom effect, not a basic change in the situation of the Tories.

The economy is still in a mess, and spiralling sharply into deeper slump. Unemployment is rising.

It is very like the slump of the early '80s, except that Britain's membership of the ERM leaves the Tories with even less room to manoeuvre.

The Tories are still in dire trouble. They will probably resume their downward fall. But it may not be as sharp and steep as it was under Mrs Thatcher.

If the Tories make radical changes in the poll tax then, probably, it won't be.

Labour may be left high and dry.

The entire anti-Tory strategy — if you can call a policy of passive waiting a strategy! — of Kinnock and his friends — and we have said it in *SO* again and again — is wrong and misguided.

It is also deeply irresponsible. Based on the hope that the Tories would go on making mistake after mistake, it committed the cardinal political sin of underestimating the enemy.

But, no, the Tories are not stupid! Despite their ancient sobriquet, "the stupid party", they are the very opposite of stupid. And they are serious in the business of winning and holding power.

Kinnock and his friends stand

in damning comparison to the Tories on that score!

Consider the experience of the poll tax. Here is a deeply unpopular measure imposed by a government backed by only a minority of the electorate. So unpopular, in fact, that large swathes of traditional Tory voters are alienated from their party by it.

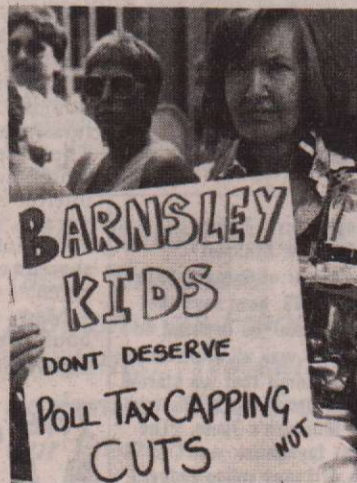
There is a great mass movement of protest against it, together with the biggest wave of mass civil disobedience in modern British history. It produced a prolonged storm of indignation.

Ultimately it was this storm of mass protest — not her posturing on Europe, important though this was — which blew Thatcher out of Downing Street. The poll tax and the resistance to it destroyed Thatcher. The Labour Party could have organised and led that anti-poll tax protest and transformed and intensified the movement by giving it a realisable political goal.

The Tories could have been forced against their will into calling a general election. Not the general election they will call within 18 months at the time which suits them best. A general election like the one Edward Heath called in 1974, and lost.

But the Labour Party leaders would have none of it. They condemned the civil disobedience and sided with Mrs Thatcher's police against anti-poll tax demonstrators.

Kinnock and his friends just



Labour should campaign for the poll tax to be scrapped now

waited, passively, speculating like irresponsible gamblers on a continual decline in the Tories' electoral fortunes which would win them the general election.

The result is that Thatcher has been removed by a Tory coup and not by a movement of mass protest led by the Labour Party.

Instead of going down to disarray, along with Thatcher, before such a movement, the Tory party has gained electoral credibility by removing Thatcher!

And it will gain if the government decides to radically modify the poll tax.

Where the Tories could be in deep disarray, and Labour moving triumphantly to office, the Tories are still in power, minus Thatcher, and Labour's electoral prospects look bleaker than for two years!

That is the balance sheet of Kinnockism.

Of course the Tories may not be able to scrap and radically modify the poll tax.

Certainly they are not going

to be able to control the slump and the rocketing unemployment and bankruptcies that are accompanying it.

It is still not too late for the Labour Party leaders to stop acting like the school's reverential junior debating team on a visit to Westminster and start to fight back against the Tories.

Kinnock has made the right noises. He has called for an election, and denounced the Tory coup. But the working class need the deeds that go with such words!

The Labour Party should mount a big campaign of meetings and demonstrations to denounce the Tory palace coup and demand a general election. It should campaign for the poll tax to be scrapped now, not tinkered with and Heseltine God knows when.

If Kinnock and his friends won't learn from the history of the labour movement, then let them learn from the example of the Tory party!

### Advisory Editorial Board

- Graham Bash
- Vladimir Derer
- Jatin Haria (Labour Party Black Sections)
- Eric Heffer MP
- Dorothy Macedo
- Joe Marino
- John McIlroy
- John Nicholson
- Peter Tatchell

Members of the Advisory Committee are drawn from a broad cross-section of the left who are opposed to the Labour Party's witch-hunt against Socialist Organiser. Views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board.

"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: Monday

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



# The scandal of London's housing

By Liz Millward



Tariq loves Tarzan and both love designer battle fatigues

## Who's the left's favourite Tory?

### GRAFFITI

**Ken Livingstone has a broader appeal than his rival as Britain's leading media leftie, Tariq Ali. The Tory leadership election has proved it.**

Tariq Ali has cheered on Michael Heseltine. "I'm very grateful to Michael," the Independent on Sunday reported him as saying. "Without him I wouldn't be where I am." Heseltine employed Ali on one of his magazines in 1966-7.

Ken Livingstone picked the winner, praising John Major. "Major would get up and say that we had to help people," he said, recalling their time together on Lambeth council.

"Many of us on the left were acutely embarrassed about the previous record of Labour. Major was infinitely more hard-working and nicer than the other members."

Of course, maybe the endorsement giving Major a decisive edge as a man of the people wasn't Livingstone's, but the one from Kinnock-loyalist MP Kate Hoey, who praised "John" for being more interested in sport than any other prime minister.

John Major still had to do some work for himself. Concerned to broaden his support beyond the Tory hard right, he vowed that the NHS would be safe in his hands. He appreciated the NHS, he said, because it had saved his



life as a baby. The sincerity of this assurance can be gauged from the fact that the NHS was not set up until Major was five years old, well past babyhood.

**In**sincere assurances, however, come cheaper than dressing your family for the Tory leadership.

Michael Heseltine footed a bill for £20,000 for new clothes for his wife and two daughters for the photo-opportunities of the leadership contest.

**O**ops, sorry. Todor Zhivkov, Stalinist dictator of Bulgaria from 1954 to 1989, now says that the "socialism" he imposed on the country was all a mistake.

"I must admit that we started from the wrong basis," he told Rupert Murdoch's Times. "The socialist foundation was wrong... If I was ruling today, I would go and decisively strike up a deal with the United States. I say this not just for pragmatic reasons, but out of a deep conviction."

He claims he started to have doubts as early as 1956. For another 33 years, unfortunately, Bulgarian workers who were so bold as to express doubts about Zhivkov's tyranny had their scepticism dealt with by the secret police.

Zhivkov is better towards his successors, who now propose to put him on trial for corruption. "No other head of state in recent history has been so inhumanly treated." He was speaking from "the luxury villa of his granddaughter, Evgenia," so probably most Bulgarian workers would prefer the "inhuman treatment" to Zhivkov's "socialism".

**I**n 1989 I almost gave up my party card, but decided to keep it to take part in the end. What I want is a party - as in cocktail - to say the party's over."

Bea Campbell, leading member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

**M**y idea of a good read is the London Property Guide. My idea of a nice afternoon is one spent wandering around show-flats. I'm pretty weird, but I could have a lot of nice afternoons!

All over London and the South East property developers are trying desperately to get rid of whole estates, sorry 'developments'.

Within walking distance of my flat the following 'developments' are almost entirely empty: King and Queen Wharf, The Lakes, Lavender Walk, Russia Court, Silver Walk, Hithe Point, and several more whose names I can't remember. Altogether there are probably a couple of thousand empty flats and houses.

The developers are going broke, the area is lifeless, and local services and dreadful London's Docklands, Thatcher's showpiece, may look good from the air, but from the ground it's just desolate.

But behind the empty river frontage is a different story. Much of the less desirable land was given or sold cheaply to Housing Associations for low-cost homes. These flats and houses are all full to bursting. There are waiting lists for the rented homes and even with interest rates so high (and very stringent entry conditions) most of the shared ownership flats are taken.

Many Southwark Council housing estates are appalling, and you couldn't pay people



## 250 black people deported every month Here to stay - here to fight

Three women in the West Midlands are fighting back against deportation. Each of them has a different story to tell but what they have in common is that they are all black and victims of the racist immigration laws.

Dharmowtee Surju (right) is expecting her first child who will be born a British citizen. The Home Office wants to separate her from her husband Harry and send her back to Mauritius. Prakesh (left) has suffered the experience of domestic violence and a broken marriage

and now too faces deportation to Mauritius with her son Prem, losing her livelihood and the new life which she has tried to rebuild. Sonia Malhi (centre), who was at one time driven to attempt suicide, is now threatened with return to India although her only close relative is her sister in England.

Since the 1988 Immigration Act came into effect deportations have increased threefold to a rate of 250 black people every month. New immigration rules are made every few months with only one purpose in mind:

to tighten the screw even further and keep black people out of Britain. Scope for challenging Home Office decisions through the legal system has been consistently diminished. The West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign (WMADC) aims to stop deportations by alternative means under the slogan "Here to stay, here to fight".

For further details contact WMADC c/o 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 19. Tel: 021 551 4518 or 021 523 0580.

Photo: Mark Salman

to live on them. But when the Cherry Garden estate was opened, no-one refused a place.

Cherry Garden is one of the only bits of river frontage to be given over to 'social housing' and the families who moved in are lucky indeed.

Southwark people are desperate for decent homes. There is great bitterness from those who have lived for years on estates like the

crumbling Bonamy Estate against the 'outsiders' who got places in Cherry Garden.

The North Peckham Estate is a national disgrace, the Tustin is a health hazard, as are the many pre-war blocks around Tower Bridge.

As if that wasn't enough, Southwark has an enormous homelessness problem.

And it could all be solved at a stroke. Just move people off the streets and the decaying estates and into all

those empty river-front apartments. Docklands would come to life.

The extra rents would pay for improvements to the older estates. Bitterness would end because everyone would have decent housing. Services would improve (they'd have to). Local schools would stay open.

But will it happen? Only if we make it happen. The next Labour government should be made to make it happen.

## The press and the Tory crisis

# Murdoch's each-way bet



By Jim Denham

**W**hat exactly has been going on at News International over the past couple of weeks? Murdoch's papers, usually so outspoken in their devotion to Mrs Thatcher, were far from uniform in rallying to her side in those last, desperate days.

The Sun stayed loyal throughout, of course: it could hardly do otherwise given the way it had rotted-welled Heseltine and his supporters at the outset of the campaign. But the Times kept its options open until the day before the ballot (when it

finally came out for Mrs Thatcher) and the Sunday Times actually backed Heseltine.

You could almost feel some sympathy for Lord Young when he complained: "I find it odd the Sunday Times, the principal beneficiary of the government's trade union legislation, should discard the prime minister."

Stronger still is the fact that of all the national press, only the Sun and Murdoch's other daily tabloid, Today, accurately predicted Thatcher's resignation on Thursday. Given the importance that Mrs T is said to attach to the Murdoch press, and the Sun in particular, one wonders whether it really was those mysterious "men in grey suits" who finally persuaded her the game was up. Or whether the coup de grace came from Wapping.

In any event, Sun editor Kelvin Mackenzie must have been mightily relieved when news of the resignation reached him. If Thatcher had

fought on into the second round and lost, Mackenzie would certainly have been sacked as the Sun suddenly switched its allegiance to that dynamic, exciting man of the people, Michael Heseltine.

As it is, the Sun is now backing Major (as the semi-official "Thatcherite" candidate) but not so enthusiastically that a switch to Tarzan would be out of the question under Mackenzie's editorship.

Of course, Murdoch has a most compelling reason to keep his options open on the question of the Tory leadership: the Sky takeover of BSB is still potentially a very hot potato - not least because it is illegal.

Thatcher gave the Digger a nod and a wink that the deal was fine by her. But would a new Tory leader necessarily take such an easy-going attitude? The Digger cannot afford to alienate any of the three candidates.

Not surprisingly, Bernard Ingham is leaving Downing Street hard

on the heels of his mistress. Although Mr Ingham is, strictly speaking, a civil servant and thus above politics, it would be impossible for him to serve a new master.

Since his appointment as Downing Street press officer in 1979, Ingham has become, in effect, Mrs Thatcher's personal propaganda and disinformation chief. It was Ingham, at his unattributable press briefings, who would give the Tory press the "line" not only against Labour but also against any of Maggie's cabinet "colleagues" who were out of favour.

Thus the tabloid campaigns over the years against Francis Pym, John Biffen, Nigel Lawson and, finally, Geoffrey Howe.

It is probably too much to hope that the departure of both Thatcher and Ingham will signal the end of this constitutional outrage. But perhaps a few more papers will find the integrity to follow the lead of the Independent, the Guardian and the Scotsman and pull out of the "lobby system".





Mass action won in France. It can win here!

# Fight the Tories French style!

By Mark Sandell, NUS  
National Committee

It is not only the ex-Prime Minister who kides herself that the continentals, and particularly the French, are made of different stuff than us British.

The Kinnockite leadership of the National Union of Students do it too, in their own way. They tell us that only a Labour government can change things for students, and that

mass action can't work, even after the victories of the French students have proved this to be nonsense. Or is it that the French are, after all, different sorts of beings from us?

On my recent visit to France I found nothing unique about French students. I found that they face exactly the same problems as British students.

Their colleges lack books and other basic materials. They are in terrible disrepair. There are too few lecturers. In short, education is grossly underfunded and the so-

called socialist government is cramming more students into education without a proportionate increase in funds.

All this is very familiar. So is the issue of safety that sparked off the first student demonstrations this year.

Safety is a major issue because of the increasing number of attacks on students — particularly on black and women students — in or around colleges in the poorer areas.

From local demonstrations students spread the action until, by mid-November, national mass demonstrations were happening twice a week. In many colleges activists organised to build local structures. The mounting wave of protest was, by mid-November, being joined by Lycee (FE) students all over France, and by lecturers and parents.

The French President finally felt he had to meet the students, and the Prime Minister was forced to give more money and to promise improvements in education.

Of course, much is still to be fought for, but the Lycee movement has a great deal to teach British students. The French students fought hard, they were not content to be a stage army, with one token demo staged when and where it would cause least fuss.

They built from one demo towards the next, often only days away. They kept up the pressure, and showed that students could win.

The demonstrations were centred on the demands of students from the poorest areas, and those who have most problems, like black students.

It involved these students not by lipservice to their "special oppression" but by building a fighting movement. They went out and made direct links with workers. They got many lecturers to join the demonstrations, despite the refusal of the Socialist Party-controlled Lecturers' Union to call joint strike action.

By contrast with the student movement of 1986, the Lycee move-

ment was almost exclusively made up of 16-18 year olds in Further Education Colleges — the very section of the British student movement NUS so often excludes or ignores.

French students have problems with their organisations, too. The French student movement, unlike

**"The British student faces the same problems as French students... We can and must learn from our French counterparts."**

ours, does not have one big union. A few small unions tied to political parties exist, but most students are not in any union.

As a result, no links existed with HE students who, for the most part, did not get involved.

The other direct result of the lack of one union was that the political party unions and other groups like "SOS-Racisme" were able to present themselves as the leadership of a movement whose activists had no way to hold them accountable, and which has no organised democratic structures. A general union needs to be built.

I left France having found nothing unique in French students — except maybe their combativity!

The British student faces the same problems as French students and our movement has the same potential. We can and must learn from our French counterparts. We must make the NUS build a fighting union based on mass action and democracy. NUS must get off its knees — the position the Kinnockites have forced on it — and mobilise students against the poll tax, against fees, and against the Tories.

We must fight, and fight to win — like the Lycee students!

## Labour Youth in conference

**No  
democracy,  
no  
socialism**

By Tony Pope

This year's Labour Youth Conference was a dull and lifeless event, poorly attended and badly planned.

The right-wing candidate was elected as NEC youth rep by the "hundred or so" votes present, and there were no "uncomfortable" decisions the Kinnockite leaders there had to report back.

This conference was disappointing for one main reason — that it wasn't really a conference at all! There were no motions, no votes and no serious opportunities for debate.

The speakers, such as re-elected NEC rep Alun Parry, and Labour Party General Secretary Larry Whitty, were full of rhetoric about "democratic socialism". In reality there was little democracy and less socialism at this conference. Socialism was the "socialism" of the Policy Review, and there was no democratic input from delegates.

The weekend was really designed to train activists to help Kinnock into Number 10. But it was revealing: the smart young economic adviser who took a policy workshop on Economic Priorities for Labour was at least honest. "Labour's policy is to work with capitalists," she said, and "we've got to convince people we can manage capitalism better than a bunch of capitalists."

When I and others objected, she told us that we weren't here to debate policy: our role is just to accept it, shut up and do as we are told. Or else.

This tiny, undemocratic conference accurately reflected the state of the Labour Youth movement. Such a movement is not a force fighting for socialism — and it can't be much of an election-winning force, either.

We need an open, democratic and radical youth movement if we are to grow and develop into a worthwhile force, fighting for young people's interests and for the cause of socialism.

We must make sure that next year's event is bigger and better. We can't allow the youth movement to continue to be stifled.

We must demand and fight for a real conference, not another "Kinnock Youth" rally.

## Four weeks for subs drive

This week the *Socialist Organiser* office is mailing out special subscription offers and appeal leaflets for our £25,000 fund drive to hundreds of people round the country who have expressed interest in the paper.

To build up the circulation of the new expanded 16-page paper, we are offering subscriptions cheap — at the old rates, unchanged for eight years — for the next four weeks, until Christmas.

Even increased subscriptions and sales will not fully cover the costs

of the paper's expansion, and that's why we also need our £25,000 fund drive. We're asking for support in two forms — straight donations and regular monthly payments into our '200 Club'. The fund's running total so far is now £13,231.

The winner of £100 from the December draw of the '200 Club' will be announced in next week's *SO*.

Donations to, and standing order and subscription forms from, *SO*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**Subscribe to Socialist  
Organiser!  
Special offer — cheap  
rates until Christmas.**

£16 for one year  
£3 for 10 issues. Send cheques  
payable to *SO* to *SO*, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.

Name.....

Address.....

**SOCIALIST ORGANISER**

Stop the War in the Gulf!  
National Demonstration  
24 November  
Assembly, 10.00, Exhibition  
March 12, 1992 in Hyde Park

**No to war!**

peace  
No WAR  
For  
Solutions

## Socialists and the unions

A Socialist Organiser  
weekend school  
February 9/10 1991  
Manchester Polytechnic

Sessions on: The state of the unions today; Arguing for socialism in the workplace; Back to basics: strike and union organisation; What do we mean by a rank and file movement?; New technology: a worker's answer.  
Debate on: Should strikers in the vital services provide emergency cover?  
How to defeat the anti-union laws.  
Plus professional creche, social and films  
£4 waged, £2 unwaged  
For more details write to PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA



**Eyewitness report**

# South Africa: stop the killings!

Frank van der Horst, a leading activist in the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), the largest independent socialist grouping in South Africa, talks about the recent explosion of violence in the black townships and what to do about it

The violence in the townships is a very complex matter — though a mysterious third force has certainly been active — all that has happened cannot be explained by this factor alone.

Agents of the state do not operate in a vacuum, they exploit existing class and/or "ethnic" divisions within the black population. And all of this is happening in a situation in which the state is on the offensive.

President De Klerk has been using the process of negotiations with the African National Congress to extricate big business from the economic crisis. He wants to attract new foreign investment and get what limited sanctions are still in place lifted.

The fighting in the townships certainly helps the state to weaken, divide and even, in some cases, to smash organisations of the oppressed.

Let me give some examples: I was at a trade union conference recently. Workers told me of how attendance at shop stewards committees had fallen from hundreds to tens as workers were too frightened to go out.

Workers are living in fear. Shop stewards who speak Zulu do not speak it anymore, not even in union meetings, because the language has become so closely linked with Inkatha [Chief Buthelezi's movement which is involved in a bloody war with the ANC and the "comrades" in Natal].

To speak Zulu in some areas is to risk your life.

I know at least five people — activists in the working class movement, in no sense supporters of Inkatha — who have been attacked or had their homes burnt down simply because they speak Zulu.

One church minister described to me the situation in a hostel complex in the Transvaal [scene of the recent fighting] where, though the different hostels tended to be predominantly Zulu, Xhosa or whatever, there was no serious friction. Workers would play football together, drink together and inter-marry.

There was no earthly reason why they would want to massacre each other. But, according to the minister, a secret group of armed masked men arrived in the complex, identified all the residents of one hostel, gathered them together and told them that they were to attack the neighbouring hostel. Anyone who didn't want to do this would be "eliminated". The majority, for fear of their lives, joined the attack.

Once something like this happens the workers become involved in a cycle of violence which just goes on and on.

This is a pattern that we have experienced many times.

Unknown agents come into an area threatening people, starting

**"The violence has taken on a momentum of its own"**

fights. Of course they do not operate in a vacuum they exploit existing divisions.

Part of the problem has been the behaviour of some of the so-called "comrades". Take, for example, the 1983 boycott of white shops.

Some of the unemployed youth — who were "high" on drugs — would set up so-called "people's courts" and try people on the spot.

The courts became a way of settling domestic scores — you had girlfriends condemning former boyfriends for all kinds of crimes, and vice versa.

The "comrades" would often humiliate older people — that's something that cuts across deeply embedded traditions within the townships. Most workers believe that the elderly should be respected not humiliated.

Groups of unemployed youth would check workers' groceries — on the pretext that they were enforcing the boycott of white shops. They would say they were taking things away to be confiscated but in reality they would take these things for themselves.

Pensioners would be found "guilty" of some minor offence and be forced to eat OMO soap powder.

In this heightened turmoil mysterious forces intervened to increase divisions and raise the temperature.

One of the most cynical operations occurred a few years ago in the KTC squatter camp outside



'Comrades' burn an 'Inkatha supporter'

Cape Town.

Guns would be handed out to back up one group or another. At one stage the state switched sides because it felt that the original group of widoeke [vigilantes] that it had backed had become too powerful.

There was complete devastation. You had entire communities dragooned to support one faction or another.

Things got so bad that various community groups and trade unions united in the Western Cape to form a "Stop the Killings" campaign.

There are attempts to get such a broad campaign going in the Transvaal. A few weeks ago the Azanian People's Organisation [a black consciousness group that is critical of Nelson Mandela and the ANC] called a conference. We in WOSA turned up but we think it is important to have a broad "Stop the Killings" campaign that is not just the property of one particular political group.

We believe it is important to involve the ANC and all the progressive trade unions. To get everyone to discuss the question of the violence and also to address the question of negotiations with the regime.

We want a consultative conference of all the organisations of the oppressed to discuss these issues and the road ahead.

Frank van der Horst was talking to Tom Rigby

**Stan Crooke reports from Germany**

# Germany: the

## Unemployment mushrooms

As we go to press, railworkers across what used to be East Germany are out on strike against job losses. Up to half the workforce face the sack. At last, the fightback has started.

Unemployment in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), now part of a unified Germany since October, is estimated to reach three or four million by the middle of 1991.

At the time of unification 445,000 people in the ex-GDR were officially registered as unemployed, and another 1,770,000 registered as short-time workers.

Hardly a day goes by without more reports of factory closures and impending closures — 33 out of the 41 sugar refineries in the ex-GDR are to be closed; 25,000 workers in the cotton industry have lost their jobs already, and another 36,000 jobs are scheduled to go by the end of next year; and 68,000 railway workers in the ex-GDR are scheduled to lose their jobs in the next five years.

Women and foreigners have been particularly affected by the sudden mushrooming of unemployment. Women are first in line for job losses and well over 50% of the unemployed are women. Foreigners often do not show up in the unemployment statistics — once they lose their jobs they are given a "golden handshake" and sent back to their country of origin.

Other tricks have been used to keep down the official unemployment statistics. Many workers are registered as on "short time zero" and are therefore not counted as unemployed. Older workers are registered as having taken early retirement and therefore do not show up in the official statistics either.

Similar to the situation in Britain, the unemployed receive either Unemployment Benefit if they have worked, or Social Aid (SA, like British Income Support) if they have not worked for at least a year. But there is no shortage of hurdles to be overcome before the unemployed can receive such welfare benefits.

To receive UB the unemployed must prove that they are "available for work". Parents who cannot show that they have alternative arrangements for the care of their children are deemed not available for work and therefore ineligible for benefits.

The unemployed must be prepared to accept the offer of a job from the Unemployment Benefit Office, even if (as is generally the case) the job is lower paid and further from home than their previous job, and does not correspond to their level of training or education.

Anyone who rejects such an offer has their benefit cut for some two months, as too does anyone who voluntarily quits their job (which is now particularly common amongst workers on short time).

The conditions for receiving SA are even more stringent. Anyone with more than 1000 Marks (£330) is disqualified from claiming it,



Kohl may laugh, workers in the east can't

and, even when SA applicants are adults who no longer live with their parents, the income of parents is taken into account when deciding whether or not to pay SA. (Parents, and sometimes other relatives, who refuse to provide information about their income are subject to legal action.)

UB is calculated as a proportion of the wage which the unemployed person previously received. Again, women in particular lose out: since women receive below average rates of pay, they also receive below average rates of UB. A recent survey in Berlin showed that women receive 34% less UB than men on average.

UB is paid directly into the bank

accounts of the unemployed. But such is the state of the banking system in the ex-GDR, given the introduction of the "free market", there are long delays before UB payments turn up in the bank accounts of the unemployed, leaving them in a state of severe hardship in the meantime.

In addition, staff in the Unemployment Benefit Offices are under-trained and lack adequate resources. Many have received only a week's training in the complex legislation and do not have any manuals containing the regulations for the payment of UB. They are therefore often unable to work out what benefits the unemployed are entitled to.

"Employment Training"-style schemes have been introduced into the ex-GDR. Wages paid on such schemes are often below the going rates, training can be poor in quality, and, as with other re-training courses, there is no guaranteed jobs at the end of such schemes.

Two groups in particular have attempted to exploit the growth of unemployment in the ex-GDR. Small-time businessmen have set up dubious and expensive courses for the unemployed (eg. in computer training), whilst the far-right Republikaner have sought to blame foreigners for the rocketing unemployment figures.

The unemployed in the ex-GDR are therefore confronted with limited access to a low level of welfare benefits, and the threat of a cut in benefits should they reject low paid work or a fake training scheme. It is only appropriate that the Unemployment Benefit Office in Leipzig should have found a home for itself in the premises of the Stasi — the former East German secret police.

## Together against poverty

Joint Statement of the ex-GDR based 'Unemployed Workers Association' and the West German based 'Co-ordination Centre of Unemployed Trade Unionists'

In contradiction to promises which have been made, the process of German unification is leading to growing unemployment, poverty, and social insecurity in all parts of Germany.

The unemployment figures are rising not just in the ex-GDR but also in Western Germany. The number of long-term unemployed in particular is growing.

The process of unification is increasingly being used to play off employed against unemployed, and also unemployed against unemployed. Differences in the social situation in different parts of Germany are being used to speed up the dismantling of the social services.

We recognise the necessity of a joint challenge in the interests of employed and unemployed to this development. We therefore demand:

(1) The right to work must be realised in line with the UN Declaration of Human Rights. This is an inner-German and inner-European question of peace, especially in view of the developments in Eastern Europe. It is therefore necessary to secure the realisation of demands for genuine state-initiated employment programmes. It is a question of creating humane and qualified jobs in ecological and social spheres in particular.

(2) Until this has been achieved there must be humane and social protection for all those who are affected by unemployment and its consequences.

This means, amongst other things, scrapping the anti-social means test and extending to the whole of Germany the more favourable regulations prevailing in the ex-GDR which were agreed upon by the two German governments.

We are in agreement that only joint action brings results. We are therefore opposed to all attempts to divide and exclude. We regard this statement as the expression of a new stage in our cooperation and work.

We appeal to all unemployment initiatives and groups to take action in their own areas to achieve these demands.



# dream turns sour



German workers and bosses are on a collision course

## Issues in the elections

# Costs and consequences of unification

Thomas Kupfer of the United Left in Halle talked to Socialist Organiser

The main themes in the elections are different in the West and East of Germany. In the West, the issue which has emerged as the principal one is the burden of reunification, the costs of reunification for the citizens of the old German Federal Republic.

Lafontaine [the SPD candidate for Chancellor] is trying to score points on this issue, by criticising and attacking the financial policies of the government, but I don't think he will achieve anything in doing so.

In the former German Democratic Republic it is different. What people here are thinking about and interested in are the social consequences of reunification. None of the promises which were made in March or later on on the occasion of the monetary unification have been implemented by the government.

The promised economic miracle has been postponed again and again. The situation here is clearly not attractive for investments. Unemployment will therefore increase, and could reach three millions by next year, plus also those not counted officially as unemployed, such as those on "short-time working: zero" as is already the case.

Is Paragraph 218 an issue? [Paragraph 218 in the West German constitution restricts women's right to abortion, whereas the former GDR allowed women greater access to abortion.]

In my opinion this is not an issue for many people at the moment, given the decision that different laws will prevail for the next two years in different parts of Germany (Paragraph 218 in the West, the old East German legislation in the East).

Of course, once the two years are up, when people are not as conscious of the issue as at present, then the attempt will be made to extend Paragraph 218 to East Germany. But it is not an issue in the elections, partly because some of the less consistent sections of the women's movement have accepted this "solution".

Other issues which are not being taken up in the elections include, unfortunately, the Gulf crisis, the export of armaments, and German foreign policy in general, including proposals for constitutional changes to allow German military forces to take action abroad. On the latter point the SPD [German equivalent of the Labour Party] will knuckle under again.

There are other causes as well which should be taken up, such as land reform in East Germany. But we are too weak to make them an issue in the elections.

Is immigration an issue in the elections?

Yes, for example the question of Soviet Jewry, or immigration by gypsies and Romanians which had already been effectively banned by the old East German government. Lafontaine has had a high profile in East Germany, putting forward conservative proposals regarding the right of asylum.

For the left, the situation in relation to this issue is very unfavourable. In situations of social crisis, such as you now have in the former GDR, there is a great temptation to blame foreigners and peo-

ple who have asylum for the non-appearance of the promised prosperity.

What is the attitude of the United Left to the elections?

We have had a lot of discussions about the elections. There has been a lot of controversy. A number of people have resigned.

The problem is that we have very few people who thoroughly studied the issues, and those people who have done so have not had the time for work at rank-and-file level. Thus, the gap between work at parliamentary level and work at rank-and-file level became bigger

## "It's clear that Kohl will win"

and bigger, the gap between Berlin (where the former was necessarily concentrated) and other places became bigger and bigger.

I would say that there are at least three different positions in the United Left. There are those in favour of participation in the elections, and those who are against participation. The latter covers both a radical anti-parliamentarian wing and also more moderate opponents of participation.

The former covers both those who support the PDS/Left List [see below], not so much because they want to work with the PDS, though this is a factor, but rather because they want to work with the West German left involved in the Left List, and those who support citizens initiatives such as the Greens.

Apart from the PDS [the former East German Communist Party], what political organisations are involved in the PDS/Left List electoral coalition?

The Left List was originally a collection of individuals, for a combination of reasons, for example to avoid introducing the arguments between the different left wing organisations into the project. But as a result of judicial decisions concerning the conduct of the elections, the PDS ended up putting up candidates in both Eastern and Western Germany.

Individuals are involved from different organisations, and also people who are not in any organisation. The spectrum stretches from left social-democracy to long-standing left wing organisations such as the United Socialist Party and the Communist League, as well as some smaller Marxist organisations, and also left wing trade unionists and people from the Greens.

What about Workers Power and the Socialist Workers Group [West German SWP]?

As far as I'm aware, Workers Power supports the PDS/Left List, but, of course, critically, but it is too small to have any real presence. The SWG, in my opinion, has a pretty stupid approach to this question. They do not support the PDS/Left List, but have called for support for the SPD, on the basis that the elections are not particularly important, but if there is anything worthwhile to be achieved in the elections, then it is getting rid of Kohl [the current right-wing Chancellor].

What is the political programme of the PDS/Left List?

The programme must be analysed on several levels.

Firstly, there is the programme itself, as it exists on paper. That is not a radical left wing programme, but rather a left social democratic one which raises issues such as ecology, women, and particularly the interests of the inhabitants of

the former German Democratic Republic, on the basis of the desire to have a say in the nature of German unity.

Several points in the programme need to be criticised. But what needs to be criticised even more is that the PDS itself is not up to the level of this programme. The programme is the product of a small elite at the top of the PDS, but the rank and file of the party is unable to make sense of the programme, and cannot accept the political culture which has been introduced by the West German left.

Do you think that Kohl will win the elections?

I am sure that he will win the elections. That is already quite clear. The question is whether the barriers within the spectrum of the opposition, for example between the PDS and the citizens initiatives, can be broken down on the territory of the former GDR.

This might occur as a result of cooperation between the different fractions in parliament in relation to specific issues. If the United Left were represented in both fractions, then it could play a leading role here.

But it must occur much more in the extra-parliamentary sphere. At the moment, however, many grassroots initiatives have collapsed, both in the former GDR and also in West Germany. You only need to think of the peace movement.

There could even be advantages if the PDS/Left List or the Greens/Alliance 90 did not win any seats in Parliament, given that the better people in these organisations would then be forced to be active in the extra-parliamentary sphere. I think that the history of the Volkskammer [short-lived East German parliament] has shown that in many spheres more can be achieved outside of parliament than within it by trying to influence decisions when you are in a minority anyway. You can try and publicise your ideas through parliament, but you cannot influence the decisions.

You only need to think of the story of the Stasi [former East German secret police] when nothing at all happened in the Volkskammer until some people occupied the Stasi headquarters in Berlin and thereby, whatever the limitations of the eventual outcome, achieved more than would have been achieved by however many speeches in the Volkskammer.

That is quite a good example of how things will carry on. One thing is for sure. The politics of the street, and the people who were involved in such politics in the former GDR, have hitherto been treated with kid gloves. But that will change.



Engineering workers fight for jobs in the West



Workers' Liberty pamphlets



Ireland: beyond the slogans

£1 plus 22 pence p&p



A handbook for trade unionists

£1 plus 22 pence p&p



Israel Palestine: the great debate

£1.80 plus 22 pence p&p

Write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Lynne Segal argues that men are not the only

Star Crooks reports from Germany

# The sexu



The women's movement is fragmented

Cathy Nugent talked to Lynne Segal about her most recent book 'Slow Motion: Changing Men, Changing Masculinities', and about her general views on the state of feminism and women's struggles

**S**low Motion: Changing Men, Changing Masculinities' is very much a continuation of those themes I was presenting in 'Is the Future Female?'

There I was taking issue with certain popular strands of feminism, usually known as cultural feminism, in which it seemed to me that the voice of feminism as it was popularly seen was almost declaring some essential difference between men and women.

In the early days of women's liberation, the stress on an essential difference was something that feminists had their campaign against. Not that they thought men and women were the same, but that they saw masculinity and femininity as socially constructed and that both men and women could be changed by women's liberation. So there was an optimistic spirit in the early women's liberation writing.

By the end of the '70s, and for reasons that are understandable — because of growing awareness of the reality of men's violence, because change is so slow and contradictory, and because feminists became demoralised about the advances of feminism and also perhaps demoralised about the lack of radical changes in their personal lives — this all seemed to fit together with a more pessimistic outlook about there being something that's seemingly ineluctable about women's oppression, and moved back toward something pre-feminist, ie. sex-war thinking about men and women.

So it seemed essential to me — as a socialist-feminist — to attempt to keep alive those hopes around sexual politics, that men and women could work together, although not easily and no doubt in conflict, toward some better future for men and women.

And the problem was being defined as men. Whereas in the early days of women's liberation we tended to see inequalities and oppression as coming from many different structural roots — from the organisation of the family, from the organisation of the workplace, and mediated by the state and social policy, these were looked at as well as the problems of men themselves. It seemed by the end of the '70s everything was being reduced to the problems of men themselves.

**S**omehow the old goals towards, say, shifting social policy and these types of campaigns, were losing ground partly because the welfare state was being rolled back. So those issues were not being so much focused on.

There was the idea that men were never going to change, no matter what advances women achieved. We come back to this inevitable problem.

So that's why I wanted to ask, once gain, is it the case that there is



# Male Optimist

some essence, some biological essence, of masculinity that inevitably oppresses women or is it that there can be some world historic construction of men from the beginning of time that will always oppress women or is it that we are not only dealing simply with the psychology and nature of men but with something more complex and in that very complexity hard to shift.

After all, when you get change in one area then you get a consolidation of relations in other areas and that is what I thought.

I tried to look at all levels of masculinity. Interestingly, feminists haven't written a lot about men — not only feminists but no-one had written about men because it was always women who were seen as the problem.

In problematising men, and taking it seriously, this suggested there was not going to be a simplistic answer.

This is the problem. How do we connect out our psychologies as men and women and the understandings we do have of what it means to be men and women with the social structures out there, be they economic, political or ideological? That just really isn't easy.

Another problem is that these different structures do work fairly autonomously, so we can't just reduce one from another, so I do

*"It seemed by the end of the seventies that everything was being reduced to the problems of men themselves"*

think that it's important to engage with the psychology of men and women, and in doing that look at what the psychologists have said.

Well, the psychologists have spent a hundred years doing frantic research trying to find some fundamental sex difference which at face value looks like a biological sex difference.

At around the mid twentieth century they thought they had found biological sex differences. These turned out to be the minutest, smallest differences and they also turned out to discriminate more within a sex than between a sex, so by the 1970s the massive amount of sex difference research the psychologists had done turned out to suggest more the similarities between the sexes than the differences, and yet we live in this world where there is the systematic gendering of everything.

We know of men and women who have the same types of chromosomes and yet we experience ourselves to be quite different.

Because of the commitment that most of us have or perhaps because of the conflict we have around identity as men and women I felt that it was necessary to look at some of the psychoanalytic work and see whether that tells us something about the rigidities and patterns we see so clearly around gender identity.



Lynne Segal

**W**as I convinced? What I find so interesting about some of the psychoanalytic work — which itself is complex and contradictory — is the idea of masculinity and femininity forming a part of all of us at birth.

It's only later on that girls and boys take on the polarised differences of masculinity and femininity — and we see a struggle going on whereby nobody is ever wholly masculine or feminine. Boys come to repress their earlier femininity and girls come to repress their earlier active (which equals masculine) desires for more passive and receptive ones. I think that's interesting in suggesting some of the tensions that surround sexual identity.

However, the whole of Freud relies on the privileging of masculinity and he connects that with the possession of the penis which has been re-interpreted more recently as a cultural symbol. The privilege of this organ culturally creates boys' great anxieties about whether they're ever going to be proper men, or ever be man enough like their fathers and a girl's awareness that she will never be a man at all and so she can only hope for the man who will give her power and engage her.

And this is something that has caused enormous contention within and without feminism. What we think of this depends on what we think about where this privileging of masculinity comes from.

And what I think is absent from the psychoanalytic line is an adequate account of precisely why masculinity is so privileged. I think they could well be right, I think it is true to say that the penis as phallus becomes the symbol of masculinity and that therefore is something which is incredibly important.

It is obviously something which is experienced centrally for both men and women. But if you accept that it is a cultural image, you then have the problem of explaining what has created this cultural image. And that is where it seems to me we have to move over to more sociological and more structural and more historical cultural understandings of why it is that masculinity is given

a higher priority. And it's those structures that we have to engage with and subvert if we are feminists or anti-sexist men, attempting to bring about greater equality or greater intimacy or greater happiness as men and women.

**T**he problems of the psyche which the psychoanalysts talk about are problems of the psyche because of a reality which has been around for as long as we know whereby men are allocated privilege. That takes us back to looking at the organisations of labour where at work those at the top, in general, are men.

I wouldn't see this as a primary exactly. We have to look at the organisations of labour, the organisations of the family and also working alongside that with a certain autonomy of its own, the cultural habits of masculinity and femininity.

Those three things have a very long history and interact with each other and as one gets subverted — for instance women going into the labour force — still in all other ways, physically and culturally, men are at the centre.

We can't just say in the end it's about class, in the end it's about the organisation of labour.

Most popular or populist feminism now is stressing that the central problem is men. However, I don't find that most women do that. The current most commercially popular feminist project has got separated off from women's struggles on the ground.

**O**ne of the things I have been most criticised about is what I say about the supposed inevitable connection of men and violence. That doesn't necessarily understand the problem of violence, and it isn't necessarily in women's interests to deny that women can be violent. Especially if you look at the high levels of depression in women which is due to women suppressing their own violence.

Also in relation to domestic violence there are cases in the beginning where women have initiated violence as much as men. The problem is that though women may have initiated violence they are the

ones in general who suffer most. Unfortunately, men are more trained into the use of physical violence.

So we can't just have a vacuous analysis of that; we have to look at ways in which types of physical aggressiveness becomes embodied in men in a way in which it doesn't become embodied in women.

And on the other hand, there isn't something naturally inevitable about rape and violence. It's not for instance that rape or levels of rape — which are for now highest particularly in North America — are universal across time and place.

And there are different explanations. There is the straightforward feminist explanation that men are socialised into ideas of masculinity to connect masculinities up with the performance of authority and power and aggressive sexuality and that somehow both men and women were socialised with the idea of man as the active and woman as the passive.

But there is the idea that violence has become so much a part of subcultures of disorganised communities in which you see men most likely to use violence against women but also against other men and against themselves.

**T**here is now a lack of an organised women's movement, but on the other hand feminists are there, and also diverse feminist campaigns are still very much around.

So I think that the effects of the women's movement are still alive and well and in some ways, although they have diversified and some strands of feminism seem to be very much at odds with the views of the other strands of feminism, the issue of gender relations is very

much in the air.

It's not the case that though women are systematically disadvantaged and also that they are victims of male violence these things are all off the agenda. That for me suggests that struggles will continue to go on. So I'm not pessimistic. Women are strong and have become stronger over the last few decades.

The changes in the economy have actually sharpened the differences both between men and between women — some women are much better off than others. That's happened in a way that undermines the attempt to think of fundamental change in gender relations.

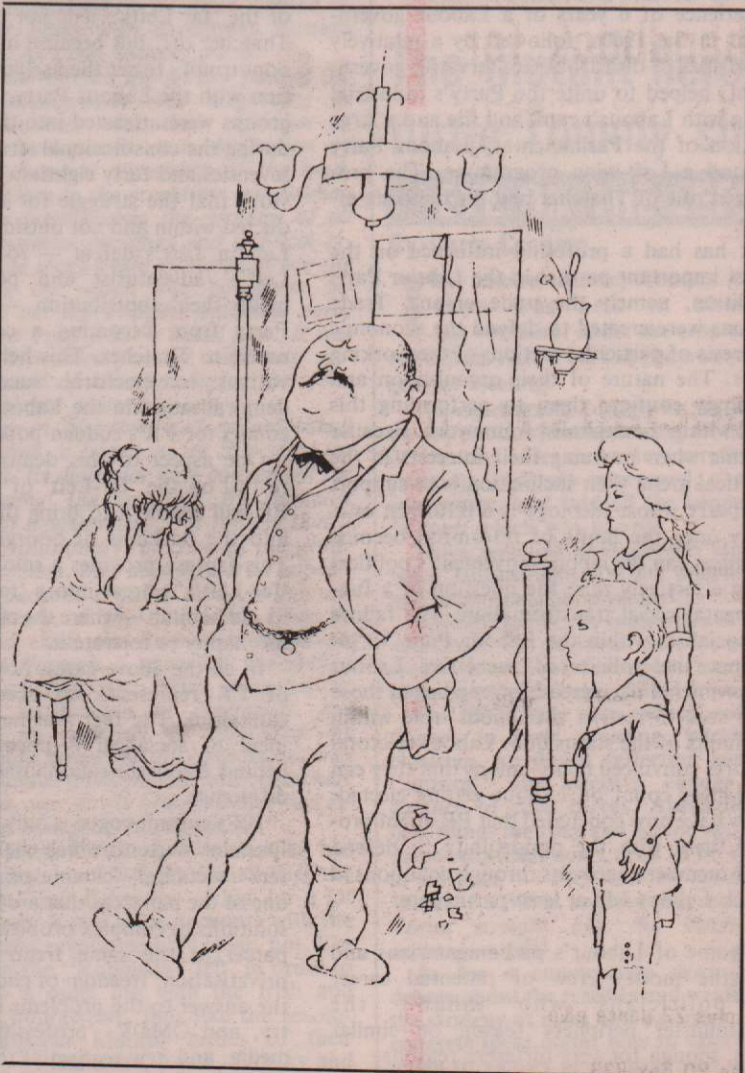
I don't think either the abandonment of women's committees all over the country or the bureaucratic enrolment of women by trade unions will silence women's voices or women's struggles because women are still nevertheless at the bottom of the labour movement and are organising together.

Also, I think there are other ways in which sexuality and sexual politics are very much on the agenda, because of AIDS for instance.

At first it seemed it was simply going to strengthen the moral right (and it did do). But the way to fight AIDS is for men and women to talk as much as they can about what they see as healthy and unhealthy, good and bad about sexuality, which again gives women more of a voice.

Although so far the campaigns around AIDS have been phallicentric about condoms, there is more chance for women to say what they think about sexuality, about penetrative sex and what they want.

So women's struggles are going to continue.





# The case against PR

## THE POLITICAL FRONT

Vladimir Derer



Alan Johnson (*Socialist Organiser* 12.10.90) gives two reasons — both full of holes — for the swing of Labour Party opinion towards PR.

Firstly he uncritically accepts that “there is now a widespread recognition that the ‘first past the post’ system is grotesquely undemocratic”. He claims that this is because the two major parties receive representation in parliament disproportionate to their popular vote and that minor parties receive derisory representation or none at all. According to Cde Johnson the “growing awareness” that there are better alternatives to the present British electoral system “other European countries do things differently” also contributed to PR’s popularity.

Secondly Cde Johnson attributes the swing to PR to Thatcher’s ruthless exploitation of “the absence of checks to her parliamentary majority” even though the Conservatives got no more than 42.2% of the popular vote.

The ‘ideological’ arguments in favour of PR (about fairness etc) have been known to Labour Party members for decades. The constant moaning first of the Liberals, then of the SDP and now of the Liberal Democrats (by no means forgetting past lamentations of the CP) ensured this. It is difficult to believe that it was the cumulative effect of these that has at last awakened Labour’s ‘liberal conscience’. The ruthlessness argument cuts both ways. If Thatcher was ruthless so could a Labour government be — if it had the guts.

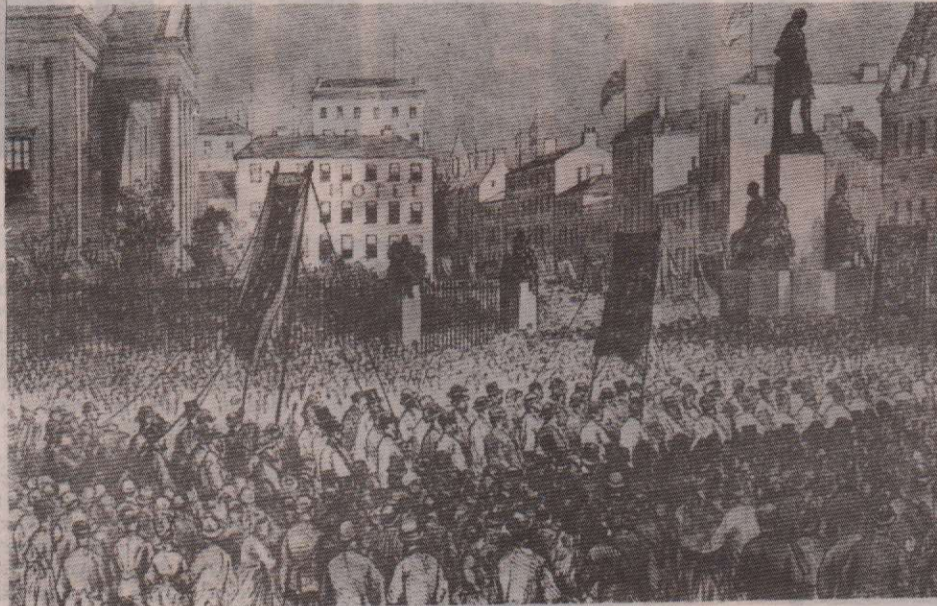
The causes for the PR lobby’s success lie elsewhere — in the despair at Labour’s seeming inability to end the continued rule of Thatcherism.

It is this which is loosening the ties which bind together the coalition that is the Labour Party. Some partners in this coalition are responding to Labour’s present adversity by regressing to their original orientation. The experience of 6 years of a Labour government in the 1960s, followed by a relatively short spell of disastrous Conservative government, helped to unite the Party’s industrial wing with Labour’s rank and file and a large section of the Parliamentary Labour Party around a Left-wing programme. The prolonged rule of Thatcher had the opposite effect.

It has had a profound influence on the most important partner in the Labour Party coalition, namely the trade unions. Trade unions were created to defend the economic interests of particular sections of the working class. The nature of their organisation and ideology confines them to performing this task within the capitalist framework. Because of this when pursuing their interests in the political arena their inclination is to support the party whose ideology is a reformist one. Only once the limits of reformism become manifest can the labour movement’s political wing effectively raise the question of a fundamental social transformation. The failure of socialists within the Labour Party to influence the policies of successive Labour governments have greatly strengthened those who seek to restrict the unions’ role within the limits of the status quo. Labour electoral failures convinced many unions that they can no longer count on Labour getting elected. They have now concluded that PR might provide them with the opportunity to defend their members’ interests through coalitions in which Labour will at least participate.

Some of Labour’s parliamentarians and the motley crew of potential career politicians who inhabit the Westminster periphery reason on similar lines, though for very different reasons.

Nevertheless most of them are not



Chartist demonstration 1848. The first mass political organisation of British workers had a comprehensive democratic programme: universal male suffrage, annual parliaments, secret ballots, payment of MPs, equal electoral districts and the abolition of the property qualifications of MPs.

ideologically opposed to major changes in social structure. They would have been happy to go along with a radical programme had socialists been able to maintain their influence in the Party and above all lead it to electoral victories. The involvement in left-wing politics and constitutional struggles of the seventies and early eighties of many a supporter of the present Party establishment proves this. However, with the prospects at the present of a Labour government uncertain, and of a socialist one indefinitely postponed, careers win out against socialist commitment. PR-based Lib-Lab coalitions seem to offer more promising pastures.

Another partner in the Labour Party coalition — the rank and file members — have been driven to PR by sheer despair. With the Left’s failure to present a credible alternative to Kinnoch, PR appears to many members as the only alternative to continued Conservative rule.

Finally, and far worse for socialism, is the reason behind the conversion to PR of some of the ‘far Left’s’; it is not the desire to see Thatcher off, but because in PR they see an opportunity to set themselves up in competition with the Labour Party. Some ‘far-Left’ groups were attracted into the Labour Party during the constitutional struggles in the late seventies and early eighties. Then, it was obvious that the struggle for socialism is conducted within and not outside the Party. The Labour Left’s defeat — to which the ‘far-Left’s’ adventurist and populist leanings made their contribution — prevented the Party from becoming a convincing alternative to Thatcher. This helped the Conservatives to electoral success, produced demoralisation in the Labour camp and accounts for PR’s sudden popularity.

One aspect of this demoralisation is the revival on the ‘far-Left’ of the fantasy that PR will enable it to bring the socialist torch into the darkness of bourgeois parliament. This fantasy provides a smokescreen for the ‘far-Left’s’ retreat into a ‘radical’ ghetto — its old habitat — where the ruling class is only too happy to tolerate it.

In all the above cases, however, advocacy of PR represents an accommodation to capitalism. The fact that here the abandonment of socialism is unconscious, hidden behind elaborate rationalisations, makes no difference.

PR’s current vogue is only one of the many ‘popular’ currents which characterise the present reactionary climate of opinion — just one of the panaceas that are being peddled as solutions to complex problems. It is part and parcel of the same trend which presents privatisation, freedom of choice, ‘Europe’ as the answer to the problems facing the country, and OMOV, ‘professional’ use of the media, and new realism as the answer to the problems facing the Labour Party.

Would the left be making a mistake to just pick out the present undemocratic electoral system as something to campaign against, leaving other, arguably even less democratic features of the British state untouched?

Alan Johnson accuses Roy Hattersley of ‘pessimism’ for arguing that under PR “no party would ever achieve overall parliamentary majority”. In fact it is the advocates of PR who are pessimistic (or worse).

According to Cde Johnson socialists must wait until they gain 50% support before they can set about changing society. Anything less would be “imposing socialism from above”. If this were so, socialists would be waiting for ever. The highest popular vote Labour ever achieved was 48.8 per cent. This despite the fact that Labour never campaigned on a socialist programme and, at best, on a radical reformist one. Some European parties which fought elections on a socialist programme feared far worse. This is no accident. In our society there are a number of factors which prevent people from responding positively to the idea of radical social change. Their upbringing, education or lack of it, the mass media, conditions under which people have to work, all combine to produce this result.

Lenin was overoptimistic when he wrote that the support of hundreds of thousands can be won for socialism by propaganda. But he hastened to add that the support of millions would be needed if socialist changes are to be brought about. Such support, he argued, can be won only through the masses’ own experience.

In fact rational arguments are likely to carry weight with relatively few. Nevertheless past experience shows that millions can be won for a radical reform programme. The election of a Labour government on such a programme is only the first step on the road to socialism. For once a radical Labour government starts implementing its programme, those who seek to preserve the status quo will resort to extra-parliamentary opposition — methods which will be unacceptable to the vast majority of the population. This alone would enable a legally elected government to mobilise the masses behind it and win the active support that, as Cde Johnson argues, is necessary for a socialist transformation.

But Cde Johnson puts the cart before the horse. That kind of support will never be produced by propaganda alone. Nor will it be produced by adopting an electoral system which requires a party to win the support of 50 per cent of the electorate before it is ‘entitled’ to form a government. Since the elec-

**“PR generates a proliferation of parties. This obscures the fundamental antagonism which underlines capitalist society”.**

tion of a reforming Labour government is only a preliminary to winning mass support for socialist measures it should not be a ‘matter of principle’ whether such a government is elected under PR or first past the post system. The one difference is that on the available evidence PR would make this preliminary step almost insurmountable.

Cde Johnson runs away from politics in the real world and takes shelter in syndicalist fantasies eg “...socialism...can only be created from below by the self-activity and creativity of millions of people...”

It is not surprising therefore that given his disregard of politics Cde Johnson takes exception to Roy Hattersley’s argument in favour of ‘strong government’ nor that he finds himself agreeing with Gavin Laird. To justify his position he falls back on the theory of the monolithic bourgeois state pointing out that it “is not an instrument which we can simply wield for our own very different purposes”. He ignores the contradictions to which a bourgeois-democratic state can give rise under a two-party system when one of the parties represent the working class.

In this situation the bourgeois state can cease to be monolithic. Representative institutions of the state preserve the status quo only so long as they are dominated by bourgeois parties. Once a party committed to the working class gains a parliamentary majority this ceases to be the case. The machinery which ensures bourgeois rule is thrown into crisis.

This is much more likely under the first past the post system than under PR. First past the post favours the major parties not minor ones. It maintains a clear choice between two alternative governments, one for the status quo and one for social change. It brings together broadly compatible interests within a single party. Thus, it tends to line up the conflicting interests which are at the basis of class society into two opposing blocs. It also provides a constitutional basis for ‘strong government’ — horror of horrors — which the party of social change desperately needs if it is to implement its programme. Last, but as important, it provides the basis for accountability both of parties to the electorate, party leaderships to party members and MP’s to their constituents.

PR on the other hand generates the proliferation of parties. This obscures the fundamental antagonism which underlines capitalist society. Voters do not elect governments of their choice but only numerous parties and must leave it to their leaders to decide the composition of governments. Consequently governments are not accountable to electors nor are party leaderships to party members once they participate in coalitions. Such governments often depend on tenuous compromises between parties, consequently the parties have to dilute their programmes. For this reason PR is the ideal system for upholding the status quo.

Of course electoral factors are not the sole factor determining the political complexion of a country. Political traditions and social structures also play an important part. An electoral system can either facilitate or hinder a party in advancing the interests of the class it represents. Their merits or demerits must not be judged by abstract criteria of ‘fairness’ but by what effects they have on the realities of an unfair world.

In the final part of his article Alan Johnson touches on the accountability of MPs. Typically he only sees MPs in their non-political role ie their social worker function. He does not even mention the accountability of MPs to their party, dramatically demonstrated in the recent Conservative leadership election. Yet when we are talking about introducing ‘socialism from below’ it is the local party which is the vital link between the voters’ class interest and the party’s representatives in parliament. It is the local party which can deselect MPs who do not stick to the programme on which they were elected. Under all PR systems, accountability doesn’t exist.



# Anatomy of the Irish left

## AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



In the run up to the Irish Presidential election a few weeks ago I watched and listened with very mixed feelings as a selection of youngish and young middle-aged Dublin intellectuals — journalists, book writers and the like — played talking heads to the cameras of the BBC's 'Late Show'.

They were all reasonable and rational contemporary Europeans, all of them progressive and mildly left wing, all supporters of Mary Robinson, the independent left wing-backed candidate who eventually won the Presidency. But, as they talked about the Ireland they would like to see, they made me feel a gut hankering for the good old "Fianna Fail Nationalism" I grew up into.

There is not one left in Ireland, but two distinct and often antagonistic streams. The one represented by the President elect might be called the social-democratic left (in the modern sense of that label). Its representatives want change in Northern Ireland and many in the past have been concerned at the ill-treatment of Catholics there, but essentially they want to accept Northern Ireland and partition as given, fixed and permanent.

That is not what distinguishes them. All the southern parties accepted partition many decades ago and went on to build a Catholic state for the Catholic people of the south, grounded in Catholic moral and social doctrines. Even while they did this they built up a ferocious nationalistic ideology laying claim to the whole of Ireland, and weaving the fact of Northern Ireland's exclusion into the long story of Ireland's oppression by England, as the last unfinished episode. That was the official state ideology — "Fianna Fail nationalism".

The social-democratic left want to ditch all that ideology, but to change, not to accept the smaller Ireland ruled from Dublin.

They want to push back the power of the Catholic church, to prise its paws off people's minds and souls. They want to introduce such now-common European civil rights as divorce and abortion.

This is a very mild and tame left (our headline dubbing Mary Robinson a socialist was, I suppose, a bit over-enthusiastic), defined by the aspiration to bring the 26 Counties into line with late twentieth century European bourgeois civilisation, and by the desire to put what Mary Robinson in her victory speech aptly described as "the faded flags of the Civil War" in a museum where they belong. (The two main political parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, are the descendants of the two sides in the Civil War of 1922-23).

It plainly has working class support, but this is a middle class "liberal" left. In working-class anti-capitalist terms, it is not a left at all.



The two lefts: Top, Mary Robinson. Above: Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams



## Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it

The question of Britain and the EC may now fade, like Mrs Thatcher, into the background of contemporary politics. Before it does, let us, with this picture, remember the disastrous days when the left shared anti-EC platforms with Tories. Michael Foot

was a main leader of Labour's left in the '50s, '60s and '70s, and burned-out Labour leader in the '80s. Here he is in 1975 sharing a platform with the Tory MP Sir Derek Walker-Smith.

Yet this tepid left's attitudes and concerns are an irreplaceable part of the platform an Irish working class left needs to base itself on. They would be part of its minimum or democratic programme.

The other strand of the left does not share such ideas, or pushes them into the background until Ireland is united. This left is properly called the "populist left". And it is the revolutionary left in so far as such a thing has existed in Ireland.

It is a bankrupt left: the way the liberal left swept up the cities and the women's protest vote is the proof that it is bankrupt.

This second Irish left has at its core devotion to the traditional Catholic middle class chauvinist solution to the "national question" — the incorporation of the Protestants, against their will if necessary, and determination to achieve it instead of just talking about it.

Where it is not devoutly Catholic (and if you include the Gerry Adams wing of the Provos in it, it is heavily Catholic) it fears to disrupt "national unity" by offending Catholic sensibilities. While many of the Marxist-influenced individuals in the populist left are themselves for such basic civil rights as divorce and abortion, they subordinate those questions to nationalism. Thus, a few years back, when they won a majority at the depleted end of a Sinn Fein conference for "a woman's right to choose" abortion, they let themselves be persuaded the following year to have it rescinded in the interests of national unity: the national question first!

The core of it, though, is their commitment to, or moral self-abasement in response to, the "armed struggle" as the way to win the unitary state solution to the national question. Given the reality that one main obstacle to Irish unity is the compact, one-million-strong Unionist bloc of Irish people in North East Ulster, this commitment warps and twists that left.

In the North, it is a communalist force: its most "left" wing (the IRSP spectrum) has even gone in for half-avowed sectarian killings of Protestants, not interested — despite occasional bits of lip-service to non-sectarian Wolfe Tone Republicanism — in reaching accommodation with the Protestant people of Ulster.

In the South it is a force concerned mainly with things outside the state. It accepts a community of nationalist identity with forces as far to the right as Fianna Fail, the main "state party" of the Irish bourgeoisie.

Yet this is the revolutionary left — the left which wins over those who want to overthrow the system, and appeals to the people who aren't quite so self-centred or so inclined to be "reasonable" and accommodating to the bourgeois world of capitalism, imperialism and wage slavery around them as the talking heads I saw on the 'Late Show' are. It is the left which draws on and, I believe, frequently reduces to nonsense, the

great revolutionary tradition of the Irish common people.

To a considerable extent, the other left, Mary Robinson's left, is formed by way of one-sided polemical reaction to, and criticism of, the older populist Republican left. A sizeable chunk of the criticism is avowedly Marxist — from the Workers' Party, for example. The Provo revolt in the North has driven the southern establishment and its academics to subject to radical revision the old "Fianna Fail nationalism" from which the populist left draws much of its strength (promising to really achieve the common goals, instead of just talking about them). The patent bankruptcy of the populist left has driven many leftists in this direction. Understandably so.

It resembles the situation in the Russian Empire back in the 1890s when the old populist movement there was plainly bankrupt, and at the same time many people who had subscribed to its ideas wanted to make their peace with developing Russian capitalism. As Leon Trotsky put it:

*"Until the nineties the greater part of the Russian intelligentsia was stagnating in Populist theories with their rejection of capitalist development and idealisation of peasant communal ownership of the land. And capitalism in the meantime was holding out to the intelligentsia the promise of all sorts of material blessings and political influence. The sharp knife of Marxism was the instrument by which the bourgeois intelligentsia cut the Populist umbilical cord, and severed itself from a hated past. It was this that accounted for the swift and victorious spread of Marxism during the latter years of the last century."*

As soon as Marxism had accomplished this, however, it began to irk this same intelligentsia. Its dialectics were convenient for demonstrating the progress of capitalist methods of development, but finding that it led to a revolutionary rejection of the whole capitalist system, they adjudged it an impediment and declared it out of date. At the turn of the century, at the time when I was in prison and exile, the Russian intelligentsia was going through a phase of widespread criticism of Marxism. They accepted its historical justification of capitalism, but discarded its rejection of capitalism by revolutionary means. In this roundabout way the old Populist intelligentsia, with its archaic sympathies, was slowly being transformed into a liberal bourgeois intelligentsia."

A fully-formed Irish working-class left has yet to emerge. It will fight for all that the "Robinson" left fights for — but for a lot more as well. It will settle accounts with the old "populist revolutionary" ideas, not, like so many in the "Robinson" left, in order to settle into a quiet life with the Irish and European bourgeoisie, but, like the revolutionary Russian Marxist critics of their populism — Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades — the better to settle accounts with the Irish and international bourgeoisie.

# The same people, the same policies

## WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary



Thatcher going is just a cosmetic exercise. The Tories are still in power. They will be carrying out the same sort of policies.

They bumped off Thatcher as a public relations exercise to try and win back disgruntled voters with a bit of plastic surgery to create a more acceptable face for Toryism.

Myself, I think it's a complete sham. I think Labour has sadly missed the chance to mount a convincing attack on the government.

I find it funny that many Tories are upset about the voting procedure which allowed a sitting Prime Minister to be challenged and defeated, and now they're having a look at the rules. I seems to me ironic that we have very precise Tory legislation about the way we elect a trade union leader — and look at how they kill off and elect Prime Ministers!

Why don't they adopt the legislation they've used against the trade union movement? Of course they won't!

We hear funny noises from the Labour Party but before Kinnock and Hattersley go on about the rights and wrongs of the Tory leadership battle they should clean up their own act first.

The Labour Party should be showing the way forward towards an accountable democratic organisation. And remember that the Labour Party itself says that much of the Tory anti-union legislation will stay on the statute books.

The very widespread anti-Thatcher feeling was looked at very closely by the Tories and they decided to pull a flanker, ditch Thatcher and put somebody else in and then try to con everybody that they have changed.

Of course they haven't changed! The Tories are now trying to ram home that Major is going to create a classless society. It's a load of bullshit but a lot of people will be pulled in by that. Labour should go on the offensive.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM

# The mutant hero-turtle Tommy show

## EYE ON THE LEFT

By Chris Croome

The second annual Tommy Sheridan show was held in Manchester last weekend, under the auspices of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation annual general meeting.

The charismatic Tommy sat, often alone, on the podium, orchestrating all the events of the day. He spoke to everything that came up, endlessly intervened, chaired the conference, and told all the supporters of *Militant* which way to vote.

There was one unexpectedly close vote, when Tommy forgot to tell people the line and most delegates abstained!

Needless to say, all supporters of *Militant* who stood for positions were elected. As a result we can look forward to another year of the campaign being stifled from the top.

The SWP were very radical and revolutionary in their shouting, heckling and chanting, no doubt reflecting last week's "upturn" and decisive change in the balance of class forces. Apparently, now that things are rosy and on the up, national demonstrations don't need to be organised in advance — they can be spontaneous. With the SWP in the lead they can kick the Tories straight out. No elections, no nothing — OK!

As for a constructive discussion and debate about the realities and weaknesses of the strategy of mass non-payment alone, or concrete ideas about how to take the campaign to victory in the next year, not a lot was said.



Tariq Ali's 'Redemption'

# The demagogue's tale

Books

Sean Matgamna reviews Tariq Ali's 'Redemption'

Tariq Ali still seeks, and gets, an audience on the left. He "read from" his novel 'Redemption' at the recent Socialist Movement conference to a tolerant friendly audience. That fact tells you a lot about some people in the Socialist Movement.

For a decade he was the best known British public representative of Ernest Mandel's version of Trotskyism.

Tariq Ali is the scion of a family of rich Pakistani landlords. He is an upper-class Englishman by education and choice. His curriculum vitae — Oxford University, 'President of the Union' etc etc — is identical to that of two of the three candidates in the present contest for leader of the Tory Party.

That sort of background is common to a disproportionate number of socialists.

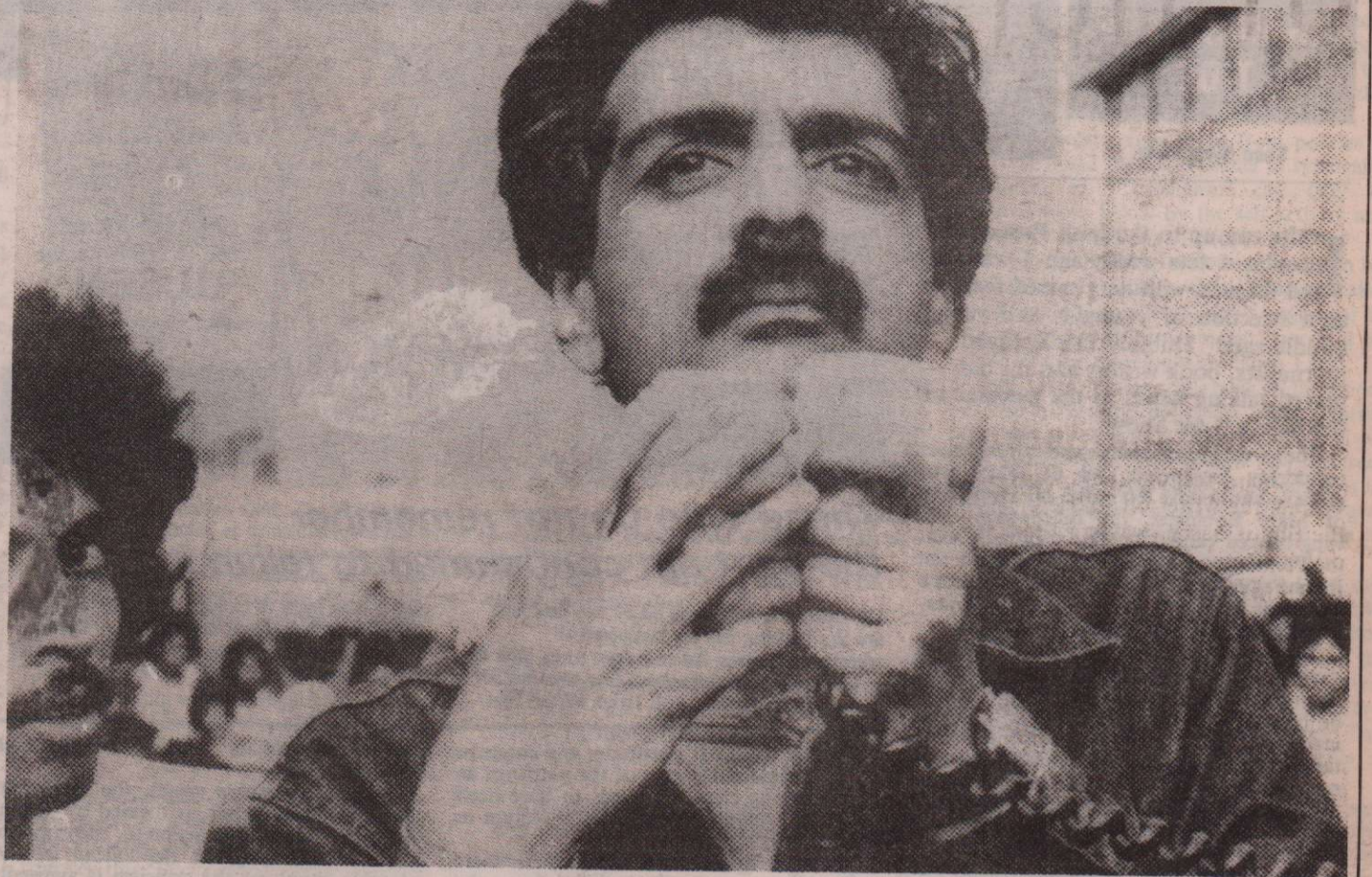
It is stupid and repulsive when socialist groupings like *Militant*, for example, attempt to make such people into morally blackjacked second class citizens because of their background. That is the principle of aristocracy rather than the principle of democratic equality and common citizenship, except that it is the geneology of the worker which is prized.

If such people really come into the socialist movement they should be welcomed. One problem with them is that most come to teach when they should come as pupils, and they come too as ego-tripping wild-oats-sowing dilettantes.

Tariq Ali, though he stayed longer, is no exception. His family were Stalinists. In the late '60s he came over to Trotskyism during the great anti-Vietnam war movement. As one of the organisers, though in no way central to it, Tariq Ali, the posh upper class English gentleman with the darker skin, quickly became the focus of media coverage of the anti-war movement. He is not known to have found this uncongenial. The evidence suggests that the media attention became the bread of life to him.

He joined the Mandelite 'Fourth International', probably for the wrong reasons. They were serious people, but woolly about Stalinism. It was only in 1969 that they decided, after 20 years, that the Chinese working class needed to make a revolution against Mao Tse Tung!

Ali remained a quasi-Stalinist and therefore, I guess, it was the group's mistakes he found most congenial. He was soft on Mao and wrote articles in praise of Kim Il Sung of North Korea. He saw the socialist revolution as an onward march of the Stalinist parties and the role of Trotskyism as



The demagogue

that of mere left critic of this movement. The files of 'Black Dwarf', 'Red Mole' and 'Red Weekly', the Mandelite press of the time, are full of such notions. Tariq Ali was one of those people who had learned to talk — and write — before they'd learned to think.

He hardened up in the '70s. But the disappointment he displays in this novel at the collapse of Stalinism proves that at root he never ceased to view the Trotskyist movement as a mere appendage of Stalinism. He explicitly says as much here.

As late as the 1978 Stalinist-army coup in Afghanistan (which prepared the USSR's invasion 20 months later and the beginning of Russia's own 8 year long 'Vietnam War') he hailed progressive Stalinism in action. Taraki and Amin, he wrote approvingly in *Socialist Challenge*, had found in the party-army officer partnership which took power a new vehicle for socialist revolution.

He balked, however, when his comrades — in their majority: there was a big minority — supported the Russian forces in Afghanistan. He left the organisation, but remained on the Trotskyist left, and is still an Associate Editor of *New Left Review*.

'Redemption' is, I suppose, an attempt at a comic novel rather than a satire, though he may have intended satire. It chronicles the impact on the citizens of the Trotskyist archipelago of the collapse of Eastern European Stalinism last year. A number of organisations and individuals are presented in the thinnest of disguises as they respond to 'Ezra Einstein's' (Ernest Mandel's) call for a world congress of all the factions to discuss the future.

But there is little invention and no comic or satirical creativity in the book. He dredges through the long and sometimes richly eccentric 60 year history of many organisations for grotesque stories and piles them up without artistic selection, like articles in a junk shop window.

The Molinier brothers, leaders of one of the French groups of the '30s, ran a debt collection agency in Paris. Here Tariq Ali has someone run a brothel. One of the clients is Posadas, an Argentine Trotskyist who went crazy in the '60s, advocating that the Russians start World War III. The younger Posadas arrives from Argentina with a parrot on his shoulder (a live one: the only dead parrot in 'Redemption' was sitting at Tariq Ali's word processor).

And the wit? Gerry Healy here is called Hood and the Healyites are — wait for it — the Hoodlums; the SWP's Tony Cliff is Rock

and — prepare yourself for another uncontrollable giggle — the SWP is 'The Rockers'. (Chanie Rosenberg, Tony Cliff's wife, is...guess who? Sugar Rock!)

Nearly all the leaders are Jews and the whole 60 year affair of 'Trotskyism' is presented as a squabbling of comic and mainly obnoxious old Jews.

Smutty, smutty peculiar and would-be scatological sex does service in the book for wit. It is not grown up sex. Some of the women are presented sympathetically, but nevertheless there is a pathetically juvenile obsession with, and judgement by, penises, down to Gerry Healy being given a false one (made of iron, no less). The character who is Jack Barnes is put down, and shut up — and, I think, intended by the author to be humiliated — by his randy comrade wife lowering herself onto his face.... Weirdest of all is having the Ernest Mandel character — a

meone who doesn't interest you tells you about highly personal sexual obsessions and fantasies.

As a comic novel it lacks a core, and despite rich real-life sources he can and does draw upon, the author runs out of steam quickly. The nearest it gets to anything like a satiric conception is having Ezra Einstein propose 'entry' into the Christian, Jewish and Muslim church hierarchies.

'Redemption' is an unrefined jumble of half-baked internal squibs and in-jokes, neither a true comic novel nor a satire.

It has no bite: it is a crude and clumsy, and half-hysterical poking of fun rather than satire, which has to be a creative reconceptualisation. Instead of the manic extrapolations that might produce a good comic novel we are served up a flat collection of stale old stories in a sauce of schoolboy 'sex'.

Even in his finale, Tariq Ali is not being inventive, just remembering. When he went back to Pakistan in the early '70s he made a great show of proclaiming himself a Muslim. Maybe that's the problem: everything Trotskyist has for decades been born into the world as twins, triplets and quadruplets. It is like a series of shadows. Every group has its own caricatural and satirical alter ego. For example: *SO* has *Workers Power*.

Tariq Ali's problem is that — despite his devastated disappointment at the failure of Stalinism — he still retains the viewpoint of a sub-section of the Mandel international: the politics have gone but the factional hatreds and spite remain. He is particularly vicious and stupid and unjust about the SWP (GB).

Charlie Van Gelderen, a veteran of 60 years in the Trotskyist movement, writes in *Socialist Outlook* that the explanation for Tariq Ali's political rubbishing of his long-time associates is that he is now quite famous as a TV producer and playwright. He wants to 'integrate'. Maybe. I don't know. For former comrades of Tariq Ali this sort of explanation — even if it is a big part of the truth, as it probably is — is a form of lying to themselves.

It is plain from the book that Tariq Ali is no longer even a Trotskyist because he always saw Trotskyism as an appendage of Stalinism, and Stalinism is now collapsing. The Mandelites should ask themselves what it was in their own movement which allowed him to do that.

Tariq Ali has something to teach the remaining Mandelites. It is not what he thinks he wants to teach them. But they'd do well to pay attention.

**"It is plain from the book that Tariq Ali is no longer even a Trotskyist because he always saw Trotskyism as an appendage of Stalinism, and Stalinism is now collapsing. The Mandelites should ask themselves what it was in their own movement which allowed him to do that."**

70 year old man — lactate and breastfeed.

(This is not so much a case of the phallic mothers as of a man suffering from the mammaries and fatheries of gender confusion).

I was left wondering yet again at the awful things the upper classes do when they send their confused young sons to boarding school; I had the feeling you get when so-

**International**  
A SURVEY OF BRITISH AND WORLD AFFAIRS

**The Fight against 'In Place of Strife'**

**PERMANENT REVOLUTION REACHES U.K.** **WOMEN: Why we are marching**

1/6

This early 1969 magazine cover, produced by the Mandelite group Tariq Ali joined, nicely catches their characteristic mixture of naivety, pretentiousness, thoughtlessness and unconscious British chauvinism. They would get worse in the early '70s.



# Born out of her time

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews 'An Angel At My Table'

Watching 'An Angel At My Table', I couldn't help feeling that Janet Frame, the writer on whose life the film is based, was born out of her time.

In the film, Kerry Fox, who plays Frame in her tormented twenties and thirties, has a sensitivity, a luminosity, that makes her sisters and their friends, with their 1940s hair and make-up seem dull and ordinary.

Frame, with her mop of unruly red hair, is a stand-out; she's not like anyone else. In small-town New Zealand, in the conventional 1940s, that made her a freak, an outcast.

Frame had a tragic early life. Her twin sister died within two weeks of her birth, and Frame was to lose two more sisters in drowning accidents. Her only brother suffered from recurrent epileptic fits; he was ostracised at school, and later unable to hold down a job.

Frame's family were poor, and cramped conditions at home forced intimacy on the girls; they shared a room and a bed whether they liked it or not. But Frame never really connected with her family. She loved them, and they were kind to her, but there was a huge chasm between their daily round and her yearning, poetic, imaginative nature.

Her family weren't villains. They were good, kindly people. But they couldn't understand her. They couldn't help her.

As a child, Frame had lost the only friend who counted, a girl who shared her romantic imagination.

As she grew up, Frame became increasingly shy and withdrawn, retreating more and more into the world of books; she felt safe there.

Bright and gifted as she was, she made no successes after school; her shyness soon became overwhelming. Increasingly lonely and withdrawn, she came to be seen as an oddity, as someone on the brink of madness, someone who needed help.

Watching the film, one is struck by Frame's longing to connect with people. Her shy surprise makes her face light up when anyone notices her or treats her kindly. But she lacks any kind of ease or social small talk. By the time she thinks out what to say, the person has moved on, leaving her more alone than before.

Frame was diagnosed as schizophrenic, and placed in a terrifying mental hospital, where she remained eight years, and where she was forced to submit to over 200 bouts of electric shock treatment, each, she says sadly, "equivalent in fear to an execution".

Only her writing talent saved her. All through her lonely life, Frame had written — poems and stories that were her connection with the world she could not otherwise reach. When her work won prizes, she was freed, and she determined to become a full-time writer.

She also travelled, she got away to a wider world.

With several books to her credit now, Frame is no longer unknown; she has made a success at the one truly important thing in her life.

Yet the film leaves us with no glib rosy ending. Frame at the end is certainly happier; she has the work and the recognition she wanted. But connections with people remain elusive. She is on her own at the end, writing alone, dancing alone; her writing is still her only connection to people.

That may have changed; the film



Kerry Fox plays Janet Frame

only takes us through part of Frame's life, the parts she wrote about in her autobiographical trilogy, "To the Is-land", "An angel at my table", and "The envoy from Mirror City". These deal more with her sufferings and struggles than with triumphs, though after so much sadness, her very survival must rank as a triumph.

Sad as the film is, it is well worth

seeing, largely for Kerry Fox's performance as Janet, but also for the depiction of school and family life in remote New Zealand before and after the war. Apart from the middle section, it is not a film where much happens. Action is not the point; what the director, Jane Campion, is trying to get across are memories and feelings, states of mind and emotion.

## Roald Dahl

# Guerrilla in a time machine

By Thomas Macara

Roald Dahl, who died of cancer last week at the age of 74, was a phenomenally successful author of books for children. He deserved his success. His children's books are truly remarkable.

The world of this writer's imaginary children is a world of magic and free-wheeling fantasy. But it is not a never-never world, because his child protagonists are not never-never kids. They are real kids.

The world they inhabit is not the real world his readers live in, but it contains the real sorts of people his readers would know.

It depicts — heightened and exaggerated and, sometimes, idealised as in the father-son relationship in 'Danny, the Champion of the World' — the real relationship between children and adults. The relationships his readers would live every day of their lives.

His is a world in which children are weak and vulnerable and, unless they fight back — and thereby hangs Dahl's tales — at the mercy of hostile, predatory and indifferent adults.

Dahl's genius as a writer for children lay in the fact that he never forgot the feel, or the pain, of being a small child at the mercy of those adults.

He never lost his sense of grievance at his own ill-treatment as a boy, and told about it in the autobiographical 'Boy'.

The heroes of his stories experience triumphs and happy endings, but you are never left with an Enid Blyton or Richmal Crompton feeling that the best of all possible worlds has thereby returned to its natural benign state at the end of the story.

Dahl has been criticised because there are truly nasty things in his books. So there are. And so there are too in a child's world.

The young Dahl kept pace with the adult, and in his children's stories the adult waged a sort of literary guerrilla war on behalf of the child's viewpoint against the adult society his childhood self had loathed.

The ageing grizzled author, one time diplomat, war-time fighter pilot, remained at heart a peevish, mildly sadistic, unreconciled, resentful child. He was a wonderfully inventive guerrilla sniper for children.

Further investigation might, I suspect, reveal that the unheated shed at the bottom of his garden, where Dahl did all his writing, was really a time machine in which he cruised back over the decades to his childhood! That's why his feel for childhood remained so fresh.

He was also something of a misogynist — I think the criticism some feminists levelled at 'The Witches' on this score was justified. And he was in his older years an avowed anti-semitic, because, he said, of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

But he was a brave old man. Not long ago he stopped a gang of policemen beating up a black motorist in the street for disobeying a traffic signal, and then gave evidence against them in court.

He hated bullies and oppressors of all sorts, and it was this attitude, rooted in his own childhood, which gave his fantasies their peculiar tang and flavour and, no doubt, their appeal to children.

# The world of Francis Urquhart

## Television

The root idea of Andrew Davies' 'House of Cards' is that a Tory chief whip might use the techniques the House of Commons whips use every day to keep the MPs in line to gain power in the party for himself.

It is based on the novel by Michael Dobbs, a one-time aide to Mrs Thatcher. But it also owes quite a lot to Shakespeare. The Chief Whip, Francis Urquhart, is a mixture of Shakespeare's two great scheming villains, Macbeth and Richard III — Richard mostly.

What techniques does he use? He bullies, bribes, pimps, blackmails and manipulates, and all the time he disguises his real purposes and lies about his real aims.

Above all, he hides his real self behind a cat-like smoothness. One of the programme's delights is his asides to the camera to tell us what he's up to.



Ian Richardson plays the villainous Urquhart

Just as in Shakespeare, where Richard is one king's conniving brother and then the new boy-king's murderous uncle, and we see him conniving and cheating his way to the throne, here we see Urquhart picking off his enemies one by one.

Morality has no place in it; personal things apart from his ambition have little place in it either. Like the murdering gangster's in Maria Puzo's 'The Godfather' novel, he might well say to his victims: "It's not personal, it's just

business." (Which, come to think of it, is what a lot of the self-protecting Tory MPs who voted to send her to her retirement home in Dulwich, might sincerely have said to Margaret Thatcher as they sent their sharp little folded voting slips through the slit in the ballot box like knives through her ribs...)

'House of Cards' is satire, and

therefore it deals in caricature and exaggeration, but, in fact, Tory — and no doubt a lot of Labour — MPs do live in the world of Francis Urquhart. The exposés and scandals that sometimes break into the light of day prove it.

'House of Cards' is half way through its four episodes. See the rest of it, anyway!



Yuri Gagarin

## Periscope

'House of Cards', BBC1, Sunday, 9pm.

'Killing Priests is Good News', BBC1, Sunday 2 December, 10.15pm. Deals with the civil war in El Salvador.

'Nippon', BBC2, Sunday 2 December, 8.35pm. The Japanese "feudal Stalinism in the company" industrial system.

'Horizon', explains the mystery of how it came about that the technologically backward USSR put the first craft into space (1957) and then the first human (Yuri Gagarin, 1961).



# The health divide

By Cindy Cooper

**T**he 'Black Report' published by the DHSS in August 1980 confirmed that the wealthy, on average, enjoyed both better health and longer lives than working class men and women.

The report also indicated that neither Health or Social Services were addressing these inequalities. Ten years on, this August an article\* in the *British Medical Journal* reveals that since the Black Report the gap between the health standards of the rich and poor in Britain has widened.

The article cites evidence from a number of studies which demonstrate the discrepancy between rich and poor in mortality rates and the incidence of illness.

The facts show that in the early '70s the mortality rate for manual workers was 1.8

times greater than for those in so-called 'social class 1'. By the early '80s the ratio was 2.4. In recent studies better measures for comparing mortality rates demonstrate even more clearly that health is closely related to socio-economic position. For example, not being a car owner, not having access to a car, having a lower educational level and being in a lower social class group are all related, partly independently, to higher mortality.

The wealthy not only live longer but their quality of health is greater than that of the poor. The evidence indicates that the 'executive stress' concept used to justify the high salaries of executives and managers is a myth. The working class experiences greater incidence of pain, tiredness, sleep disturbance and emotional distress as well as higher rates of long-standing illness such as angina than their managers do.

The importance of this



No justice: the idle rich live longer and enjoy better health

report is not only that it confirms what many people already believed, but that it also emphasises the fact that low health standards are not only an experience of the very poor. The report points out that the standard of health you can expect is directly related to your economic position.

The better off you are the better your quality of health and the longer your life

expectancy. Just as importantly, investigation into factors such as smoking and poor diet indicate that these are intricately linked with poverty and can not be used as an excuse for the low health standards of the poor.

\* 'The Black Report on socioeconomic inequalities in health 10 years on', George Davey Smith, Mel Bartley, David Blane. *British Medical Journal*, vol 301, 18-25 August 1990

## Soft on Ed McBain

### WRITEBACK

Dear S.O.,  
You've done it again!  
Your recent article on the  
Carnegie Union by...

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

**B**J Siddon is far too soft on Ed McBain (SO 467). To claim that there are few jarring moments in the 87th Precinct novels strikes me as very odd.

Take McBain's sexism. Teddy Carella, the wife of the precinct chief, is the grossest example; literally a beautiful dumb (and deaf) woman, always sexually available to Carella, silent and servile. The same applies to part-

ners of the precinct cops, those curiously available models and secretaries, whose abductions and jealousies provide problems for the men of the 87th.

Even the sole female cop is used in typically sex-specific roles, as bait for the mugger in 'Fuzz'. And what about the tone of the earlier novels, such as Meyer's running joke about 'instant pussy' in 'The Mugger' and the descriptions of Byrnes in 'Cop Hater' as 'a man trapped in the labial folds of a society structure'; just what does that mean?

It's true that there are blacks, hispanics, Jews and Irish cops in the precinct but that doesn't necessarily get McBain out of the woods. In 'Jigsaw' Brown (very big, black, ironic) exhibits McBain's liberal, individual answers to racism (and a lot more besides) when he frightens a confession out of a southern white woman. Meyer Meyer's experience of anti-semitism becomes a running joke, repeated time and again, to explain his silly name.

But all this is less important than the image of basically good cops with the occasional bad apple trying — oh so hard — in a tough world. The liberalism and the empirical approach of the cops is supposed to be the key to success, even though crimes are often solved merely by chance.

The ideology of McBain's work is a response to the concrete jungle of capitalist

America, to the throwing up of hands in despair. What we can do, what cops actually do is get on with the job. McBain ends up endorsing the 'we're not political, we're only doing our job' attitude to 'law enforcement'.

Socialists should see through this. Mind you, I'm still addicted to McBain's stuff!

Jon Pike  
Glasgow

## Less sectarianism please

I have been impressed by the new-look *Socialist Organiser* and its aim, much needed, to produce a general left paper with a broadly-based Editorial Board.

I am much less impressed, however, when the sec-

tionism of small group politics shows through as it does, for example, in Paul McGarry's review of Alex Callinicos's new book on Trotskyism (SO 466).

It is not entirely clear, to me anyway, what McGarry is on about in the review. But it would seem that he feels that some bits which are included in the book should have been left out, and vice versa. I took a quick look at the book in a bookshop (well, it is £6.99 for 90 pages!), and noted that it is in a series of social science books whose aim is to explain the general principles of particular political philosophies.

I can only assume that McGarry in complaining about the book's failure to provide an adequate history of Trotskyism is thinking of an entirely different book. Whatever book he is thinking about I wish he would keep his squabbles with Callinicos to himself. I see that you state that "views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board". If McGarry is an example of an author I think I would like a bit more of the Editorial Board.

Keith Marat  
London SE11

### WHAT'S ON

Saturday 1 December. 'The Left Agenda for 1991', with Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone. Organised by Labour Left Liaison. London School of Economics, Houghton St, WC1. £3/£2/£1, 10.30am-5.00pm  
Saturday 1 December. 'Conference on Debt Impact on Third World'. Organised by Campaign for Non-Alignment. Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7. £5/£2, 10.00am-5.30pm  
Saturday 1 December. Anti-war demonstration in Bridgewater (Tom King's constituency). Speakers include Campaign Against War in the Gulf and CARI  
Saturday 1 December. Demonstration marking the third anniversary of the Intifada. Assemble 12 noon, Malet St, London  
Saturday 1 December. 'Kurdistan: History and Culture'. Conference

organised by Kurdistan Solidarity Committee. Trade Union Centre, Brabant Road, London N22. £2.50/£1.50. 11.00am-7.30pm  
Saturday 1 December. World AIDS Day Act-Up Event. Tate Library, Brixton. 10.30am-5.30pm  
Saturday 1-Sunday 2 December. 'Fighting for Workers Liberty', Socialist Organiser student weekend in Manchester. Details 071 639 7967  
Sunday 2 December. Women Against War in the Gulf meeting. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. 12.00  
Sunday 2 December. Socialist Movement (Scotland) Forum and AGM. The Cowane Centre, Cowane St, Stirling. 12.00-4.00pm  
Sunday 2 December. Anti-Gulf war blockade of Ministry of Defence. MoD, Whitehall. 3.00pm  
Sunday 2 December. 'From Cold War to Gulf War'. Socialist Society seminar. Speakers include John Palmer and Dan Smith. Polytechnic

of Central London, Marylebone Road, London NW1. £5/£2.50. 10.45am-5.00pm.  
Monday 3 December. 'The Decline of the US'. Islington Socialist Organiser meeting. Speaker: Martin Thomas. The Belinda Castle, Canonbury Rd, N1. 8.00pm  
Tuesday 4 December. 'Tories in crisis — fight for a general election'. Manchester Socialist Organiser meeting. Manchester Town Hall. 8.00pm  
Thursday 6 December. 'Women and Socialism'. Socialist Organiser meeting. Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse, Leeds.  
Friday 7 December. 'Is Socialism Dead?' Luton Labour Parties Forum, 3 Union St, Luton. 7.30pm. (Labour Party members only)  
Sunday 9 December. 'Stop Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men'. Demonstration and rally called by Outrage. Assemble 12 noon, Horseguards Avenue, London SW1 (Embankment tube)

## Why different campaigns on the Gulf

### LEFT PRESS

By Colin Foster

**A**s many people will have found out to their dismay on the demonstration against war in the Gulf last Saturday, 24th, there are three rival campaigns on this issue.

They have real differences of politics and orientation. The Campaign Against War in the Gulf calls for US and British troops out of the Gulf, opposes the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and orients to the labour movement.

The Ad Hoc Committee calls for troops out, but also positively supports Iraq, and orients to left grouplets and unorganised youth.

The Committee to Stop War in the Gulf calls for 'no war' (but not for troops out), and appeals primarily to CND, Greens, Plaid Cymru, and church groups.

Such differences are predictable, perhaps inevitable, given the state of the left. But why are they not expressed as different emphases and preferences within a united campaign? Why is there not even a liaison committee of the three campaigns to organise joint activities?

Part of the answer lies in this: each campaign has political groups at its core. The pro-Iraq Ad Hoc Committee has the Revolutionary Communist Party.

The Campaign, has *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Outlook*.

And what about the Committee?

It is the organisers of the Committee who have been the most determinedly divisive. Their differences with the 'Campaign' are merely tactical (no war means inevitably troops out. Troops out equals no war!) Yet they have even driven supporters of the Campaign out of their meetings. Who exactly runs the Committee?

The political force that you would expect to find at the centre of a campaign with such politics and orientation is the Communist Party; but these days none of the fragments of the CP can manage to play such a role. No, not the CP.

At the centre of the implacably divisive and 'right wing' Committee is, in fact, a small self-proclaimed Trotskyist grouping, *Socialist*

Action.

Although very small, *Socialist Action* has been sufficiently well-placed to play a big part in shaping the Committee's stance of stubborn non-cooperation with the Campaign.

It has, in effect, been the major force on the left campaigning against 'troops out of the Gulf', and for economic sanctions against Iraq.

Doubtless *Socialist Action's* arguments on their own do not carry much weight. They have had weight because they chime in with the more diffuse influence of the fragments of the CP and sections of the Labour left traditionally close to the CP. But weight they have had.

Well of course, that's a shame, you may say, but what can you do about it? Politics is politics: and there are serious differences dividing the Committee. All you can hope to do is get unity in action; though, you may, on the evidence, be inclined to add, *Socialist Action* could try to be a bit less divisive and 'sectarian' in their prosecution of the cause of their own 'softer' position on the Gulf.

You could say that, but you'd be way off beam: *Socialist Action's* own position — the position of its magazine — are the politics of the semi-loony Ad Hoc Committee who couldn't give a damn what Saddam does to Kuwait as long as he opposes 'imperialism'.

But the CPs, as far as I know, never went so far as to organise a campaign supporting economic sanctions against the USSR.

*Socialist Action's* magazine explains their two-faced politics on this (as on almost everything these days) as resistance to 'ultra-leftism'. 'Fake ultra-leftism consists in refusal to support semi-colonial countries in struggles with imperialism (and) another form of ultra-leftism... is the refusal to see the need to fight against imperialist wars alongside pacifists...'

What *Socialist Action* has taken over most fundamentally from the CP tradition is *manipulative politics* — the idea that instead of arguing straightforwardly, political activists should talk out of both sides of their mouths, and cynically use catchwords which they privately condemn in the hope that they will manoeuvre people towards desired conclusions. It is the same method used by most of the left on the issue of the European Community over the last 20 years, only much cruder and more blatant.

## Why Polish workers support capitalism

### AS WE WERE SAYING...

*Socialist Organiser* No.200, 11 October 1984

Many oppositionists in East Europe and the USSR — and probably Wales — do have a friendly attitude to people like Thatcher and Reagan because they are strident enemies of the Kremlin. Their attitude is: my enemy's enemy is my friend.

For a Wales that is short-sighted and based on a fundamental misunderstanding.

Oppositionists in the East who favour the West are merely a mirror image of those workers in capitalist society who adopt a friendly attitude to the Stalinist dictatorships. Our Stalinists and quasi-Stalinists see only everything negative in the West and think nationalised property is working class socialism in the East. So they favour the East.

The oppositionists in the East see

that there is personal freedom in the West, the right of the workers to organise trade unions and political parties and to publish more or less what they like, the rule of law in contrast to the arbitrary state tyranny in the Stalinist states, so they idealise the West.

I read somewhere that, back in the Middle Ages, when landlords and priests oppressed peasants and enslaved serfs, lots of peasants worshipped the devil. They reasoned that since the Christian god was the god of their oppressors, and the devil was his enemy, they had better side with the devil.

Rebels and oppositionists in both East and West today too often approach the East-West division of the world into capitalist and Stalinist camps in that spirit.

Instead of such ideas we need independent working class politics East and West. Workers, East and West, should support each other against the oppression of both the capitalist and Stalinist systems. We need consistent international working class solidarity.



# Miners: unity on the picket line

By Dave Cliff, Hem Heath NUM

**M**ineworkers at Hem Heath colliery in Staffordshire took industrial action on Friday 23 November, a scant few days after the ballot to introduce a national overtime ban had failed.

Rumblings of discontent have grown over the last month, with the major cause being the divisive bonus scheme. Men working on the coalface and in developments have enjoyed relatively large bonus payments, while outbye workers (those involved in supplying those at the point of production) have received amounts which can only be described as an insult. Outbye workers received £18 for a week's bonus, whilst faceworkers received at least ten times that amount.

At a mass meeting held several weeks ago, the workforce unanimously agreed to demand a return to the 'devisor system' of

incentive payment. This system is far from perfect, and its introduction was opposed by the NUM; many of the workforce want to see the incentive scheme consolidated into basic pay, as it has been for management. This can only be achieved by national negotiations.

The next best option, which is achievable at local level, is a return to the original devisor scheme. This scheme operates on the basis that each coalface or development installation earns individual bonuses and these are divided by the number of installations to arrive at a 'pit average' which is paid to all those not involved in any installation.

This scheme reflects the average bonus of those on contracts, and would leave outbye workers substantially better off.

The current scheme in operation, known as the 'Doncaster option', pays 50p per thousand tonnes of coal drawn up the pit. After appearing intransigent, management offered to increase it temporarily to 84p per thousand tonnes; though this may sound like a large increase, in reality it means that outbye workers' bonuses would rise by just £7.50 before stoppages.

Following the first mass meeting, which demanded a return to the devisor scheme, NUM branch representatives approached management, expecting to be rebuffed out of hand, but received a conciliatory response: "We agree in principle, it will take a few days to look into it."

The action on Friday 23 was due to frustration at waiting for management's response. A walkout on Thursday 22 was held off. When the dayshift arrived on Friday morning, outbye workers had mounted a picket; most refused to cross, and the pit was effectively halted.

British Coal responded by threatening to issue writs against the two branch officials (despite the fact that neither knew about the picket before it was in place), and to issue an injunction against the NUM branch. They have also said that they will stop the 'check off' system of collecting union dues, which has been in operation since nationalisation in 1947. Management have also made implied threats to Branch committee members who appeared on the picket line, even if they were stopped by the pickets and stayed to chat to those workers who had organised it.

A second mass meeting was organised for the Friday afternoon. This meeting resolved that a return to the devisor scheme was a basic demand, and that a ballot would be organised on the issue. The ballot will ask that selective industrial action be taken unless the demand is met. The mass meeting treated management's threats with the contempt they deserved.

What seems to have amazed British Coal is that the majority of those on relatively large bonuses supported the outbye workers. The tactic of divide and conquer was not as effective as management had expected. Even the top paid mineworkers can see the iniquity of such a system, and also recognise that they too are being ripped off.

One amusing aspect of the dispute was that rumours rapidly spread on Thursday that miners at Hem Heath were walking out as a result of Thatcher's resignation. I can assure all those who helped spread, or half-believed this rumour, that we see no advantage in whoever leads the Tory party. Let's face it, none of them is going to reinstate the nine men who remain victimised since the 1984-85 strike, are they?

## DSS staffing — time for action

By Steve Battlemuch, DSS Notts South

**T**he combination of Thatcher's resignation and the decision of NUCPS to launch a national staffing campaign means there is no better time than now for CPSA members in DSS to fight back.

The job losses through the Operational Strategy have been proved by the department's own staff inspectors to be unjustified. As many "live" offices will testify, they cannot cope with their current complement, and if the post-Operational Strategy losses are taken away, the offices will just collapse.

It is therefore a disgrace that CPSA's leadership in DSS have failed to call any action at all, and, worse, have told members to "work normally" in the nine offices where NUCPS are on strike!

However, many CPSA members in those nine offices don't want to "work normally" and they are asking CPSA's leadership to ballot them for official strike action alongside NUCPS.

In Ilford and Bloomsbury CPSA members are already out on strike on 50% strike pay:

branches should immediately collect money and send it to their hardship funds.

Other offices could join the fight by submitting local staffing claims to management and asking CPSA for official backing for strike action if the local

staffing claim is not conceded.

The next national focus will be the NUCPS one-day strike on 7 December. It is vital that CPSA takes action on that day as well. It is unlikely that we will get a lead from our Section Executive; therefore branches need to

organise meetings and argue for strike action on that day.

It is vital that we don't let this opportunity for action slip by. The department is in a complete mess and we need to ensure we take full advantage.

Stop the job cuts!

## PSA: keep up the action

By John Moloney, PSA London

**T**he fight against the Tory plans to convert the Property Services Agency into a private company took a new twist

this week.

The general secretaries of the two unions involved, NUCPS and CPSA, were invited to have a 'chat' with the head of the PSA this week.

As can be imagined, when activists of both unions heard about this, we all got the familiar sinking feeling you get when you hear that the 'top brass' is taking

a hand.

On the day following the meeting of the Big Three, new offers from management were sent to the unions (Wednesday 21 November). This new offer, although better than the last, is still not good enough. The CPSA DoE SEC, the body in charge of PSA, unanimously voted to continue the action and to escalate it to all members. Although the Section Executive Committee voted this way, we have also to clear the hurdle of our National Disputes Committee, although the indications are favourable.

Activists must campaign to get NUCPS back into the action and for CPSA to continue theirs. PSA is losing money hand over fist, they are on the ropes. A big push can bring us victory.

Activists elsewhere in the CPSA should raise the issue in their workplace.

## Tottenham DSS strike

**N**UCPS members (support and supervisory grades) at Tottenham DSS are now entering their fourth week on strike against job cuts.

30 jobs are set to go by the time the Department of Social Security is turned into an Agency next April.

CPSA members want to come out in support but are being held back by the national officials. They will definitely strike on 7 December.

Unity in action is vital. As Roger Andre of NUCPS put it: "The problem is that the leadership of the CPSA are asking their membership to cross their consciences, as well as our picket lines".

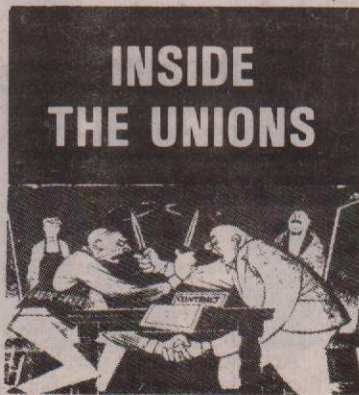
# A deal that stinks

**S**am McCluskie, executive officer of the shipping section of the Rail, Marine and Transport Union, would do well to study the outcome of a court case held in America this summer.

A federal judge awarded 21 Filipino seafarers \$43 million damages after finding the Japanese Inui Steamship Company guilty of "double book-keeping". The court found that Inui (a subsidiary of Mitsui) had paid the crew less than 20% of the International Transport Federation (ITF) minimum wage while keeping phoney books to give the impression that ITF wages were being paid.

The crew's lawyer, Richard Dodson, has since filed a \$100 million suit against Inui on behalf of 2,000 other seafarers who have suffered under this practice over the last 10 years. He commented: "This scam has been going on for years and not just on this ship. It's a worldwide racket."

This case should be of concern to Bro. McCluskie and the RMT because



By Sleeper

they have recently negotiated a draft agreement with Cunard.

Under the proposed deal, the union would receive £20,000 per quarter from the company in exchange for what, it is alleged by rank and file activists, amounts to a no-strike deal and a

guarantee not to organise Third World workers who are the vast majority of Cunard's crews.

The crucial section of the agreement is paragraph 7 which reads: "The union and the International Transport Federation have reviewed the terms and conditions of service applicable in the company's passenger fleet and have found them to be broadly in conformity with the ITF minimum standards for crew ships."

Elsewhere the text of the agreement reads: "With specific reference to paragraph 7 the company agrees to pay the union."

This poses a fairly obvious question: why should Cunard pay the union £80,000 per year if the terms and conditions meet ITF standards?

The answer may be contained in paragraph 8 of the agreement, which reads: "The union accepts that it no longer has and will not seek while this agreement is in force representation rights for personnel now employed in the company's passenger fleet other than the decks and the engine room."

In other words, McCluskie is prepared to agree that the vast majority of Cunard's crews — black and Asian workers from the Third World — will remain unorganised in exchange for a vague commitment that their terms and conditions are "broadly in conformity" with ITF standards...and £80,000 per year from the company.

All this conjures up unpleasant memories of the so-called 'Asian Levy'. Under this arrangement the union (then NUS) was paid by the shipping companies not to organise workers from the Indian sub-continent. Initially, the NUS received £10 and finally £30 per head, for each Asian worker taken on. In exchange the union did not organise them.

The new deal is still in draft form, and RMT activists are now organising to prevent it coming into operation. If the deal became a reality, it would represent a return to the very worst racist origins of the British trade union movement. Hopefully, the Inui judgement will persuade some people to think again.



FREE TODAY: Full colour Christmas Shopping and Gift Guide

## WE'LL STRIKE FOR OLD FOLK

Killer of city woman gets jail for life

Unions unite in battle

## Stop the closures

By Tim Cooper, Secretary, Notts NALGO

**A** lobby of hundreds of elderly residents, staff and supporters is expected on Wednesday 28 at County Hall, Nottingham against the proposed closure by the ruling Labour Group of Notts County Council of 12 elderly people's homes to avoid poll tax capping

If no change to plans is made and the callous and incompetent report is not withdrawn, then I would urge all NALGO members to vote for strike action at the

special general meeting of Notts NALGO on 29 November.

Some people have plucked a date out of thin air and are proposing 7 December, but I will be urging a joint day of strike action on 19 December (the next Social Services Committee and the last chance to revoke the decision as it cannot then be discussed for six months).

It is by our determination that we have pushed NUPE (who have the vast majority of staff in homes affected) into joint action.

It's a campaign we must win. If the council can ride out day after day of pictures like this and headlines of tearful elderly, then it will be easily able to push through other cuts in all departments.

## Sheffield council: a mood for action

By a Sheffield NALGO member

**T**housands of council workers in Sheffield struck for half a day on Wednesday.

A massive rally and demonstration was organised to protest against the City Council's plans to axe thousands of jobs in an attempt to solve its 'financial crisis'.

All council unions supported the rally and demo even though some union full timers disassociated themselves from strike action at the last minute in an attempt to sabotage the action.

Recreation workers are first on the firing line for compulsory redundancies but its clear that once policy of no redundancies is

broken it will not stop at the recreation workers.

There is a real mood to take action against the moves to make job cuts but it seems likely that union full-timers are itching to negotiate deals over early retirement and voluntary redundancy rather than build on the excellent action taken so far. The council's preferred option is a deal over voluntary redundancy and early retirement but they have made it clear they are after the cheapest package possible in order to save money. Any such deals would be shoddy affairs opposed by the majority of the workforce whose primary concern is job security and decent services.

It's vital that stewards and rank and file activists begin to organise across unions and departments independently to build and develop the fight back that started today.

## Youth occupy council chamber

By Wendy Robson

**O**pposition to massive cuts in Sheffield's services is growing fast. A fortnight ago recreation workers stormed the town

hall.

Last week around 200 members of local youth clubs and their club leaders stormed a DLP meeting to protest at drastic cuts in youth club provision.

Shelly Ibbotson (15), Lisa Marshall (16), Paul Higgins (16) and Lesley Sharpe (15) were 'fuming' when they heard about possible closures. They climbed on the roof to make their protest and forced reluctant DLP delegates to take their leaflets and read their banner before allowing them to get through the door into the meeting.

What was the DLP's response to the invasion? Stacey Woodhead and Clare Lulley, both 12, said: "They were ignoring us really. People were pushing us about. All we could hear was booing and hissing." Lisa said the councillors in the meeting were "talking bullshit".

Suggestions of talks with council leader Clive Betts and writing letters to MPs were rubbish. The demonstrators are planning further protests.

The cuts that are being planned across the board by Sheffield City Council will affect services all over the city. This has got to be the start of an ongoing campaign to oppose all cuts. We need to link up the youth who were demonstrating with the trade unions and the left in the Labour Party to fight the cuts.

The fight is certainly set to continue — if the youth of Sheffield have anything to do with it!



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Jordan calls off hours campaign

## Engineers are winning — no time to retreat

By an AEU shop steward, British Timkin, Northampton

**W**ith recession threatening, engineering workers should not

be talking about giving up the fight for a shorter working week.

"No, we need to do the opposite. Our answer to the slump has to be cut the hours, share the work and create more jobs."

That was how Dave Gough, Liverpool District Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), responded to the proposal from the leadership of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) that the engineers should abandon the 35 hour week campaign "for the duration" of the new slump that now threatens us.

Dave, who gave Bill Jordan a real shock in the recent AEU Presidential election, polling nearly 40% of the vote, speaks for many trade unionists in the industry.

Bill Jordan and friends have come up with a crazy policy. If workers had accepted the bosses' arguments about what they can and cannot afford then we would all still be working a 12-hour day, seven days a week!

It is not our responsibility as workers to carry the can for the bosses' sick system. Our jobs and living conditions have to come above the profitability of their system.

Right now, activists in the engineering unions have to unite to force the CSEU leaders to reverse their decision and lead a fight.

• *Every engineer on 37 hours.*

Immediately, the 500,000 or so workers who have yet to win a 37-hour week must put in local claims and prepare strike action before the proposed end of the hours campaign on 12 April next year.

• *Fight for a national agreement!*

If we don't conclude this first phase of action with a decent national agreement with the Engineering Employers Federation that guarantees a 37-hour week for all and a massive increase in minimum time rates then all the gains that have been made over the last few years will be wiped out. We will also be ignoring the weaker sections of engineering workers who are less well organised and have less muscle. If we have to then we should organise national strike action for a national deal.

• *Press on for 35 hours.*

Instead of postponing phase two of the hours campaign "for a few years" as Bill Jordan put it, we should press ahead now. If not all the gains of the hours campaign in the biggest trade union breakthrough in recent years will be lost.

Even the strongest sections who can usually win a lot on their own have been helped by the national campaign. If you take away the national momentum then we all suffer.

• *For a recall CSEU stewards conference.*

Right at the start of this battle Rolls Royce Hillington convenor Darren Keown argued: "It's important to have a national Confed stewards conference to discuss any possible settlement. It's the lay members who have put the money in, they should have a say in what happens."

He was right then and he's right now.



Tony Benn speaks at the 20,000-strong demonstration against war in the Gulf in London last weekend (24 November).

**Date for war set**

# Build a mass anti-war movement!

## Learn from America

By Neil Cobbett

Over the past months US anti-war activists have been laying the basis for a massive anti-war movement. Their model is the Vietnam anti-war movement of the '60s and '70s which helped stop that war.

Anti-war activists in this country have much to learn from our American co-thinkers.

Naturally, the memory of the

Vietnam war is still alive in the minds of many Americans. Anti-Gulf war activists have something solid to build on.

They know how to use teach-ins, demos, anti-war veterans movements and other techniques of protest used against the Vietnam war.

The American share of the human cost of Vietnam was overwhelmingly born by working class America and by the ethnic minorities. So will the cost of Bush's Gulf war.

Activists are attempting to involve in one movement those who already oppose the war, together with representatives of those social groups who will have to pay the higher price for Bush's war.

In September, rallies and teach-ins were held across the USA, to spread the word and prepare for the struggle to stop the war.

In New York 2,000 people rallied at Cooper Union's Great Hall under the slogan "No Vietnam War

in the Middle East!". There were speakers from working class, ethnic and civil rights organisations.

The coalition was formed on the basis of these points:

- Withdrawal of all military forces;
- No establishment of US bases in the Gulf region;
- Legislation prohibiting the President from usurping Congress's powers to decide on war and peace;
- Support for peaceful diplomatic efforts to end the crisis;
- Money for human needs, not war.

Support has come from many campaigns and organisations: Vietnam Veterans Against the War, National Conference of Black Lawyers, Women Strike for Peace, National Lawyers Guild, etc.

A 25,000-strong demonstration was held on 20 October. In Berkeley, California, for example, on 14 September, around 2,000 people attended a teach-in against

US intervention in the Middle East organised by the Ad Hoc Committee Against A Vietnam War in the Middle East.

Here again speakers represented a broad range of interest, experience and opinion; student activists, trade unionists, Vietnam veterans, intellectuals, experts on world economics, the Middle East, international law, representatives of ethnic groups. Also there were Marines Eric Glen Larsen and Jeff Patterson, who are among those who have refused to "ship out" with their units to Saudi Arabia and fight a war for "big oil".

Following this wave of rallies and teach-ins there was a series of demonstrations in 25 major US cities. 25,000 marched in New York, and 8,000 on the West Coast.

The Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East is planning a massive rally in New York's Madison Square Gardens for February and is launching a petition drive for a million signatures against war.

Activists in Britain should look to these activities and the unifying and mobilising effect they have had, drawing on these experiences to build a gigantic chorus of protest against imperialism's war-drive.

**Campaign Against War  
in the Gulf demand  
US British troops get out of  
the Gulf**

**Picket & Vigil**  
outside the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square,  
London (tube: Bond St)  
**6.00-7.00, Wednesday 5 December**  
followed by  
**Public CAWG Meeting**  
to discuss future campaigning and the Gulf  
situation.

**7.15, Wednesday 5 December, Mayfair  
Library, 25 South Audley St — near to  
Grosvenor Square**

**Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!**