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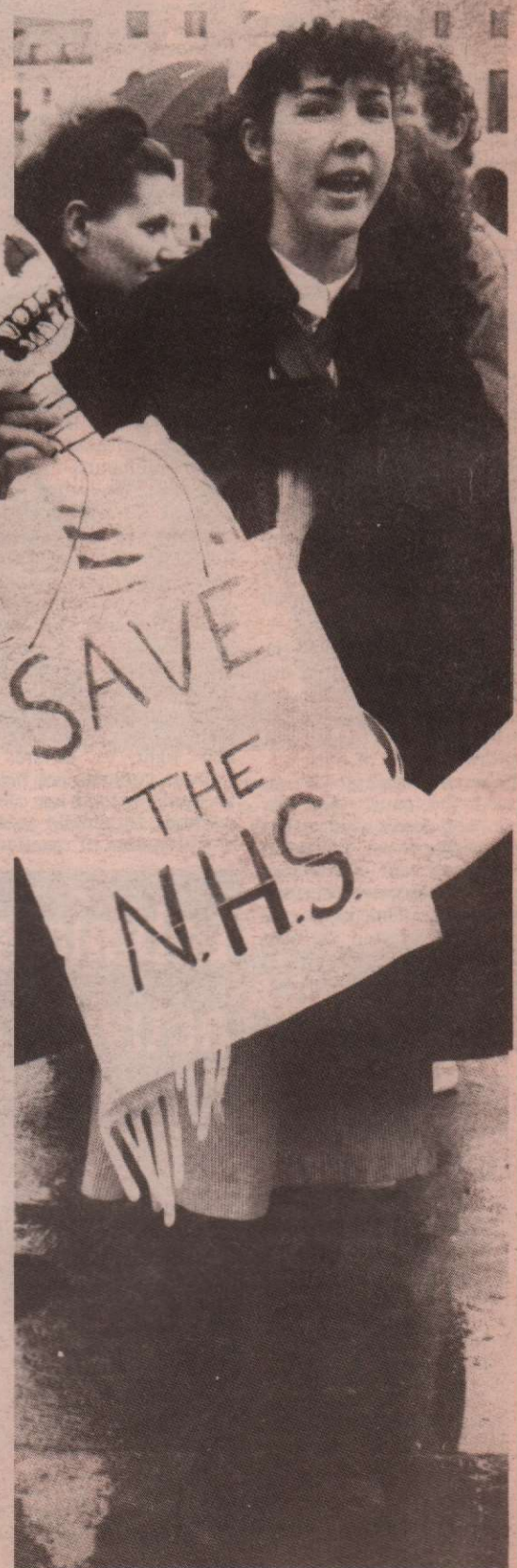
# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

## Tory wreckers cling to office

# Fight for a general election!



- \* NHS at risk
- \* Jobless total rising to three million
- \* Tens of thousands homeless

**T**he Tories have decided to cheat us out of an autumn election!

They are clinging on to power in the hope that something will turn up before next June, when they are constitutionally bound to hold an election. Prime Minister John Major intends to consult his "image-makers" and spend the summer and autumn polishing up his image!

Meanwhile Toryism continues to ravage our society. As the slump bites deep, tens of thousands of workers are being thrown on the streets. Unemployment figures are rocketing.

Tens of thousands more young people will be condemned to

wander the streets of London and other cities, homeless.

The savagely unfair poll tax is still being collected. People who can't, or won't, pay are still being hauled into court.

The Tories continue to wreck the NHS — that is, the hopes of people who are not rich for adequate health care — and are now busy erecting a privileged second tier above the derelict slum they have made of the Health Service.

While salary increases for the big capitalist company chairmen make even the popularity-seeking tabloids squeal feeble protests, wage settlements are at their lowest for ten

Turn to page 2

# Fight Tory racist card!

By Gail Cameron

We are still months away from the general election, but already the Tories are sinking to the level of the political sewer: racism is going to be used as part of the Tory platform in the election. This week the Tories leaked proposals to restrict immigration further, especially where it involves what they call "fake" political asylum. All this is coded language for the old Enoch Powell game of playing the race card. The legislation that Ken-

neth Baker wants to bring in would result in automatic fingerprinting on arrival, and see camps set up with barbed wire and guards to house asylum seekers.

The Daily Mail was quick to pick up on Baker's plans with a front page "exclusive".

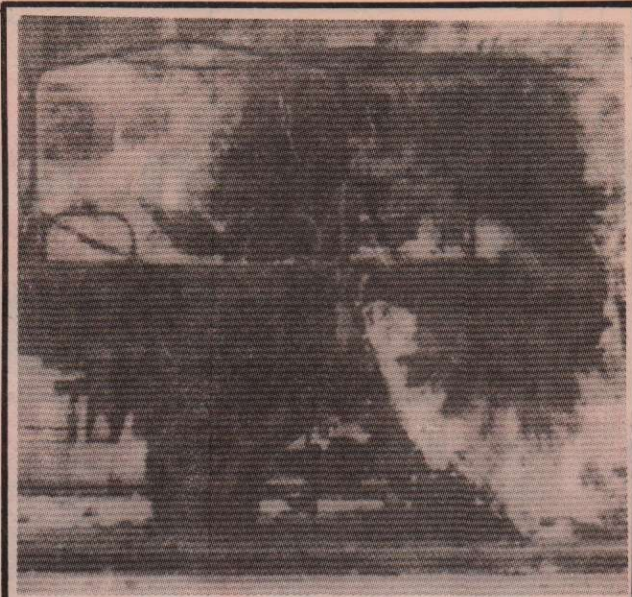
Images of hordes pouring into Britain before 1992, milking "our" social security system are used thus to generate hostility to all immigrants.

The Mail goes on to say that some immigrants arrive knowing only two words — "political asylum" — and that is enough to ensure their stay in the country! Funny, only a few weeks ago we were

told by the Star that people arrive knowing only one word — "house" — in order to get immediate housing. Crafty buggers, aren't they?

Baker's plans have already run into some trouble from within the Tory party. Patrick Mayhew, the Attorney General, advised Baker that the legislation would most likely be thrown out by the European Court, thereby setting up yet another split between pro-European Tories and the old Thatcherites.

Labour's position is unclear, but we should be prepared to fight hard against the racist card being used, no matter how it is disguised, in the coming months.



## Victory in Albania

In Albania a general strike has forced the resignation of the Stalinist government and the creation of a new coalition regime. The working class has yet to tie its strength and determination to its own independent demands.

## More support needed for '200 Club'

The winner of this month's "200 Club" draw is Stephen Smith of Peckham, South London.

Contributors to the "200 Club" make a regular donation towards the cost of sustaining the 16 page Socialist Organiser, and each month they have a chance in our draw for a £100 prize. We need more of those regular donations! We have

no wealthy backers, no lush advertising revenue, no sources of support other than our readers and sellers.

Our production, like that of most socialist newspapers at all times, depends on a shoestring budget, constantly under pressure. We need your help.

"200 Club" contribution forms from, and donations to, SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

# Labour in Wirral

By Gail Cameron

After years of campaigning on a policy of improving local services the Labour Party finally took "control" of Wirral Borough Council, on Merseyside, in May of this year.

Within weeks of the elections the Labour Group pushed a cuts package of £7.9 million through the Council on top of £12 million cuts already in the budget. The budget had the backing of the District Labour Party and officers of the Anti-Cuts Campaign and the council unions.

The excuse for the cuts has been that Labour cuts will be "kinder" than the Tories, and anyway the unions weren't prepared to fight the cuts.

So what are these "kinder" cuts? Education will be cut by £3 million when it is already £7 million below the government's minimum spending assessment. School maintenance is being cut when the schools are already suffering high levels of decay and school governors are looking at further cuts which could reduce staff.

Social Services will lose about £700,000 at a time when there are severe staff shortages and posts are being left unfilled. Children at risk from abuse are being left vulnerable.

£1 million is being cut from Wirral College, resulting in the reduction of courses and cuts in staff.

Jobs that should be filled are being left vacant. The lowest estimate is 200 jobs. Short term contract workers are not being re-employed.

The campaign to overturn the

council's decision is gaining support with the District Labour Party now taking a position against the cuts. Eight Labour councillors are refusing to implement the cuts and some sections of the workforce are saying they will oppose the cuts and also refuse to cover for unfilled vacancies.

## The other housing scandal

From back page

ner city estates, particularly high-rise estates which are fabulously expensive to maintain.

The town planning disasters of the sixties and seventies have left a legacy of expensive eyesores. A massive increase in funding might have meant councils could have kept these buildings habitable. Tory cuts have led to them being allowed to fall down around the tenants.

Without funds to repair them, inner city flats become hard to let. It is easier to put a family in bed and breakfast than to find the money to repair a flat for them to live in.

The Tories sneer about empty properties and long waiting lists, but the coun-

cilors just produce another poster about Tory cuts — and carry on implementing those cuts.

The sad fact is that the local government left has failed both to fight Tory policy and to put its own house in order.

The costs of this failure have been and are being met by front line workers and tenants. Managing run-down estates without proper resources is an impossible job.

Those people who didn't leave council housing during the '80s must have become very disillusioned and bitter. It is difficult to retain pride in a job under these conditions. And these are the conditions which lead to corruption.

Liz Millward works as a housing manager for a Housing Association

## Poll tax forces suicide bid

By Lesley Smallwood

A man attempted to commit suicide in Leeds Magistrates Court last week, where he had been summonsed for non-payment of the poll tax.

After explaining to the magistrate that he could not afford to pay the tax, the man asked for a glass of water and proceeded to swallow a bottle of pills.

Other non-payers who attended the court that day were shocked when they realised that it was police officers, and not ambulance staff, who escorted the man from court. Amazingly, the police had arrested the man before seeking medical assistance or an ambulance.

## New massacre threatens in Iraq

The Kurds rose against Saddam Hussein, hoping the Iraqi regime had been so weakened that they could free themselves.

So did the Shi'a Muslims in the south. Now the army of Saddam is poised for an annihilating offensive against the Shi'ites. The Shi'ites say, and with good reason, that they fear attacks with poison gas.

So much for the line that the Gulf war would serve to rid the region of Saddam Hussein's brutal tyranny.

## Labour student activist conference

By Jill Mountford

Labour student activists from around the country will be attending a conference this weekend to discuss the present situation in the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS).

The conference, called by Manchester Polytechnic Labour Club, and sponsored by 13 other Clubs.

The NOLS leadership has further alienated itself from ordinary Labour supporters by publicly calling for a Liberal vote against SO supporter Mark Sandell at the recent NUS Conference, and

by backing the Extraordinary NUS Conference on Reform.

SO supporters will be arguing that the conference should focus on three main issues. Firstly, it should launch a campaign for democracy in NOLS.

Second, activists must be organising the student and youth vote for Labour. "Socialists for Labour" campaign will be a useful focus for the NOLS left.

Thirdly, a campaign to renew Labour's youth section is needed. The Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) does not exist. There is potential for students and youth to build LPYS branches in the run-up to the election.

## Fight for a general election!

From page 1

years. Unemployment is hell for the unemployed, but the wage-cutting bosses know how to turn it to their advantage.

Everywhere you look in our society you can see the ravages of Toryism. And Mr Major is "polishing his image"!

And Mr Kinnock? He is polishing up his phrases for the debates in parliament and the ritual exchanges of conventional insults across the despatch box!

He has rightly challenged the Tories to dare face the electorate. He pours scorn on them and scores witty debating points.

But it is all a game of musical chairs in the House of Commons for Mr Kinnock and his friends.

They demand a general election, but they refuse to campaign for it!

A tremendous agitation should be set up now demanding that the voters be allowed to judge and sentence this Tory government — an agitation that would

build up firmer Labour support for the general election when the Tories finally have no choice but to stand their ground.

You get none of that from No-Guts Neil, John Major's responsible, statesman-like understudy.

With the poll tax, it is the same story. Millions of people are still being harassed for the poll tax the Tories now admit was a mistake and an injustice. And the tax will not be abolished before 1992. What does Kinnock do? Nothing!

A tremendous campaign could be organised against the continued working of the poll tax, and in defence of those being fined or bailiffed. What does Kinnock say? He denounces poll tax non-payers, he supports the courts and the bailiffs. Against the Tories? Nothing!

We have to organise our own campaigns against the poll tax, against unemployment and in defence of the health service. We have to do it now. Don't wait for Labour!

## The lie machine



As Gail Cameron points out on this page, the Tories don't mind crawling on the racist dung heap in a good cause — whipping up Tory enthusiasm and rallying racist votes in the election.



What kind of dad is he? Don't the Sun hacks know that royal babies are traditionally reared by the nanny? But we're glad to see another blow at the image of the future King of England.



After the royals, the BBC is the second favourite target of the tabloids. And, unlike the royals, of the Tories too. Relentlessly, they go after the BBC, intent on destroying it. Murdoch's Today is in one commercial bag with satellite TV.

Here the excuse is BBC franchising. The press owned by Murdoch, of all people, kicks the BBC around for trying to make money!



The headline writers in the Mail must have been watching Alan Bleasdale's GBH, where the Derek Hatton local government boss habitually tells his minders to "stay", like a dog trainer.

# Unite the left!

There is a great deal of senseless squabbling within the left and quite a lot of it is needlessly destructive, and even personal.

It is easily forgotten that there are also serious issues involved in some of the divisions on the left. For example, *Socialist Organiser* and *Briefing* separated a decade ago because there was a radical disagreement between us on policy for the left which was winning power in a number of cities, including London.

We said that left-wing councils

should be made into bases for resistance to Tory cuts, deliberately going for sharp confrontation with the government, mobilising their working class communities behind them.

*Briefing* backed those such as Ken Livingstone who tried to evade confrontation with the Tories by raising rates to compensate for the Tory cuts: everywhere this policy led to frittering away the left's strength and to turning the councillors into the reluctant local administrators of Thatcher's policies.

When they had discredited themselves, Thatcher then moved to

disqualify some of them.

That dispute is now a matter of history, but it was no idle dispute, and the split that arose out of it was probably unavoidable.

It is inevitable that major political issues often lead to division. *But they can also lead to the healing of divisions, to unifications.*

Such a major question now faces the left. Where do we stand on policy for the next election? Two poles are forming inside the left: those who say unequivocally that the Tories must be defeated and Labour returned to office. And those who say that Kinnock is such

a wretch, and his party moved so far to the right, that it makes no sense to actively campaign for the destruction of the Tory government and the return of Labour.

Between now and the next election the differentiation between those two poles will sharpen. It is a divisive, but it can also be a unifying process.

Unity is possible between those groups and individuals on the left who agree that our central task is to defeat the Tories and elect a Labour government, and on the need to combine a vigorous campaign within the working class and

in the labour movement to achieve this with a fight against Kinnock and his careerist friends.

Though conditions are different, the precedent is there in the 1978 unification of critical pro-Labour forces, in the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, out of which grew *Socialist Organiser*.

If we can unite a sizeable portion of the fighting, pro-Labour left, then we will also be taking a big step forward in the fight against Kinnock and the pink Tories who now run the Labour Party.

Unite the left!

## Don't wait for Labour?

The slogan with which the article on page one ends is a good one. It advocates direct action, and that is the beginning of wisdom for the labour movement. It is our slogan in the sense established in our article.

But it can also be a mind-bogglingly stupid slogan, and it is so when used to say or imply that workers don't have to bother with the Labour Party, and with such things as elections.

That is the sense in which *Socialist Worker* and the SWP are using it now.

It is part of a complex of attitudes which add up to a suicidal pretence that the labour movement can do without politics — that socialist and militant workers can turn their backs on the political concerns of the labour movement; that we can deal with the Tories without the Labour Party.

No we cannot! Unless the labour movement can organise a successful general strike and a victorious insurrection we can *only* kick out the Tories in a general election, and then *only* if we can replace them.

Labour is the labour movement's mass party, the only available alternative to the Tories. In that sense, yes, we do have to "wait for Labour".

That, given the shameful passivity of Kinnock, and his treachery towards working class struggle, is a tragedy. But we will not change it by fantasising that it is not so.

It is a fantasy — a syndicalist fantasy — to pretend that strikes and sectional struggles can *substitute* for the political processes embodied in parliament, and covered by the



Labour Party. Strike figures are now the lowest for 50 years — that fact shows up the mindlessness of *Socialist Worker's* approach.

But even if strikes were now as big and frequent as they were in the early 1970s it would still be a nonsense to pretend that we can dispense with politics, with "Labour". No we cannot!

**W**e have no real alternative to Labour against the Tories: and no other way, now, to break the back of this Tory government except a Labour victory in the general election.

Trotsky used to point out that it is a recurring pattern in politics that belly-crawling such as Kinnock's at the top of a labour movement generates incoherent "ultra leftism" amongst those who find it disgusting — an emotional "rejection" of politics.

Kinnock has generated such moods on the left with his witch-hunting and purging within the Labour Party, his refusal to fight the Tories outside it, and the neo-Tory policies he promises to *try* to pursue if he wins office. A lot of people on the left can no longer see any point in fighting to return a Labour government. That is the alarming message that came from the Socialist Movement conference (see

the report on page 4). The *Militant*-led breakaway from Labour in Liverpool is, essentially, a product of the same mood.

Whatever they say for themselves, their indifference to kicking out the Tories shows how far from being revolutionaries, or serious socialists, or even champions of the labour movement are

**"It is a nonsense to pretend that we can dispense with politics, with 'Labour'. No we cannot!"**

those — almost 50% — at the Socialist Movement conference who were against advocating a Labour vote.

They do not represent a labour movement alternative to Kinnock: on the contrary, their proposed response to Kinnock amounts to abandoning the field of working class politics to him and his friends.

For socialists to do that represents a deepening of Kinnock's

victory and its unnecessary prolongation. It is an admission of defeat, a throwing in of the towel, albeit with good "socialist", "revolutionary" and "anti-Kinnock" slogans scrawled all over it.

Without the defeat of the Tories there is no way forward for the labour movement! The road to the renewal of working class self-confidence and militancy goes over the defeated carcass of this Tory government. Kicking out the Tories and the election of a majority Labour government — that must be the central goal of every serious socialist in the lead up to the general election.

Anything that gets in the way of that — including Neil Kinnock — is acting against the interests of the working class and playing the Tory game. Those socialists who find the choice of Kinnock's Labour or the Tories an impossible one and retreat into abstention, passivity or little local adventures like *Militant's* Walton by-election candidacy, are part of Kinnockism's triumph within the Labour Party.

The real socialists now are those who know this and organise themselves to fight within the trade unions and Labour Party to concentrate the energies of the labour

movement on defeating the Tories and electing a Labour government in the coming general election.

To do that it is necessary to oppose and resist the sectarian and abstentionist moods which are now growing in the labour movement.

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"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 Tridant Press, Edenbridge  
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

# UCATT rats jump ship

The right wing clique that for years ran UCATT by means of ballot-rigging and sweetheart deals with employers lost their majority on the union's executive three weeks ago.

Now, in the words of one UCATT militant, "the rats are deserting the sinking ship. We've got to keep the ship afloat." He might have added that the rats are not just jumping ship: they're trying to scupper the vessel as they go. A group of full-time officials led by Alan Black and Andy Verdeille (heads of the Direct Labour Section and the Exhibitions Industry Section respectively) approached the EETPU as soon as the left victories in the elections were announced. UCATT General Secretary, Albert Williams (now suspended, pending an inquiry into his involvement in ballot-rigging) had been holding merger discussions with the electricians for years. But what Black, Verdeille and Co. were proposing wasn't a merger, but an EETPU "raid" on UCATT, aided and abetted by disaffected UCATT officials.

The mutineers promised Pirate King Hammond at least 50,000 recruits from UCATT's total complement of 200,000. In exchange, they wanted comfortable quarters and cushy commissions aboard the Good Ship EETPU. Three UCATT regional secretaries (including Paul Corby of Yorkshire) signed up with Hammond's crew there and then. But, in the meantime, another vessel hove into view: it was the GMB, under full sail, with wily Cap'n John Edmonds at the helm. Edmonds had never before sailed under the skull-and-crossbones (indeed, just three years before, he'd led the TUC's assault on the EETPU privateers) but the prospect of rich pickings from UCATT's hold was too much to resist: "Avast there, me hearties!" he cried to Black and Verdeille, offering them even more attractive terms than Hammond had done. The mutineers would be given jobs with the GMB, to set up a new Construction Section.

Edmonds tried to present his raid as a "life-boat" sent out to save the crew of a foundering hulk. Under these desperate circumstances, he argued, the Bridlington Agreement didn't apply. And anyway his only motivation was to save the Good Ship UCATT from the EETPU's non-TUC boarding-party.

But no-one believed this load of bilge — not even Norman Willis, who warned Edmonds that if he proceeded with his piratical plans, TUC lefties, like the MSF and TGWU, would take great pleasure in proposing that he walk the plank, just like Hammond three years before. All very embarrassing for Willis, not to mention Admiral Kinnock. So Edmonds lowered the skull-and-crossbones and set a new course proposing to take Messrs Black and Verdeille on board for GMB jobs "outside the building trade".

The rest of the mutinous UCATT officers have now signed up with Hammond and a new EETPU Construction Craft Section is being established. A series of bitter skirmishes can be expected as the two unions engage each other in local authorities and the private sector.

Can UCATT loyalists keep their ship afloat and steer her away from the rocks? A vigorous recruitment campaign on non-union sites would be a start. And on sites where UCATT "members" never see a union card (let alone an official) and the employers choose the convenor before there is a workforce, basic norms of independent union organisation need to be re-established, with functioning stewards' committees. Given the crisis facing the union, there is a strong case for a special recall conference.

In the medium-term the best bet is probably a merger with the TGWU — a prospect made more likely by Bill Morris' victory in the recent T&G election. But even so, the UCATT Broad Left needs to concentrate on basic recruitment and site organisation if Hammond's pirates are to be seen off.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



A Labour victory would be a tremendous boost to the working class, demoralised by 12 years of Tory rule

# Socialist Movement calls for a Labour vote

By Paul McGarry

To vote Labour, or not to vote Labour — that was the question at the Socialist Movement AGM at the weekend (1 June).

Should the Socialist Movement in its press, *Socialist*, due to come out in September, after two or three postponements, advocate voting Labour at the General Election?

At most labour movement events the issue would not be contentious, but the SM is a strange beast. Some of its central figures are not members of the Labour Party, and advocate building a "new socialist party": members of the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalists, support the SM project, so there was bound to be friction on the question of advocating a vote for Labour.

The intervention of *Socialist Outlook* supporters, however, was by far the most interesting aspect of the debate.

On the surface *Outlook* share *Socialist Organiser's* orientation to the Labour Party. They are in Labour Party Socialists. One supporter of *Outlook* is chair of "Socialists for Labour"; two of the witch-hunted Lambeth councillors sympathise with *Socialist Outlook*.

The pro-Labour resolution at the SM AGM was submitted and motivated by *Outlook* supporters. It would have seemed certain that they would vote for this position. Life in and around the walking political contradiction that is *Socialist Outlook* is not so simple. On the vote *Socialist Outlook* split three ways.

Most of them abstained — including the mover of the "vote Labour" resolution! It took two attempts for their comrade who is chair of "Socialists for Labour" to vote in favour. Others, including Davy Jones, *Outlook's* most prominent supporter in the SM,



Kinnock's not the first traitor

voted against — and in favour of reflecting the "pluralist tradition" of the Socialist Movement; in reality, a "neutral" position on the general election.

It was the same Davy Jones who, with an air of exasperation, assured the Labour Party Socialists AGM last October that of course *Socialist* would back a Labour vote everywhere.

This comedy is important for two reasons. First, in working class politics there has to be clarity. The issue of the general election is the next chance the labour movement has to de-throne Major and his cronies. Socialists must be clear in their support for Labour, despite Kinnock, not because of him. A victory for Labour would give a tremendous boost to the working class, demoralised and disoriented by 12 years of Tory rule. It would allow greater opportunities for socialists to argue their ideas: that is the important of a Labour victory at the general election.

Secondly, the event was instructive in the political method of *Outlook*.

Essentially those who were ambivalent on voting Labour were retreating from class positions. Ex-Labour members argued that Labour was now so terrible, with its support for the Gulf war and compliance with the Tory poll tax dictates in local

government, that socialists could not lend their support.

One speaker said that we should advocate a vote for "socialism", not Labour, and that the general election was not a priority for socialists. And some long-standing Labour activists argued that in some constituencies where the SNP or Plaid were the contestants, we should vote for them instead.

All this showed the effects of 12 years of Tory rule and more deep-rooted confusion on what the Labour Party is and what it represents in society. For some of those present it was easy to support a left wing Labour Party, but not this one.

SO can sympathise: the general election will not be a battle between socialism and capitalism. The sharp turn to the right dismays us. The election is, however, a battle between the existing working class movement and the Tories. And, after all, Labour under Kinnock is not radically different from the Labour Party in the past, nor will a Labour government after the next election be so different from past ones: Labour has supported every imperialist war, it has routinely betrayed the working class. What's new?

So how do *Outlook* fit in to this? Some of their supporters made speeches I could fully support, some however were very strange. The small success of the SNP, Plaid and, most recently, the "Real Labour" candidates for them complicate the issue, because they have been successful against Labour "from the left".

There was a subsidiary issue. A pro-Labour stance would alienate the good activists in the SNP, Plaid and the Green Party who support the SM (as well as causing possibly irrevocable splits within *Outlook* itself). Some of this is true, but some *Outlook* supporters saw this "pressure from the left" as a positive development.

It seems obvious that socialists should relate to the

youth in Govan that support the SNP because they supported non-payment of the poll tax (they've now dropped this policy) but *Outlook* just mimics and echoes them.

The socialist left must engage in a political struggle to orientate radical youth to the labour movement. Voting Labour is part and parcel of that. In different circumstances, with mass radicalisation and a discredited Labour government it may be different, but presently with a battered labour movement, getting a Labour government is the overriding priority.

This fascination with Scottish nationalism is not just a fleeting fancy either. It tells us much about the history of *Outlook* and the international grouping they support, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USEC).

In the '70s the main forerunner of *Outlook* helped set up the Scottish Socialist Party as a split from the Labour Party. It quickly withered and died. The USEC has had a penchant for investing faith in non-socialist radical movements. From guerrillaism to Stalinism, these radical movements have been part of the developing world-revolution pushing ever onward and upward, they say.

Now there's a thought: Jim Sillars as the new Fidel Castro.



Jim Sillars



# The intifada at the crossroads

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

Since its beginning, the Palestinian uprising had two distinct aspects: the highly visible one of confrontations with the Israeli army, and the less visible — but possibly more significant — of building up a network of independent Palestinian political, economic, social and cultural organisations as the basis on which the Independent Palestinian state would be erected.

Even the extensive repression practiced for three and a half years by the military authorities did not succeed in ending the intifada. But under this constant pressure, many features of the intifada were changed and distorted.

The systematic detention of the intermediate level leadership often left local intifada committees in charge of young and inexperienced activists, having only loose links with the central leadership. Moreover, the continued pressure of the army, especially in the cities, makes large demonstrations difficult or impossible, leaving much of the daily confrontations with the army in the hands of small bands of masked youth. To this should be added the extreme rise in unemployment — at present mounting to about 50% in the Gaza Strip.

As a result of the immigration wave, unemployment has gone up sharply in the Israeli economy. The most severe damage was done to the most vulnerable workforce: the Palestinians from the Territories who have been daily commuting to work for Israeli employers.

In the months following the Gulf War, the misery became so acute that the



The intifada is turning in on itself

Defence Minister Moshe Arons — in order not to lose control — had to alleviate some of the restrictions on the Palestinian economy. In the past period, more operating permits were given by the occupation authorities to Palestinian entrepreneurs per month than normally in a whole year. Also, from now on, these Palestinian entrepreneurs would, during the first years, enjoy tax exemptions.

One of the symptoms of the growing despair is the spread of lethal violence.

Knife attacks on random Israeli civilians seem to have been the acts of individual Palestinians. The killing of Palestinian collaborators has a more systematic character. This last phenomenon has lately reached the average of one victim per day.

In the beginning, the targets were obvious collaborators — those who walk in the village streets flaunting openly the guns given them by the army, and using their connections with the authorities to get material benefits. Then, searches

started to be made for those who secretly provide the army with information — and torture was introduced to obtain confessions from suspects. (Sometimes, youthful Palestinian interrogators make use of methods whose effectiveness they learned when they had received the attention of the Israeli Security Service).

Finally, the youths — under no outside control — began killing common criminals, as well as settling private scores — to the point where more Palestinians are now killed by other Palestinians than by the Israeli army. Also, members of different factions began turning their weapons on each other; on 3 June, an actual gun battle between different factions took place in the alleys of the Nablus Casbah.

The Palestinian leadership is increasingly concerned by this state of affairs, whose corrosive effect on the fabric of Palestinian society may long outlive the Israeli occupation. A measure of this concern is that discussion of the matter is no longer confined to closed meetings, but is carried on in the East Jerusalem press.

Adnan Damiri, a Tulkarm journalist considered a high level Fatah activist, wrote that for too long we have been trying to find excuses for all these executions of people who work with the authorities. We run away

from questions by the foreign and Israeli press about the phenomenon which has emerged, where every knock on a door by a masked man becomes a nail in a coffin (*Al Fajr*, June 5).

Damiri — who himself spent several six-month terms in administrative detention at Ansar-3, for this political activities during the intifada — writes further: a friend told me he has been arrested four times by soldiers who attacked his house, but now he is more afraid of masked men because he doesn't know their names, their addresses, their faces, and not even their smell.

In a related development, major leaders of the main PLO factions in the Occupied Territories — Feisal Hussein of the Fatah, Zuhira Kamal of the Democratic Front, and Riad Malki of the Popular Front — all made public calls for a reassessment of the intifada's strategy. Hussein called for renewed emphasis on the construction of an independent Palestinian infrastructure.

The chances for such a reversal of course are closely tied with the progress of the diplomatic process — giving the Palestinians at least a measure of hope for an eventual end to the occupation. With no prospect for the future but further repression, the decent into blind, all-out violence could only be hastened.

## Algeria's crisis gives chances to the left

By Martin Thomas

A state of siege was declared in Algeria last week, and the general election due on 27 June has been postponed to the end of the year.

The FLN (National Liberation Front) government made these moves in response to a two-week general strike and violent demonstrations called by the opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). But behind the shows of strength by both the FLN and the FIS, there are signs that they are becoming discredited and chances are opening up for the left.

The FLN took power in Algeria in 1962, at the end of a long and bloody war for independence from France during which it had not only defeated the French but also forcibly destroyed all other political forces in Algeria.

In the course of the 1960s the FLN set up a Stalinist-type regime. The single state party controlled all political, social and cultural life, or aspired to. A drive for self-sufficient industrialisation was launched, with the state controlling practically all investment and setting production targets by decree.

For a time, with Algeria's oil production bringing in big incomes, the FLN got results of a sort. Manufacturing production increased at 9.5% a year between 1965 and 1980. Infant mortality was halved between 1965 and 1986; the percentage of children getting secondary education rose from 7% to 51% in 1985.

But the programme of industrialisation was always bureaucratically botched, and as oil revenues have sagged since the early '80s Algeria has run into trouble. Agriculture, long neglected, has stagnated. The government has heavy foreign debts. Millions of young Algerians are unemployed; millions of others have to go to France for work. The corruption and greed of the FLN fat cats have made a mockery of their socialist rhetoric.

Mass protests in October 1988 shook the FLN regime. Since then it has embarked on its own programme of "glasnost" and "perestroika".

The fundamentalists of the Islamic Salvation Front have gained most from the FLN's decision to allow opposition parties, although FLN leftists purged in the 1960s have also organised, and there are a couple of Trotskyist groups with a few hundred members each.

That the Islamicists were able to call a general strike shows their strength in the cities, though some reports (*Financial Times*, 6 June) suggest that the strike was beginning to collapse last week. They were also able to call huge demonstrations during the Gulf War, giving opposition to US imperialism a sharp anti-Christian and anti-Jewish twist.

But they also discredited themselves in the Gulf War by initially supporting Saudi Arabia (which was giving them money). And their record in local government has disappointed their supporters. In April, people in three towns occupied their town hall in protest against the Islamicist local councils.

The Islamicists have banned concerts, alcohol, and mixed bathing; denounced popular music; attacked young women wearing "un-Islamic" dress; and organised "morality searches" on homes. Increasing numbers of Algerians are becoming disillusioned both with the Islamicists and with the FLN, and that must create openings for the left.

## Hunger and unemployment in Gaza

Mary Khas reports for *Socialist Organiser* from the Gaza Strip

The situation here is very bad. There is no work and hunger is now a real problem.

A new campaign, "Fight Hunger in the Gaza Strip", has been started, and food collections have begun.

Unemployment is over 50%. Israeli government policy has led to a decrease in the numbers crossing the Green Line to work in Israel. It is very difficult to get a permit for this work.

In the past 45-60,000 workers from the Strip used to work in Israel. Now the figure is down

to 20,000. And this is an over-estimate.

The Gulf situation badly affected Palestinians in Gaza. Firstly, the Gulf states' funding for the PLO was cut.

Second, many Palestinians were supporting families in Gaza by working in the Gulf. 70% of the population here was receiving support from children and relatives working in the Gulf. Now much of this work has ended.

Palestinians from Gaza who were working in the Gulf when the occupation of Gaza by Israel began are not allowed to return. There are few exceptions to this rule. However, some of the migrant workers have returned from the Gulf and are adding to the unemployment and misery.

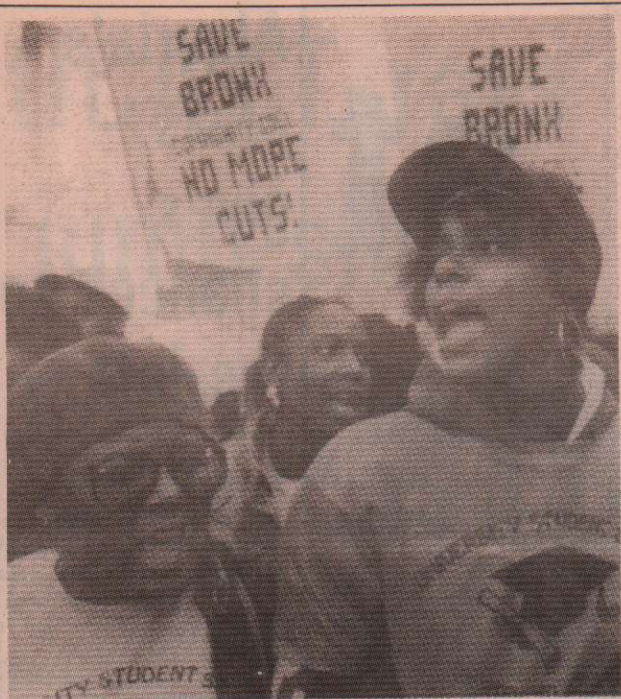
Commerce here is now weak and depressed.

I feel the presence of Hamas — the Islamic fundamentalists — has actually lessened recently. We are not prepared to accept these people. They are not part of the local leadership, on the contrary they are opposed to it and all that the PLO stands for.

They want a single Islamic state. The PLO demands self-determination and a two-state solution.

There have been clashes with these people. But, also, the press likes to exaggerate these incidents.

The occupying authorities have always had a deliberate policy of helping the fundamentalists. Two years ago the *Jerusalem Post* exposed the Israeli authorities as giving them money and arms. They want the fundamentalists to fight the PLO.



New York students protest at budget cuts

## Lights go off in New York

### GRAFFITI

America's military muscle was paraded in its major city on Monday. New York played host to the celebration of mass destruction.

The city of New York needs such diversions. In the three weeks before the financial year ends on 30 June, \$3.5 billion in cuts have to be made. The major city of the American empire once again stands on the verge of bankruptcy.

So far David Dinkins, the Democrat Mayor, has proposed laying off 20,000 workers, closing Central Park Zoo, and switching off one in four street lights. It still won't be enough.

He is less likely to cut police numbers as NY last year had a record 2,245 murders and is in the midst of a rapidly increasing crime rate.

The 1987 stock market crash accelerated the trend for big business to abandon New York. In the 1960s half of the top 30 American companies were headquartered in New York, now there are only two.

At the same time George Bush has confirmed that he will again veto legislation aimed at reversing recent Supreme Court decisions which make discrimination in employment easier.

In fact for black Americans, whether in jobs or most other indicators, the gap in standards of living between black and white is increasing.

The life expectancy of black males is seven years less than for whites; 30% of blacks live below the poverty line compared to 10% of whites; 13% of blacks are jobless compared with 6% for whites.

In 1989 average black per capita income was \$24,168 compared with more than \$100,000 for whites. The ratio of black and white incomes has not changed since 1970, nor have relative racial poverty rates, nor have relative unemployment rates.

It is not surprising then that 59% of blacks in a May NBC poll said laws to protect minorities needed to be toughened. An earlier *Newsweek* poll showed that 61% of blacks favoured quotas in education and jobs.

Almost 30 years after Civil Rights legislation was introduced the gap between black and white in America remains huge

and there is no sign of improvement. And certainly not if George Bush can help it.

Despite campaigns in the 1970s to reduce the hours of work, two out of every 5 British men work more than 46 hours a week.

This is almost double the average for the EC.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has also found that 10% of men had worked at least one shift of more than 13 hours in the week surveyed.

Two things stand out. Firstly, if Britain adopts the EC policy on working time then many management practices will need to change, including the maximum shift time.

Secondly, these working patterns show how difficult it is for housework and childcare to be shared between the mother and father. While men worked such long hours and in such awkward patterns women are forced to fit in work around their family responsibilities.



Helmut Kohl

The unforeseen costs of German unification continue to show up in the national accounts.

Inflation is increasing while around the world it is showing signs of decreasing. But of most interest is the continued contracting of the German trade balance.

While most countries in the world run a trade deficit, some in astronomical sums, Germany and Japan stood out as consistently having annual surpluses, sometimes in astronomical sums.

In March 1990 the West German trade surplus was DM13.4 billion. In March 1991 it was DM2.6 billion.

In April German trade went into deficit to the tune of DM1.4 billion. It is the first trade deficit for ten years and will send Helmut Kohl's stocks down even further.

# Sindie, bloody Sindie

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Readers of the *Independent on Sunday* must be wondering what the hell is going on.

On 2 June the paper was peppered with oblique (and not-so-oblique) references to sackings and resignations of its own staff. The following week, the *Sindie* appeared with a new masthead and an almost totally different set of writers.

The explanation for these strange goings-on was that Andreas Whittam-Smith and his side-kick Matthew Symonds, of the daily *Independent*, had carried out a palace coup against *Sindie*'s editor Stephen Glover, placing the Sunday paper firmly under the control of the daily's editorial team.

Glover and a large number of his colleagues were sacked or "invited" to take voluntary redundancy. The 2 June issue was Glover's parting shot, deliberately intended to undermine readers' confidence in the future of the *Sindie*. Two weeks earlier, Glover (a Tory) had written a fiery editorial committing the paper to supporting Labour at the next general election.

However, the *Sindie*'s two best-known contributors, TV critic Mark Lawson and "killer" interviewer Lynn Barber, will continue to write for the paper for the time being. Both applied for their redundancy, but were refused

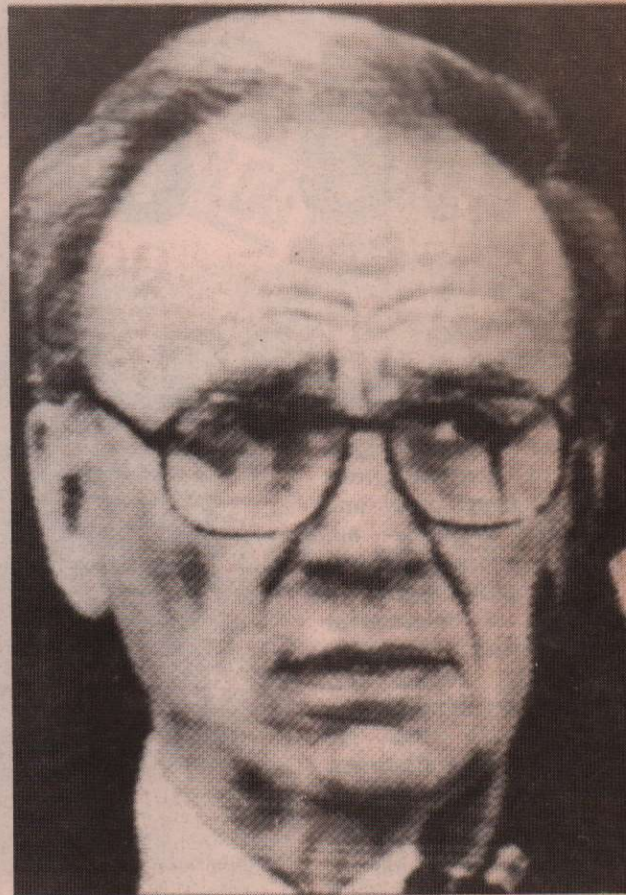
by Whittam-Smith.

*Selling Hitler*, Euston Film's blockbuster TV series about the "Hitler Diaries" hoax, promises to make excellent viewing. Younger readers may not remember the "Hitler Diaries" business: in 1983 the German magazine *Stern* paid out the equivalent of £3.15 million for 60 diaries supposedly written by the dictator himself. Soon a desperate scramble for the world publication rights began, with Mr Rupert Murdoch's News International leading the pack.

Eventually Murdoch secured the rights and the *Sunday Times* proudly announced its historic scoop to the world. Any doubts that Murdoch and his hacks may have harboured about the diaries' authenticity were allayed by the "eminent" historian Lord Dacre, who publicly authenticated them for the Digger.

Then, as the *Sunday Times* prepared for the first part of its serialisation, Lord Dacre had second thoughts. Eventually it turned out that Dacre, Murdoch and the *ST* had all been fooled by an amateur German con-man and forger (played by Alexei Sayle in the TV version) who'd used cold tea to make the pages of the diaries look "old".

Brian McArthur, the *ST*



Murdoch: fooled by cold tea

deputy editor who supervised the serialisation of the diaries, previewed the TV series with commendable good humour last week, but could not resist noting with some bitterness that "we were betrayed by the *Times*, which not only snatched a scoop by revealing that the diaries existed on the Saturday before the *Sunday Times* appeared — but failed to let

us know on that day, when serialisation could still have been aborted, that it was aware of Dacre's gnawing doubts about his verdict that the diaries were genuine."

It seems that even within Mr Murdoch's camp, there is no love lost between titles.

On the TV, incidentally, Murdoch is played by Barry Humphries. Should be a treat.



## The day when I'll believe hype

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

I promise that this is the last thing I write about female body image for ages. But I have to say that I do not believe the "return" of the corset or platform shoes represents a liberating choice for women.

I will believe the hype of the fashion industry when men rush out to buy the latest retro-chic — hose and cod-piece.

As a reader of this newspaper you are clearly independent-minded, intelligent and (probably) reasonably assertive.

Therefore you probably have a hard time at work. I had been falling into the trap of forgetting that "equal opportunities" is a pretty new idea. However female-dominated our workplaces, the bosses are most likely to be men. Despite the media images, assertive, intelligent women are still expected to be

subservient to those men.

A friend of mine works as a project supervisor in a planning firm. She found out that one of her male colleagues was undermining her efforts by withholding information. After several private conversations with this man she told him that if he did not change his ways she would raise the matter in front of their boss (and others) at an important meeting. He did not change. At the last minute, fearing that her colleague would be publicly humiliated she did not raise the issue at the meeting, but afterwards privately with their boss. The boss said that she must "tone down" her approach...

However justified women's assertive behaviour, at work it is a most always viewed as aggressive by the male hierar-

chy. My example is from a woman perceived as 'successful' but, lower down the status-and-pay ladder, women are treated as badly and worse. A black woman I used to share a flat with told me of her attempts to get out of her canteen job at a big department store. At her interview for the canteen job she was told that once employed she could apply for any internal vacancy at the store. When she applied for more interesting jobs she kept being told not to be so pushy and to wait a bit...

My conclusion is this — it is not individual women who are aggressive, but the system which needs changing. SO is committed to changing the system which harms women in this way. Don't blame yourself — change the world!

## Eric Heffer 1922-1991

# 55 years for socialism

Eric Heffer MP, who died on 27 May, was an active working-class socialist for 55 years and, in his last years, a regular contributor to *Socialist Organiser*. On this page, as a tribute to Eric Heffer, we reprint extracts from a few of his articles.

I was born into the labour movement. Not that my parents were active members of the Labour Party, but they never voted anything other than Labour.

Politics were discussed in my house all the time, and it was always left wing Labour politics.

I left school at 14 and became an apprentice carpenter-joiner in a very small country town just outside London, Hertford.

I had joined the Labour Party as a youngster when I joined the union, but then I left the Labour Party for the Communist Party because I didn't think the Labour Party was strong enough, active enough, or socialist enough. Labour was not supporting the struggle against Fascism as I thought it should be supporting it.

I didn't think they were supporting the struggle in Spain where fascists and anti-fascists were fighting a civil war.

**"Nothing I have learned in 50 years has changed me, or shifted me from the socialist bedrock — the class struggle position. I believe that the whole idea is to transform and change society, to build a socialist society, and that only in that way can the working class come into its own."**

My first inkling that things were wrong in the Communist Party came during the general election in 1945. It happened like this. I hadn't kept up with all the Party's theoretical journals, though I read Party papers when I could get them, and I didn't know that the "Party line" was for a new Labour-Tory coalition government.

Then I saw the documents and they made my hair stand on end. It

was the stuff that was coming out of at the time — for "national governments" everywhere in Europe supported by or involving the Communist Party.

I began to read seriously — Lenin and the theoretical works of Marx and Engels. I studied Lenin in particular — *Left Wing Communism, State and Revolution*.

I never did become a Trotskyist at any time. Never an anti-Trotskyist, but never a Trotskyist. Certainly I became anti-Stalin later — but, then, I was just learning about Stalin. At that stage, when I was thrown out of the Communist Party, I wasn't anti-Stalin, though I was beginning to be more critical.

I was a delegate to the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party, because I paid the political levy, from my union branch. After a bit it seemed to me that I might as well join the Labour Party.

After a number of years I got a bit fed up with things in the Labour Party — the rise of Gaitskell and the move to the right, and so on. I left. Looking back on it I was wrong. But then, I felt that the time had come to form a new party.

Together with Harry MacShane, and one or two other people, I helped form a group called the Socialist Workers Federation. That was either in 1953 or 1954. It lasted about two years. By then I realised that we were getting nowhere and old Harry realised that we were getting nowhere, so we decided to disband and go our own ways. We wound up the SWF and I became very active as an individual member of the Labour Party.

I continued to be a shop steward in the shipyards and the big sites. Then, in 1960, I was pressurised by the left into standing for the council.

Then there was a discussion about whether I should stand for Parliament.

So I was, you might say, pushed towards Westminster and, in October 1964, to Parliament.

I had never really changed. I have — I hope — learnt quite a lot, but nothing I have learned in 50 years has changed me, or shifted me from the socialist bedrock — the class struggle position. I believe that the whole idea is to transform and change society, to build a socialist society and that only in that way can the working class come into its own.

From Workers' Liberty No.11, January 1989.

## Stay in the Labour Party and fight!

I think it's very important that socialists remain in the Labour Party and at the same time work very hard to create an organisation or organisations which can fight for socialism inside the Labour Party and work with organisations outside the Labour Party.

This is not the time to leave the Labour Party. I'm not saying that at some time in the future there

won't be a new socialist party. But this is not the moment. We have to organise the left for socialism, but within the Labour Party.

That doesn't stop us collaborating with people in the Socialist Movement and others who are not in the Labour Party.

I don't think we should be advocating that people should leave the Labour Party. We shouldn't be calling for a new party. We should concentrate on building up a good genuinely left wing movement within the Labour Party. From SO 453, 12 July 1990



## Against the Gulf war

This war is led by the United States of America. Despite the United Nations resolutions, the whole international community is not involved.

It is a war for oil! A war to maintain American and British hegemony in the Middle East.

The war must be resisted! I feel very sad for the ordinary soldiers, and airmen — American, British and French, and all the others — who are out there now. They are just pawns in a game.

They are pawns in the hands of

imperialists who are trying to reverse history, to turn the hands of the clock back 30 or 40 years.

Socialists cannot, and will not, support the regime of Saddam Hussein. It is an exceptionally vile regime.

But we are totally opposed to the slaughter and destruction of millions of ordinary innocent people in Iraq, Kuwait and elsewhere in the Middle East.

And therefore the entire labour movement should organise to resist this imperialist war in every possible way.

From Socialist Organiser 471, 18 January 1991.

## A message to SO

As far as I am concerned, and I have long argued over the years, all those who are left-wing socialists and have their own newspapers ought to be members of the Labour Party, and in my opinion are fully entitled to organise around the journal and paper which they support and publish.

Therefore I welcome the fact that Socialist Organiser has been doing this for a number of years and I think very beneficially to the party; therefore I think it is absolutely wrong that there should be any attempt on the part of anybody to either close down the paper or take action against people who support the paper.

I thought it was wrong in relation to other journals such as Militant and so on in the past, and I argued then that it wouldn't stop there, and it would ultimately, if it went on, end up with the Tribune itself being closed down if this is the trend within the party. Therefore, as far as I'm concerned, I trust there will be a mobilisation of the membership to stop any further witchhunts.

So I definitely give my greeting to the Socialist Organiser conference; I hope that it is a great success and in particular I hope that it will also broaden the contacts of Socialist Organiser with those in Eastern Europe of like-minded socialist views so that we can work for a genuine democratic

socialist society, based in the East and the West.

Message to the Socialist Organiser Alliance AGM, March 1990 — from Socialist Organiser 439, 22 March 1990.

## Independence for the Kurds

The Kurds have a right to a state of their own. There should be a Kurdistan which goes across the existing borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and the USSR.

We have a responsibility as socialists to give them full backing in their fight for independence, whoever it's against.

The fact is that the Americans and the British and the rest of the imperialists are not concerned with the freedom of the Kurds.

The big powers are concerned with maintaining secure oil supplies, and if that means that there should be no break-up of Iraq — it should be a unified state, even under a dictator like Saddam Hussein — then they are perfectly happy to support that outcome, hoping that later there can be a less radical government and a removal of Saddam.

All the imperialist pretences and hypocrisies are now exposed for what they always were.

From Socialist Organiser 483, 18 April 1991.

## No double standards on Stalinism

Since the late 1940s it has been clear to me that the Soviet Union wasn't the socialist millennium at all.

The workers there have been bureaucratically controlled — and more so in some respects — as in capitalist Britain. Therefore a fundamental change is necessary in the Soviet Union, and the fight for such a change is as important as in this country.

Even if there are no capitalist moguls in the Soviet Union, there are state bureaucrats who manipulate society and have developed into something like a new class. The USSR is not socialist. It's not the sort of socialism that I believe in.

What about the economy based upon a type of public ownership? That should certainly not be destroyed. It should be defended. I want Gorbachev to develop democracy and democratic ideas and free discussion in the Soviet Union. But I have a feeling that there will be some forces there who want to destroy the socialised nature of the economy in the Soviet Union — and that I am not in favour of.

One way to define it is to spell out what programme you think the workers in the Soviet Union should fight for. I think that what they have to fight for is:

- genuinely free and independent trade unions;
- the right to have free publications, which can express their own points of view clearly;
- the right to have political organisations, quite separate from the Communist Party;
- the right to have free elections.

We have to speak with one clear voice and according to one simple standard in support of the right of workers everywhere to organise trade unions free of any state control.

The terrible double standards with which some on the left view the USSR also showed in their attitude to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. You had a mass movement in protest at America's bloody war in Vietnam, and rightly so, but bored disinterest in the USSR's war against the peoples of Afghanistan.

I was one of the few left wing Members of Parliament who protested very strongly when the Soviet Union marched into Afghanistan. The best thing that Gorbachev has done up to now has been to start to withdraw from Afghanistan. It really was no different from Vietnam. We really have to be honest about it — we can't go on having those double standards.

I know that it is very much a minority position on the left, very much so. People feel that if you make a stand you are siding with right wing reactionaries. But you can make your socialist stand against 'left wing' regimes and at the same time distinguish yourself clearly from the right wing by putting questions and policies to them that they cannot possibly accept. You can show them as hypocrites because of it. It depends on how you do it.

We have to convince people that there is a separate view, a working class view — that you do not have to side with either the bureaucrats or with Thatcher.

Socialist Organiser 362-3, 28 June 1988.

Split in local party can only help Kinnock

# The tragedy

**Sean Matgamna draws a balance sheet on the Liverpool left**

Liverpool is one of the most deprived and poverty-stricken areas in Britain. Its economy has been in chronic decline for two decades and more.

Liverpool's working class, which has a long and great history of struggle, has been systematically weakened and undermined as a consequence.

Despite that, the labour movement remains comparatively strong. But it is a labour movement that has been bloodied and misled by decades of misleadership.

The right wing were dominant in Liverpool labour until well into the 1960s; people like the notorious Bessie and Jack Braddock ruled the roost there, along with a corrupt "Catholic mafia".

Left wingers like Eric Heffer were in the minority. Slowly things changed. The bitter old Protestant-Catholic division — the sort of thing they have in Belfast, only not so deeply rooted — receded. Everywhere in Britain labour was militant and on the offensive. The combativity of Liverpool's dockers was legendary.

Then in 1973 the Liberals gained control of Liverpool City Council and held it for the rest of the decade. The working class began to suffer setbacks and defeats. The Liverpool docks industry declined, so did shipbuilding. Chronic depression laid hold of the city, and its grip still holds.

It was against this background that *Militant* slowly grew to dominance over sections of the Liverpool labour movement. A branch of *Militant* (under different names) had existed in Liverpool since the 1930s. They controlled the Labour Party Young Socialists for 15 or 16 years, with the collusion of

the Labour Party bureaucracy. They didn't rock many boats or challenge the labour movement machine: their goal was to burrow within it and take it over. Their notion of socialism was a cross between Fabianism and bureaucratic Stalinism.

For example, the long-established Liverpool black community has been the subject of institutionalised racism for many decades: *Militant* never concerned itself with such issues. Nor with the oppression of women. It accommodated to the existing level of ideas of the working class around it. But it grew.

By 1983, when Labour regained control of the council from the Liberals, *Militant* had a big enough block of councillors to control events, behind a thin facade of "independent left wingers" like council leader John Hamilton.

The result was a series of disasters for the Liverpool labour movement. Conditions were unfavourable for any left wing council under great pressure from the Tories, and especially so in mass-poverty Liverpool. Conflict with

***"Militant chose to do a short term deal with the Tories in mid 1984, refusing to go for confrontation then which would have linked the cause of the Labour far left with the miners then on strike, and could maybe have given a lead to other left councils."***

the government was inevitable.

*Militant's* representatives began to compensate for all the years of quiet burrowing by an orgy of public boasting and confrontation-



Council workers strike and burn redundancy notices, 1991. Photo: Paul Herrman, Profile.

rattling.

For a year — from May 1983 to May 1984 — they worked, and worked well, to mobilise the Liverpool working class. Mass demonstrations challenged the Tories. An opinion poll in May 1984 showed that 55% of Labour voters — Labour, with its fighting policy, made big gains in the council elections — were ready to back a local general strike.

And there *Militant* threw it all away. In the end they merely played the Grand Old Duke of York, marching mass demonstrations up to the top of the hill and then down again. Apart from style — and their strange and incongruous leader Derek Hatton — *Militant* was little different from any other fake left Labour council.

Or perhaps it was a little more cynical. Despite all the "revolutionary" and "Marxist" bluff and bluster, *Militant* chose to do a short-term deal with the Tories in mid 1984, refusing to go for confrontation then which would have linked the cause of the Labour far left with the miners then on strike, and could maybe have given a lead to other left councils.

*Militant* let the Tories — who greatly feared a fighting linking up of other workers with the miners — buy them off, and like the rest of the labour movement left the miners in the lurch. By this blinkered and treacherous parochialism Derek Hatton and his friends — under the daily control of *Militant* national leaders — bought themselves exactly a year. Then, the miners beaten, the Tories came back to sort them out.

Despite the craven record, the boasting and the bluster continued. They continue to this day! A book published by *Militant* after the 1985 fiasco compared the experience of the Liverpool City Council favourable to the French Revolution of 1789-94!

Yet, the truth is that had *Militant*

deliberately wanted to demoralise and demobilise the Liverpool working class it would not have behaved any differently. The mad saga of the "Marxist" council pretending to sack its own workers as a means of putting pressure on the callous Tories is well enough known by now. The jubilant right wing saw to that.

Yet, though Neil Kinnock, who rattled on both the miners and the

***"Militant had burrowed its way into control of part of the old and corrupt Labour Party machine in Liverpool. They acted in the well-established bureaucratic manner, with only the addition of 'revolutionary' rhetoric, and efforts to build the Militant sect."***

local government left, had no right to say it, he told the stark truth when, at Labour Party conference in 1985, he mocked at the "tendency tacticians" and condemned them for sending a fleet of taxis around Liverpool to give council workers their redundancy notices.

Such antics by *Militant* made the job of no-guts Neil so much easier.

Soon, it turned out that the full truth was even more fantastic than it appeared at the time on the hostile TV screens or in the

bourgeois press: none of the grotesque pantomime with redundancy notices was "necessary" even financially: they had already negotiated a big loan with a Swiss bank, and the necessary cuts had been taking place "spontaneously" as council services ran down in Liverpool's financial crisis.

The council leaders were just bluffing the Tories and — like the bureaucrats in office they were — not bothering at all about the effect on the Liverpool working class and trade union movement.

That is the essence of it: *Militant* had burrowed its way into control of part of the old and corrupt Labour Party machine in Liverpool. They acted in the well-established bureaucratic manner, with only the addition of "revolutionary" rhetoric, and efforts to build the *Militant* sect. The labour movement they tried to treat as a mere stage army, demonstration-fodder, ballast to put pressure on the government. Such techniques were common for decades to the French and Italian CPs.

Added to that was the antics of *Militant's* leader in Liverpool — Hatton — a caricature spiv and bully-boy who now faces charges of corruption.

They came into bitter conflict with the Liverpool trade union movement. Worse, they ran a typical white bureaucratic racist vendetta against Liverpool's oppressed blacks: and when the leaders of the black people protested, *Militant* ran a vicious campaign throughout the labour movement denouncing them as "pimps" and "gangsters".

*Militant* led the Liverpool working class to defeat. The Tories disqualified a large number of councillors. Like jackals, the Kinnockites moved in and started to purge the Liverpool Labour Party. Now in control of the council they cut services and sack workers.

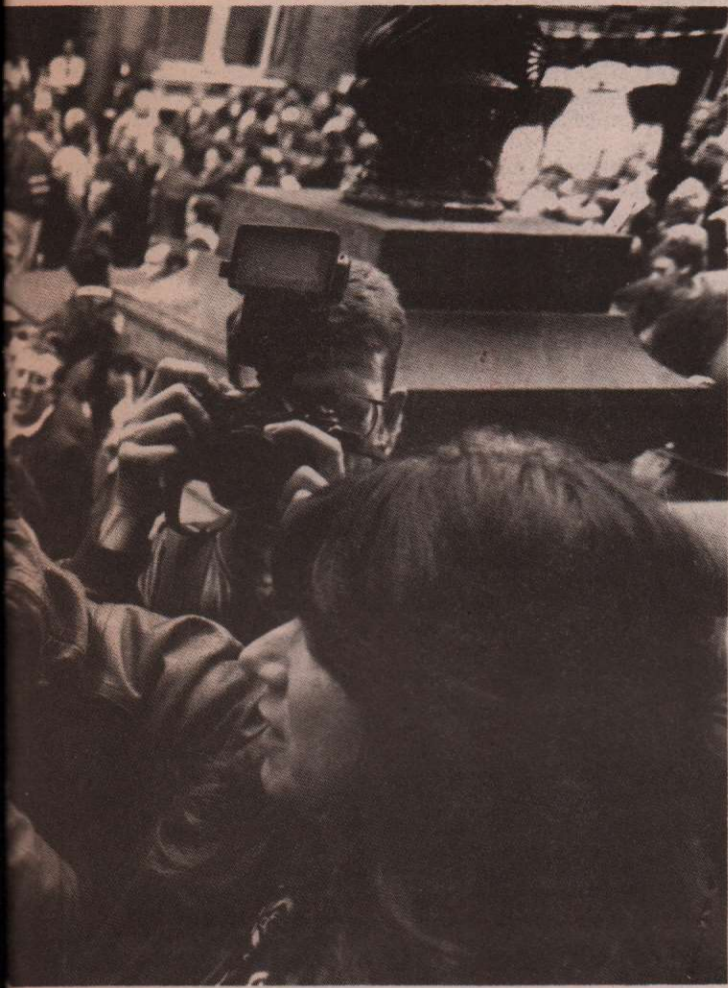
Against this the *Militant*-led



*Militant* and Hatton left the miners to fight alone...



# of Liverpool



## Militant's failure

**May '83** Labour makes gains in elections for one-third of Liverpool City Council's seats and wins the Council from the Liberals (who have controlled it since 1973). *Militant* supporters are central in the new council Labour group.

**Nov '83** 20,000 people join a march to support the Labour council's demand for the return of grant money withdrawn over the years by the Tory government.

**29 Mar '84** Budget day for the council. Despite a one-day strike by council workers and a big demonstration at the Town Hall, Labour's 'unbalanced' no-cuts budget is defeated by 3 Labour right-wingers voting with the Liberals and Tories. All other budgets are defeated too.

**May '84** New council elections. Labour wins a solid majority. An opinion poll indicates that 55% of Labour voters would back a local general strike if the Tories intervened against the council. But the *Militant*-led Labour council does not vote through the unbalanced budget. The mass campaign is wound down in favour of negotiations with the Tory government. This is the decisive turning point when confrontation with the government could have linked up with the miners' strike and given a lead to all other councils.

**July '84** The council leaders announce a deal with the government. Some of the financial problems are postponed to the next year, and the council can get through with a 17% rate rise. *Militant* call it "a 95% victory", but the Tories are quietly satisfied: they have evaded the danger of a fight on two fronts, miners and local government, at the same time.

**Oct '84** The Council appoints Sampson Bond, a *Militant* supporter, as its race relations officer, against the strong opposition of the City's Black Caucus. The ensuing row wrecks the Council Unions' Joint Shop Stewards' Committee and alienates Liverpool's black community. Throughout the country — in



Derek Hatton

LPYS branches for example — *Militant* wages a savage campaign of racist stereotyping against the leaders of the Black Caucus, denouncing them as "Pimps and Gangsters".

**Mar '85** The miners, defeated, are forced back to work. Liverpool Labour Council has not yet said anything definite about plans for a confrontation with the government over the budget for the financial year starting April 1985. Instead it delays setting a budget — a policy also followed by a few other Labour councils.

**June '85** Councillors propose a budget with a 20% rate rise and some financial juggling to see them through the year without a showdown. The council workers' unions say no. The Council sets an 'unbalanced' budget — yet starts no clear campaign for action.

**Sept '85** The Council announces that it is about to run out of cash and will issue 90 days redundancy notices to all employees "as a legal device". The council unions protest. The council leaders withdraw the notices. The council shop stewards call a ballot for an all-out strike. The vote goes against a strike, 47% to 53%. The council leaders send out the redundancy notices again — some by taxi to bypass a teachers' picket line.

**5-11 Oct** NALGO members strike in protest. Labour Party Conference. Neil Kinnock makes great play of denouncing Liverpool Council for sending out the redundancy notices. The Liverpool left is not yet totally isolated — David Blunkett from the platform, hypocritically offers them help — but isolation will come over the next year.

**11 Oct '85** The Council is forced to withdraw the redundancy notices by legal action brought by the NUT. It proposes another 'legal device' — laying off the whole council workforce from 1-28 January!

**20 Nov '85** Labour's National Executive sets up a kangaroo court 'inquiry' into Liverpool District Labour Party. This is simply the Kinnock faction seizing its chance.

**22 Nov '85** The Council announces a deal. It gets a loan from Swiss banks on condition that it makes cuts and stays legal in future. It reveals that the required cuts have already, quietly, been made! And it soon comes out that the loan had been negotiated back in August! The entire saga of redundancy notices, taxis, clashes with the workforce etc is rendered inexplicable. To this day *Militant* has offered no credible account of what it thought it was doing. *Liverpool, the Council that dared to fight* by Peter Tuaffe and Tony Mulhearn relies on lies and bombast.

**Mar '86** A court declares that the Liverpool Labour councillors must be surcharged and disqualified because of their delay in setting a budget. The Council sets a budget implying cuts. In July 1986 the District Labour Party is given details of £12 million cuts. *Militant* supporters vote them through.

**Oct 86** Labour Party Conference approves the expulsion of Derek Hatton and other leading *Militant* people from Liverpool, with opposition only from the hard left.

Since 1986 the Liverpool Labour Parties have faced repeated purges and suspensions — which have, however, failed to create a safe, controlled, Kinnockite local party.

Broad Left" has organised a breakaway "Real Labour Party" in Liverpool. They won five seats in the council elections, and are now contesting Eric Heffer's parliamentary seat in Walton.

The story briefly outlined above puts these developments into perspective.

The split in the Liverpool Labour Party is a product of the defeats

**In terms of credibility the problem for the 'Real Labour Party' is that the people at its head, Militant, were the main architects of defeat, the people who made such a ridiculous and noisy hash of things when they had control of the council."**

ffered by the left.

In terms of credibility, the problem for the "Real Labour Party" is that the people at its head, *Militant*,

were the main architects of defeat, the people who made such a ridiculous noisy hash of things when they had control of the council.

Around the "Real Labour Party" grouping are also many workers who desperately want some means to fight back against both the Kinnockite Labour council and the Tory government.

Nevertheless, they are misled. A comparatively tiny breakaway such as theirs can only result in making the Liverpool Labour Party safer for the Kinnockites. That would be a disaster and it would be a great political

error even if it were just a straightforward breakaway by outraged honest Labour Party people.

In fact, the breakaway is dominated by *Militant*, which has a powerful political machine. This is inevitably going to turn out to be a self-promoting stunt by *Militant*.

Lesley Mahmood scarcely bothers with the "Broad Left" or "Real Labour Party" name tags: she is, she says, publicly, *Militant's* candidate.

Socialists other than those who support *Militant* have no reason to support this stunt.

Socialist workers in Liverpool should refuse to accept this split in the labour movement. They should continue to demand that all those expelled in Liverpool be readmitted to the Party, that the structures of the Liverpool Labour Party be re-established on a democratic basis, and that there should be a new, open and democratic selection meeting to choose a united labour movement candidate in Walton.

The danger of letting in the Liberal Democrats must be a real one. The Liverpool labour movement should demand of Mahmood that she stand down and join the campaign for a new selection meeting.

If on polling day Mahmood and Kilfoyle are both on the ballot paper, then vote for the official Labour candidate.

The central task of the labour movement now is to get the Tories out and put in a Labour government. In the best case the breakaway in Liverpool and its candidate in Walton would be a diversion from this.

In this case, it is part of a self-promoting stunt by the organisation that inflicted Derek Hatton on Liverpool, and presided over the grotesque antics of the mid '80s there. It deserves to be thoroughly condemned by everyone who has the real interests of the working class at heart.

# The failure of Thatcherism

# After the fall of Thatcher

John McIlroy concludes his series on the failure of Thatcherism by sketching out the problems confronting John Major

The election of John Major as Mrs Thatcher's successor on 27 November 1990 clearly demonstrated the problems the Party faced. Major received 185 votes against Michael Heseltine's 131, and Douglas Hurd's 56. Not merely did he lack the overall majority required by the party rules (he became leader technically not by election but by the withdrawal of Heseltine and Hurd from a third round of voting), but he received far fewer votes than the falling Thatcher's 204 in the first round a week previously.

In essence the election was not about Major but about Heseltine. One choice was to keep Thatcher and sit out the crisis with gritted teeth. After the first ballot this was no longer possible. The immediate choices then were for a shallow cosmetic approach, dropping Thatcher as a figurehead because she was an electoral liability, sprinkling around a little largesse in a less strident tone but basically standing firm on Thatcherism, or, and this was what Heseltinism was about, introducing changes of substance and a relatively clear break with key aspects of the policies of the past; or, and this was what Major stood for, introducing more gradual modulated nuanced changes.

Heseltine demonstrated that the first approach was finished and he provided, through his polarised opposition to Thatcher, the opportunity for the third approach, which would base itself firmly on continuity with Thatcher but feed off the corpus of Heseltine's policies for change.

This process could be seen almost

immediately from the fashion in which, given Thatcher's continued support for what only a few days previously she had brought herself to call the poll tax, and Heseltine's promise of a fundamental review, Major and Hurd fell in behind Heseltine with reptilian alacrity.

The fall of Thatcher stemmed from desperation in the Tory ranks: almost anything would be better than Thatcher, who was leading them to certain defeat. An anarchy of the self-seeking was unleashed as the electoral college of MPs behaved, in the words of one backbencher, like "a bunch of demented ferrets". Nevertheless, the approach of the candidates — muted to meet the occasion — demonstrated the divisions and the alternatives on offer.

Heseltine shared much of the hard approach of Thatcher in terms of both policy and personality. A self-made multi-millionaire, he believed that in some ways the approach of the first Thatcher government had been too faltering. Hugo Young of the *Guardian* reported: "If he'd been in charge, he told me, he would have shaken out employment, imposed the squeeze, throttled uncompetitive business, all far more harshly than Chancellor Howe."

As Secretary of State for the Environment, Hezza, as the *Sun* typically termed him, had been the executioner of public sector housing, stopping local authority building and given away the existing stock of council houses. As Secretary of State for Defence in the second Thatcher government, Heseltine had been gung-ho, deploying Cruise and Pershing missiles, taking a firm line on the peace movement.

For all his vaunted "compassion" after the 1981 inner city riots, hard urban regeneration was minimal, given the attack on local

government grants that Heseltine was simultaneously spearheading.

The other tendency in Heseltine stemmed from his role as Minister of Aerospace in Heath's 1970-74 government. His spells at Aerospace and Defence in the 1970s and 1980s gave him a clear understanding of the scale and finance required for modern industry to compete effectively in international terms, and the soaring cost of research and procurement which necessitated co-operation beyond the national sphere.

By the 1980s he was even firmer on this: he believed that a European bloc was required to create the scale and efficiency to compete effectively with the US and Japan. Britain needed a fused financial-industrial economy and it could not rebuild an industrial base *alone* in the conditions of the '80s.

It was indeed Heseltine's support for the integration of the UK economy with European capital against the US-client relationship which led to his resignation from Thatcher's Cabinet in 1985 over the Westland affair. Thatcher wanted the ailing helicopter company to be taken over by the US company Sikorski. Heseltine wanted to put together a European package of support.

If Heseltine set the EC against Thatcher's Atlanticism and free world market, he also set the state against, or rather with, the market. He wanted a closer interpenetration of capital and state on the Japanese model with the state supporting financing, sometimes directing, capital. This was the only route by which the UK could catch up and reverse its century-long decline, given the vast scale and intensity of world competition and the lead possessed by the UK's competitors.

Heseltine put particular emphasis on state support for regeneration of manufacturing, the need for im-

proved education and training, the need for an extended role for the Department of Trade and Industry.

Thatcherism, in Heseltine's eyes, had produced a private affluence-public squalor situation in which the private affluence had proved shallower and ephemeral because of the public squalor. The public squalor was part of the UK's economic problems because when it came to infrastructure, transport, communications, the education system, research and development, UK capital could not be expected to stand completely on its own two feet.

Capital in other countries did not stand on its own two feet. It received state aid. That gave it a competitive edge and put it into shape to

the Housing Action Trust fiasco or vouchers in education or further privatisation? Or would Major quickly doff Thatcherism and, having become leader because the party would wear neither Heseltine's disloyalty nor his conviction and certainty, quickly don Heseltine's politics?

It seemed difficult to see which way Major would go because Major, in all probability, had no detailed conspectus himself. His statement that "I am not ideologically pure in any way" bespoke an essential pragmatism. He had the strong advantage of Thatcher's blessing as she saw him as the closest to her — Hurd of course was Heath's former personal assistant, an inscrutable Old Etonian — and the best bet to beat Heseltine.

Major was thus able to wear the mantle of Thatcherism whilst also benefitting from the strong feeling amongst sections of the party against the treacherous and politically unreliable parvenu Heseltine.

And there was also the sense that a change could only benefit the party — and of course MPs who might otherwise lose their seats. As the "least worst choice" candidate Major just scraped home.

His few months at the helm seem shorter because of the relative suspension of domestic politics occasioned by the Gulf war and the all-party consensus. In one sense we have not seen much, although we will see more, and cannot expect to see much this side of an election. There have been a very small trickle of cosmetic measures, such as more money for hospital doctors, the homeless and haemophiliacs infected by AIDS through NHS treatment. There have been small cuts in interest rates and Health Secretary William Waldegrave has stated that, in relation to the welfare state, Thatcher overdid the language of commerce. Not much, and against that there have been declarations on the need for more trade union legislation.

In one sense, however, compared with 12 months ago, there have already been big changes. Heseltine is in the government. The poll tax is finished — although the method of execution and what will replace it will still create major problems for the Tories, as will the fact that another round at least of payment and non-payment is inevitable. The entry into the ERM is both an important step forward for the Europeans and the precursor of further steps towards closer co-operation. Major will accept integration and attempt to ensure that it meets Britain's interests.

Already at the start of 1991 he was telling the Germans it was in Britain's "national self-interest to help build and shape the future Europe, and to do so with enthusiasm."

Britain must be "right at the heart of the community, working closely with our partners" (*Observer*, March 10 1991). Whatever his protestations, Major is not travelling in the same direction as Thatcher. Controlling his rhetoric, he represents important changes.

But these changes presage new problems for Major. They face internal opposition too. Support for the poll tax is being rallied by former chairs of the party, Norman Tebbit and Cecil Parkinson, and within the Cabinet by the Thatcher loyalists Peter Lilley, Michael Howard and Ian Lang. A new Thatcherite group, "Conservative Way Forward", has been formed as a harder variant of the "No Turning Back" group to safeguard Mrs Thatcher's achievements.

## "Heseltine set the EC against Thatcher's Atlanticism and free world market."

knock the stuffing out of its UK opponents. To help and direct capital, to give money and to give a lead, that's what the state was there for, that was the secret Thatcher forgot. Heseltinism would repair the ravages wrought by her amnesia.

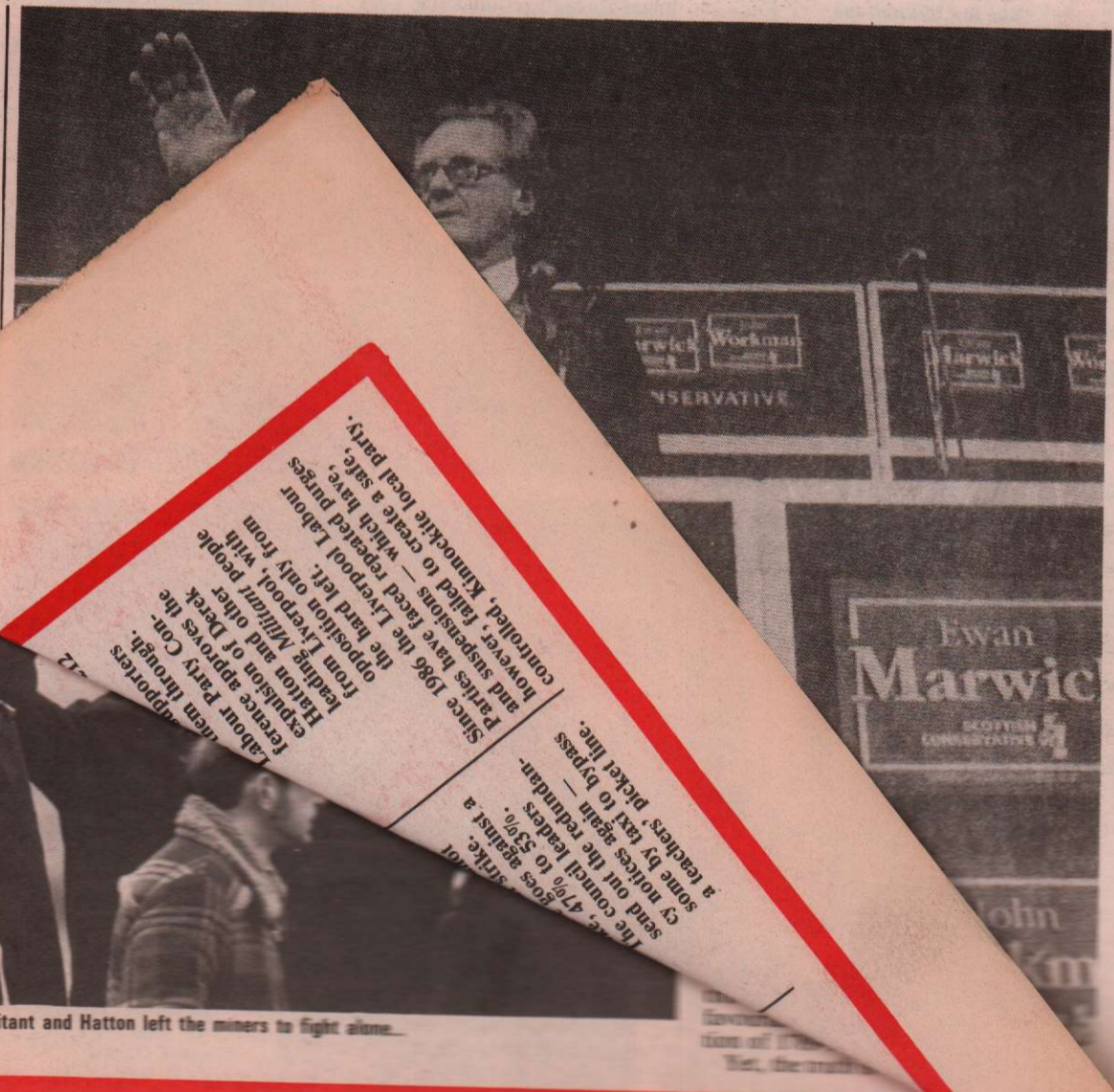
As Heseltine put it in the mid-'80s: "There is also a general appreciation that the only way forward is political, not industrial, not military, not research-led. It is in the end the only ultimate customer, the national taxpayer, who through their politicians can bring about the co-ordinated market place that alone will deliver the efficiencies and economies. I do not believe that the market itself will produce such a situation. Government must take the lead."

John Major was a hope of a different colour. His entire political formation had not taken place under the shadow of Thatcher — he had worked with Heseltine in the past and cited Ian Macleod, an apostle of 'One Nation' Toryism as an inspiration. But he was, if anybody was, working with Lawson at the Treasury and then as Chancellor, directly responsible for the boom which had nurtured inflation and then for the policies which had brought his mistress to her knees.

He seemed entirely lacking in the conviction of Thatcher or the radical flair of Heseltine. Yet Major had been instrumental in getting the pound into the ERM against Thatcher's opposition. He had for long been associated with Tories such as Chris Patten and William Waldegrave in the Blue Chip group, a supper club which agonised over the excesses of Thatcher and wanted a stronger emphasis on social concerns, particularly education. He had now signalled that he was ready to let the poll tax go.

Like Thatcher herself, but with more sincerity, he avowed that the welfare state was a major achievement and was safe in his hands.

It was difficult, certainly, compared with Heseltine, to see exactly what Major stood for. Was it simply a matter of eliminating the bellicose language and the "bull in a china shop" style of Thatcher whilst maintaining loyalty to the shape of the future she had charted? Or was Major, as well, a compromiser, who would curb "going on" for the sake of "going on" and finally cut out projects such as



Militant and Hatton left the miners to fight alone.



# Will Major become Heseltine?

The more Major signals to the electorate that he is not Mrs Thatcher the more he will incur the wrath of Tebbit, John Moore and Keith Joseph of Way Forward, and, to a lesser degree, of Lilley, Redwood and Rumbold of "No Turning Back".

On the other hand, he has a firm base of support from those who see any continuation of Thatcher's memory, an electoral liability, and traditional Tory loyalty to a new leader. As he faces the protracted and messy business of laying the poll tax to rest he also knows that public attention is now firmly focused on local taxation and the tensions are biased against the Conservatives.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that within the ERM the pound is overvalued and cannot be devalued without accepting an important defeat. The attempt to slash inflation that its present position requires necessitates the maintenance of high interest rates and an attack on wages which, between 1979 and 1989, grew by 14% in Germany and 145% in the UK.

There can be little change in existing policies here this side of a general election, although they militate against a Conservative victory.

After such a victory, however, it is even possible that Major, who for a variety of compelling reasons respects incomes policy, could be convinced of the utility of a one-off wage freeze which was central to France's successful entry into the ERM. After all, everything else has been tried in the unavailing struggle to break wage pressure and a freeze could have a useful trade-off in keeping down unemployment.

Conservative policy in the run-up to the election is likely to differ

from the Thatcher inheritance basically in relation to Europe, the welfare state and social policy, and its discarding of any new radical experiments. Mrs Thatcher's attacks on the NHS and education will be reversed in terms of expenditure cuts and privatisation. But the moves towards an internal market for the NHS and "opting out" for schools will continue. It is likely that Major will accept the limits of Thatcher's attempts to cut back on expenditure on the welfare state. The unions are out and they will stay out. They have nothing to offer.

Major's "social liberalism" is also likely to be reflected in a softer approach to law and order, immigration policy, sexuality and the family. However, the "liberalism" side is likely to lead to a continuation of the privatisation policies the Conservatives judge to be so successful with coal, sections of the Post Office and parts of British Rail the main candidates for selling off.

Winning the election will now be central and Major is likely to ignore criticism from the guardians of Thatcherite economics who warn him against his image as a "nice chap with a cheque book", and who, like *The Economist*, fear that if the small increases in public expenditure are "the first trickle of a broader flood of pre-election spending, it will make a nonsense of the government's professed desire to curb inflation". At the moment, in keeping with the best traditions of the Tories, winning is all.

Over the longer term it is likely that the pressures from the failure of Thatcherism from the gradual, if contested, process of EC integration, and from the electorate, will turn Major further in the direction of the policies proposed by

Heseltine — an approach which is essentially that of the continental Christian Democratic parties and increasingly that of the British Labour Party.

Externally, EC integration will be a prolonged, contradictory and uneven business. But Major's unwillingness to set it as his objective will increase constructive and fertile contact, bring the UK into the European mainstream and foreground emulation of the organisation of state and industry in Germany and France.

The latest example of those internal pressures is the report of the

**"If Major can pull off re-election against all the odds... the achievement will really be that of Kinnock."**

House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, "Innovation in Manufacturing Industry", chaired by Lord Caldecote, chair of *3i* — the venture capital group — and including prominent industrialists such as Lord Keaton, formerly of Courtaulds, and Lord Gregson, a director of the Farey Group, which claims that lack of state support for industry is damaging to the economy and the "national interest".

It argues that "there was virtually

no investment in manufacturing industry during the 1980s...if market forces alone are to determine the course of events it is conceivable that we will end up with no significant British-owned manufacturing industry in the UK." It found that Britain was the *only* country in which expenditure on R&D has declined as a percentage of GDP during the 1980s and that this was due to a reduction of government support. Capital investment as a proportion of GDP was "well below that of most of our major competitors".

None of this will mean the end of the present attacks on the working class. They will involve a new and more consensus-based approach to expanding the progress made by Thatcher in decisively weakening the working class. But increasingly the glaring weaknesses of chaotic communications, inadequate transport, shortages of skilled labour whilst millions are unemployed and investment drought whilst millions flow abroad, the limits of Thatcherism and the market in ensuring accumulation, will prompt the rehabilitation of state intervention.

This has already been observed by the keen eye of Thatcher herself. She remarked in early 1991: "I see a tendency to try to undermine what I achieved and go back to more powers for government" (*Sunday Times*, 10 March 1991). It will be fought hard by Thatcher loyalists. But in the end, in the way of the Conservative Party, Thatcher will be safely iconised and in practical terms castrated.

What we will see is a further example of the dialectic of continuity and change we have observed throughout the history of the Conservative Party. Like his predecessors Major will change the

Party — although we can safely leave military coups to *Militant* and General Grant. Major will go with the tide because he is a pragmatist and because such an approach is more consonant with the requirements of Conservatism and capital in the 1990s.

Heseltine was the wrong man at the wrong time. A premature anti-Thatcherite, he lost the leadership battle, but he could still win the war over policy.

The precise details of the "when", "what", and "how" of change will depend on numerous factors. The most important in the short term will be the result of the coming election. With the recession deepening and passing from services and the switch to manufacturing and the north, and presently looking deeper than the trough of a year ago, with unemployment already over 2.5 million, interest rates at 13%, inflation still at 9%, the poll tax still on the books, with £1.6 million arrears, and with a leader deeply implicated in every one of these failures, the result should be a foregone conclusion. After all, it has been the electorate's belief in the Tories' superior economic competence which has given them the edge in recent elections.

If he can pull it off against all odds, possibly the worst electoral background any government party has faced since 1945, it will be a great achievement by Major and his party. But he will owe such a crucial and unrepayable debt to Neil Kinnock that, under the superficial trappings, the achievement will really be that of Kinnock and the Labour leadership.

If Major wins the next election one of his first and most enjoyable duties will be to offer Neil Kinnock a knighthood.

# The left and Labour: lessons from 1979

## AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna



Today, many on the left are so disgusted with the Kinnockite Labour Party that they can't control their urge to get out of the Labour Party. They are ripe for adventures, like *Militant's* "Broad Left" candidacy in the Walton by-election... They should study the lessons of the labour movement!

Let us start with "Socialist Unity's" attempt to create an alternative to Labour for the 1979 general election.

One of the most striking things in the recent history of the left is the incomprehension with which a large part of the left regarded Thatcher when she was moving towards power at the end of the '70s.

The Tories had changed radically in opposition, hardened and embittered by the long series of ruling class failures over 15 years to quell the labour movement — under both Labour (1964-70 and '74-'79) and Tory (1970-74) governments.

The Tories edged towards power openly determined to smash up the labour movement. They intended to inflict savage cuts, following in the pioneering tracks of the Labour government after '76. The slump that came in 1980, and the collapse of militancy that came with it, allowed the Tories to inflict tremendous damage to the labour movement. That they would succeed like that could not be predicted in 1978-9; that a Tory victory in the general election was a serious threat to the working class should have been obvious to anyone able to read newspapers.

Yet a sizeable part of the left behaved in this situation as if the Tories scarcely mattered, and as if the Labour leaders were the main enemy. They chose to ignore or brush aside all the broader questions facing the working class. They tried to act in defiance of the central political fact of life in the 1979 general election: Labour was the only alternative to the Tories. Instead of relating to the broad class questions, they mounted a miniature — token — electoral challenge to the Labour Party in a handful of seats.

This was "Socialist Unity", a broad coalition put together to mount such an electoral challenge to Labour.

Now there were very good reasons for hostility to the Labour leaders. Unlike Neil Kinnock today, they were actually in power, doing foul deeds. They ran a limping capitalist government — dependant on Liberal, and even Ulster Unionist, support for the last two years of the government's life — while they attacked the living standards of those who put the government in power, pioneered "monetarism", and initiated social services cuts at the dictat of the IMF.

Labour ran a regime of very savage repression in Northern Ireland, and in general, under James Callaghan, the Labour government did its best to serve the same capitalist class that Mrs Thatcher would serve much more ruthlessly and more effectively throughout the 1980s.

Yet, it was going to be either this government re-elected or a Tory government. More: despite its record in office, Labour was still the trade unions' party, it still retained the loyalty of progressive workers; the on-

ly sizeable defection of workers from Labour in the 1979 general election, that of the skilled workers in the Midlands, went not to the left, but to the Tories. Its links with the labour movement normally inhibited what it could do against the working class.

For the left, the possibilities were stark:

- Support Labour, however "critically". This is what the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory did, producing its own anti-Tory propaganda which a number of Labour Parties distributed, and also warning people to prepare to fight back against Callaghan.

- Try to present itself as the possible government alternative to both Labour and the Tories.

- Throw in the towel, declare the election irrelevant, that there was no choice, and advise the working class to abstain.

- Ignore the broad question of government, and the Tory threat, and mount a token "socialist" propaganda candidacy in a few constituencies.

Socialist Unity decided on the last option.

Who and what was Socialist Unity? Its core was the IMG (from which *Socialist Outlook* and *Socialist Action* and the Castroite Communist League can all claim descent). Then there was "Big Flame", a group of semi-mystical quasi-Maoists.

Beyond that there was the ISO/Workers League, a group expelled from the IS/SWP

**"While the vandal Tories were marching towards power, Socialist Unity spent its time making imaginary war on the SWP — which was busy making imaginary war on Labour (except on election day...)"**

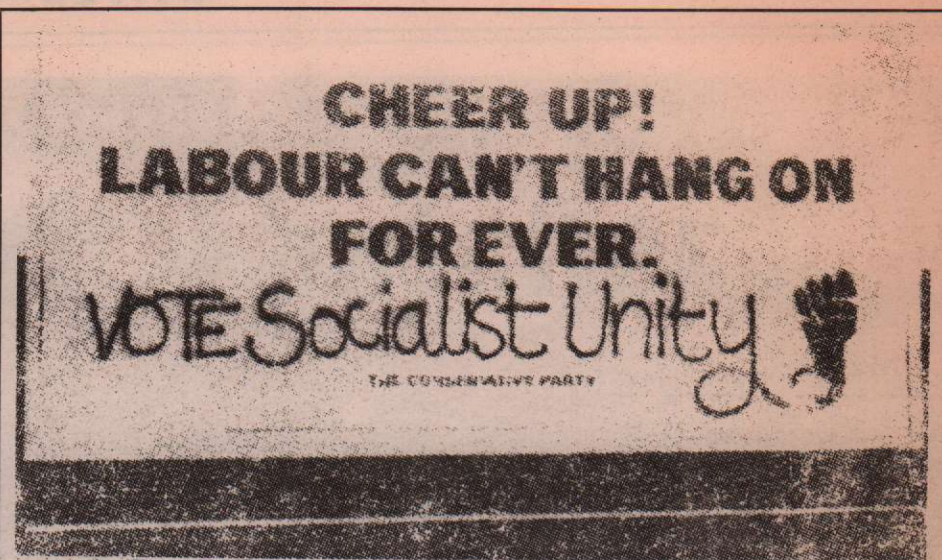
in 1975, which contained a sizeable proportion of the cadre of the IS group as it was in the late '60s and early '70s. And there was "Marxist Worker" of Bolton. Then there were quite a few unattached individuals who hated Callaghan and wanted action.

Numbers? IMG: 800-1000 perhaps; the ISO/WL had 200 at its founding conference and probably had a big periphery; Big Flame less than 100; Marxist Worker, five or six. And perhaps a few hundred "independents". As a whole, it was a conglomerate heavily middle class and white collar union in its composition.

How could this collection ever, for one single moment, have imagined itself a credible electoral force, anywhere, let alone an alternative to both the Tories and the union-based Labour Party? At the beginning, Socialist Unity talked of standing in lots of seats, and then narrowed it down to half a dozen.

By the time of the 1979 general election, there was scarcely any pretence that it was anything but a stunt. People were advised to vote Labour, wherever there was no Socialist Unity candidate.

The truth is that Socialist Unity was something intruded into serious working class affairs — and few things in recent history have been more serious for the working class than the 1979 general election! — from the realm of irresponsible toy-town sectarian fringe "politics". And, despite the self-presentation, and its attraction for peo-



**Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it**

1979: 'Socialist Unity' tries to give a revolutionary twist to a Tory election poster. The 'Socialist Unity' campaign

was not a serious challenge to Labour's dominant right wing, and was therefore a stupid diversionary gesture at a time

when the labour movement was trying to stop Thatcher.

ple who hated Callaghan, Socialist Unity had more to do with the competition of the IMG with the much larger SWP than with serious class politics.

That, at any rate, is where it started. It was an attempt by the IMG to exploit the contradictions in the SWP's approach to politics.

In March 1977 both the IMG and the SWP stood separate candidates in the Stechford (Birmingham) by-election. The SWP was trying to move into politics, so to speak! Both organisations got only a few hundred votes on polling day, but the IMG (with 494 votes) did noticeably better than the SWP (which got 377, though it was perhaps four times the IMG's size).

Why? Probably because the "parliament is a waste of time", "strikes are the only answer" approach of the SWP didn't make them good vote gatherers.

Whatever the reason, bettering the big SWP cat rapidly went to the head of the small IMG mouse. From now on electioneering was their great expertise. They decided on what their discussion bulletin referred to as a "unity offensive" on the SWP.

Socialist Unity in the election could, they said, mount a credible alternative to Labour. There should be united left candidates. That was the answer to traitor Callaghan and threatening Thatcher.

The excitement of being able to compete with the SWP and the flocking to them of a few hundred people desperate for a socialist choice in the election drove everything else out of their heads. They had been in the Labour Party for the previous two or three years; now, almost all of them pulled out. They re-launched their paper on the winds of success, renaming it *Socialist Challenge*, which, edited by the enterprising and shameless Tariq Ali, even managed to give the appearance of SWP collaboration — by reprinting Paul Foot's book reviews from a commercial magazine!

Above all, the IMG recruited. Everything now was "unity". Unity of odds and sods on the fringes of the labour movement with each other, but not unity of serious socialists with the labour movement, for whose activists the election was a deadly serious business. Needless sectarian divorce from it, in fact.

Nor was there any unity with the SWP, either. The SWP learned the lessons of the Stechford by-election: from that day to this they have never stood in an election! Politics, they say, is for the Labour Party, which they denounce for its parliamentarianism, except for one day every four or five years when they are ardent Labour supporters.

By the election in June 1979 Socialist Unity had dwindled to six candidates. Their programme had become blurred and muzzy, and it was not revolutionary socialist. All the Socialist Unity candidates, predictably, did very badly, averaging only a few hundred votes. Not so predictably, Tariq Ali, one of the best known black men in Britain, standing in Southall where there had been much anti-racist activity, and the Labour MP had been tainted with racism, got only 477 votes.

The IMG bubble had burst, but not before they had established one of the most discredited and irresponsible episodes in the recent history of the left. While the vandal Tories were marching towards power, they

spent their time making imaginary war on the SWP — which was busy making imaginary war on Labour (except on election day...). Both pursued self-advancement above all else.

Let it be clear what I am saying and am not saying here. If, in 1979, socialists had been in a position to make a serious, credible challenge to Labour's dominant right wing, then it would have been criminal not to have made it. Because there was no such possibility, nor any half-way serious reason to believe that there was, it was criminal to mess about.

Socialist groups compete with each other and try to recruit. Any group which says otherwise is either not long for this world or silly and hypocritical. But Socialist Unity was designed to compete with the SWP and recruit to the IMG, by engaging in manoeuvres which cut across the needs of the class struggle — which in the given circumstances had to mean fighting for the victory of the trade unions' party, the bourgeois workers' party — the Labour Party — against the open party of big business, the Tory party.

All the big class issues and the reality around them were forgotten in the debauch of wishful thinking and sectarian opportunism.

Many on the left are today in a mood like that which generated Socialist Unity. It is not, they half-say, worth electing a Kinnock-led Labour government. They could not be more wrong.

The choices now are essentially the same as then. There is no conceivable working class based alternative government to the Tories except Labour. To say it doesn't matter is to play the Tories' game! To say that there is no choice is to abandon politics.

In fact there is a choice: if the trade union-based party — even under a Kinnock who wants to continue Tory policies — beats the Tories it will be a tremendous release for the energies of the labour movement. With that under our belt, we can deal with Prime Minister Kinnock!

The idiocy of Socialist Unity disgraced the Labour left; it will be a shame if similar idiocies disgrace us now that it may be possible to put an end to the Tories — this time with *Militant* playing the role the foolish IMG played in 1979, with the victory of the five "real Labour" council candidates in the Liverpool local government elections of 1991 standing in for the IMG's "victory" at Stechford in March 1977.

And, finally, what happened to those who ran Socialist Unity? Big Flame's leaders are now among the most shameless anti-socialist witch-hunters in the Kinnockite Labour Co-ordinating Committee! Strands of the ISO/Workers' League evolved into the group around the magazine *Catalyst*, in the Socialist Society: the Socialist Movement AGM showed they haven't changed much! John Ross, one of the masterminds of Socialist Unity, is now a house-trained professional "left social democrat", and Ken Livingstone's pet sycophant. The real Socialist Unity spirit seems to live on in that section of *Socialist Outlook* — perhaps they are the majority — which abstained at the Socialist Movement AGM on whether to advocate a vote for Labour in the next general election. Those who do not learn from history...

## THE CULTURAL FRONT

# An average detective story with nasty packaging

## Cinema

Tony Brown reviews

*Silence of the Lambs*

What is the most important part of movie making? The cast, story, script, music, setting?

Nowadays it's got to be advertising.

The promotion of *Silence of the Lambs* has been remarkably effective. Plenty of advance publicity, strategic film clips on TV followed by a limited release at first, and finally widespread distribution.

Most people know what they're going to get before they even buy their ticket. Or do they?

I was prepared to be scared. I thought of asking if the cinema might keep the lights on. I knew about Hannibal the Cannibal.

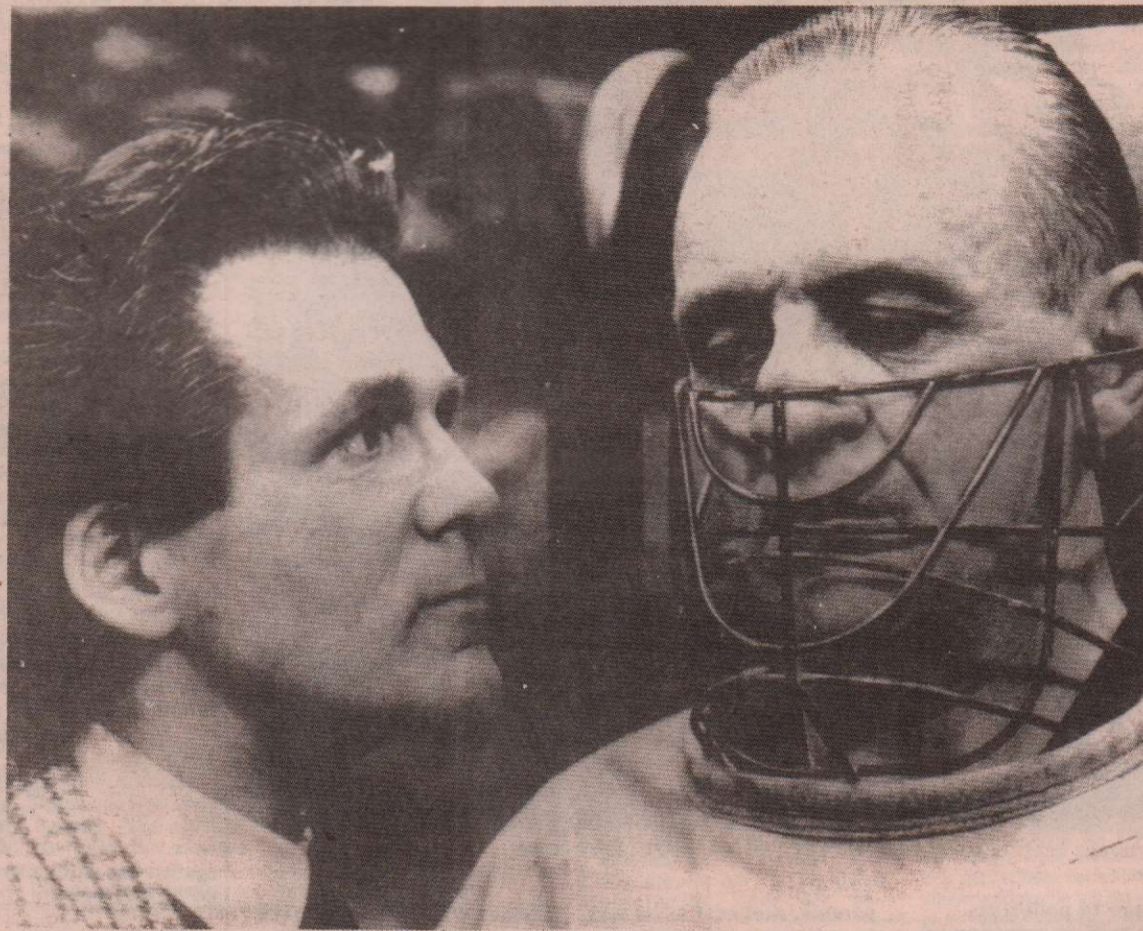
But what I got was a pretty average detective story, dressed up in particularly nasty clothes.

A serial killer preying on women is on the loose and he has just taken another young woman, the daughter of a female Republican Senator. It's a race against time to find the killer before the daughter becomes another dismembered victim.

Who knows better how to capture the lunatic than another serial killer, Dr Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins)? And who better to entice him to assist the FBI than a young, attractive woman agent, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster)?

Lecter and Starling's relationship is really the core of the film. Lecter is portrayed as a calm, sophisticated, analytical psychologist who just happens to eat the people he kills. Starling is from the mid-west, full of suppressed feelings about her dead father. An incredible coincidence, eh?

At their first meeting Lecter manages to insinuate himself into her mind and from then on a strange paternal relationship



Dr Frederick Chilton (Anthony Heald, left) with Dr Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins)

develops.

Despite the convenience of this pairing, their scenes together are the most gripping parts of the film. Hopkins' performance is compelling. Without it the film would be no better than dozens of others of its type.

The audience is expected to overlook a number of gaping holes in the story's credibility — who could really believe either Hannibal's escape or Clarice's stumblings in Buffalo Bill's (enormous) house?

What is most objectionable, though, is the basic story. It's as if

the writers sat down and tried to think up the vilest atrocities to entice a public that has become immune to horror thanks to the tabloid media.

All the women are either victims or potential victims. You wait for something to happen to them because that is the framework that is created.

This modern genre is like the tabloid press. What it portrays on screen is out of all proportion to what really happens. It plays on fears and prejudices; it adds to a fear that justifiably exists, and reaffirms it rather than confronting or

combatting it.

Jonathan Demme could have made it worse but at least he refrains from gory closeups. He doesn't glorify the violence, but the subject matter is so odious that he doesn't need to to get the effect of turning one's stomach.

Hannibal Lecter is certain to enter the pantheon of demented film characters. Hopkins has signed for the almost mandatory sequel and who knows what else will be dragged up next time.

Apart from Hopkins' performance, *Silence of the Lambs* has no redeeming features.

Alan Bleasdale's *GBH*:

## Manipulation and no movement

## Television

Kevin Feintuck, who was a member of Liverpool City Council from 1987 to 1990, reviews Alan Bleasdale's *GBH*

Alan Bleasdale's TV series *Boys from the Blackstuff* was a graphic description of a layer of the working class in Liverpool, atomised by unemployment, struggling for self-respect and survival in Thatcher's Britain. His latest, much hyped, series "*GBH*" started on Channel 4 on 6 June.

The central theme of the new seven part series deals with a very different feature of the 1980s Labour Movement. The writer has stated that his series is not intended to deal with the experience of Liverpool during the 1983-7 period. Having seen the first episode many viewers, myself included, will be left with the feeling that, despite his protestations, much of his material uses events, and particularly characters, from that period. As the credits to the *Untouchables* used to say "Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent." The only difference in Bleasdale's series may well be that the

far from innocent also appear with assumed names.

The two main characters to have emerged so far are the newly elected Labour Council leader Michael Murray (Robert Lindsay) and Jim Nelson, the sincere, middle-class Labour Party member and head teacher of emotionally disturbed children, played by Michael Palin.

Michael Murray is a manipulating and abusing individual whose need for power appears to be closely connected with a brutalised and despised childhood.

Some of the characteristics of Murray's childhood have emerged in his conversations with his chauffeur. Other strands have been shown in a series of flashbacks, à la Dennis Potter, showing him as a victim of violence at school and hinting at other, yet-to-emerge, unpleasant activities in which Murray is the perpetrator, or at least conscious participant.

Murray also wears flash ties at interviews, shouts his opponents down at public meetings, employs eye-to-eye intimidatory techniques and threatens violence, of which more later.

The main action of the first episode is focussed around a Day of Action called by the Council to fight against an extremist and undemocratic Tory Government. The way in which the Day of Action is decided upon sums up the theme of manipulation which we can expect to see a lot more of in future episodes.

The push for action has not come from any recognisable section of the Labour Movement. The Labour Party and Trade Unions have been invisible

except for a few placards on picket lines. The Labour Group of Councillors consists of an assortment of beer swillers, mindless yes-people and the occasional racist.

In place of a recognisable Labour Movement, Bleasdale has created a sinister group of conspirators clustered around a University professor named Mervyn Sloan. Sloan appears to exercise a quasi-religious influence on his followers and with an eye to a half

**"Socialists will certainly be wondering when, or if, the labour movement as such will impact on this cess pit of manipulation and intimidation"**

chance has instructed Murray to call the Day of Action on a date to coincide with the opening of Parliament. Murray, in return, has agreed to act as the group's mouthpiece (for reasons that are not altogether clear or convincing).

Having established their mutually advantageous relationship, Sloan's group provide cheerleaders and voting fodder in the lead up to the Day of Action. More dramatically, the Day of Action is enforced by groups of young, white,

male activists who are shown terrorising Jim Nelson's pupils, under the direction of one of Sloan's runners.

The first episode of *GBH* has left a lot of unanswered questions.

The viewer is clearly going to learn a lot more about the formative influences in Murray's childhood. We will also see Jim Nelson suffering as the well-meaning Mr Nice Guy who has confronted Murray whose confidential school papers seem to have hit the mark in describing him as damaged and disturbed.

Socialists will certainly be wondering when, or if, the Labour Movement as such will impact on this cess-pit of manipulation and intimidation. More particularly, perhaps we will learn whether Sloan's bizarre messianic sect is all that it appears. For myself, a right wing/police conspiracy seems a decent bet at this stage.

Another interesting question is whether Alan Bleasdale is capable of portraying Labour Movement politics other than as a set of blindly struggling individuals (*Boys from the Blackstuff*) or in the form of sinister conspiracies and grotesque parasites such as Michael Murray.

Oh, by the way, is Murray the loud-mouthed, flashy-suited thug meant to represent Derek Hatton? I've read that Bleasdale has said, "It's a disservice to me to diminish the central character Michael Murray by identifying him with Hatton. Murray is much more interesting."

I am sure the author is quite right, but I can't wait to see how Murray gets on with the firms involved in his house-building programme.

## Myth picking

## Drama

Cathy Nugent reviews *The Plough and the Stars*

Sean O'Casey's play *The Plough and the Stars* is still being shown at the Young Vic in London. For the price of a West End cinema ticket (not cheap but still a comforting equivalent) you can still get to see it.

I found it fascinating, and with Judi Dench playing, there's added attraction.

The play is one of a group of three plays written by the socialist O'Casey in his early years. They dealt with three great "Irish" themes: nationalism, socialism and religion. It is a comedy, but labelled a tragedy by the author.

*The Plough and the Stars* could be interpreted as an anti-nationalist play but that does not make it an anti-republican play or anti-independence for Ireland — not at all.

It is set in Dublin in the weeks and days leading up to the Easter Rising of 1916. The characters are all living in a slum tenement, suffering short lives and grinding poverty, waiting eagerly for death. Most of the characters are women who hold the shreds of existence together. Mostly it is the men who suffer the barbs in O'Casey's comedy.

Jack Clitheroe goes off to fight with James Connolly's Citizen Army — but only because they give him a last minute promotion.

Nora Clitheroe, his wife, is fervently opposed to Jack's involvement and wants him to stay at home, safe, wrapped up in her love, etc. The young Covey is a bare bones socialist, his head full of mechanical workerist "marxism", the theory of evolution, and other theories he barely understands but passionately feels.

You cannot feel any sympathy for Nora. Although young Covey is not spared O'Casey's scorn, he is the most sympathetically treated. Young Covey, I suppose, is O'Casey himself as a young, hot-headed socialist.

O'Casey himself had been an active participant in the Citizen Army. He broke with them before the Rising, opposed to their merging their political banners with those of the petit bourgeois "Volunteers" of Patrick Pearse. He is very critical of the bourgeois nationalists.

Their brand of religion-drenched, romantic nationalism is thoroughly ridiculed.

In the end, though, this was not the main criticism O'Casey received. When the play was first shown it was booed and hissed off stage during its first week. This had been stirred up by the Republicans — Sinn Feiners — focusing on its "immoral" content.

They objected to a scene in a pub with Rosie Redmond, a prostitute, who speaks openly about her work, taking the piss out of men. This was defamation of the men of the Easter week, our brave lads; it was a disgrace, you see, to show such a woman in a Catholic country. In the confusion which followed the protests many otherwise "liberal" people (artists and so on) did not rush to defend O'Casey.

O'Casey left Ireland — a country that could not tolerate his pricking at Irish myths — for good soon after.

The play is really extremely good and quite complex — it made me want to find out more about this part of Irish history. Yet it is also a simple and very clear depiction of what happens to people in struggles, how some political ideas win over others as they weave into existing traditions and prejudices.

The Chartist demands of the 1830s still hold good

# Socialists and democracy

## AS WE WERE SAYING

Tony Benn has raised the question of democracy once again. *SO* supports him in this.

When the Kinnockites separated themselves from the serious left in the early to mid '80s, one of the political slogans they used was 'democracy'. They were democrats, we were not. In fact, *SO* had, since its inception, argued that democracy — its development and extension — was central to a viable anti-Stalinist socialism. In this excerpt from *SO* (September 1985) we replied to the 'Democratic Socialist' manifesto with which *Tribune* (under Chris Mullin's editorship it had been with the hard left in the early '80s) relaunched itself in Kinnockite colours. The then *Tribune* editor, Nigel Williamson, had been a supporter of *Socialist Organiser* for a while.

**"We** must win the ideological battle against the Marxists," said Neil Kinnock to *Tribune's* newly-softened soft-left editor Nigel Williamson, who interviewed him in the relaunched *Tribune*.

*Tribune* was out on the battlefield ahead of him. The crowing glory of the "relaunch" was a manifesto grandiloquently entitled "Democratic Socialism — a *Tribune* Relaunch Statement", and signed by 54 dignitaries, 33 of them MPs or Members of the European Parliament.

On the level of political institutions, we have yet to win the battle for democracy in Britain. It is no use saying "we have more democracy than the USSR or Chile have". That is true, but irrelevant.

We have only the right to elect the "central committee of the ruling class" who will govern us, once every five years. Real power is in the hands of a permanent non-elected civil service.

For example, the decision by a Labour government to build the British atom bomb in the late 1940s was an executive decision that was not even announced to Parliament, let alone voted on.

When a reforming Labour government is elected, it will be in control with permanent bureaucracy, linked with the ruling class and the Tory party. The strings of family



Our democracy: miners listen to Scargill announce there will not be a ballot on the pit strike

reference to politicians. We need an extension of democracy. The programme of democracy inscribed on the banner of the first mass working-class movement, the Chartists of the 1830s and '40s, has never been realised in full.

The Chartist demand for annual parliaments would make a continuation of the present government with its present politics impossible; with the exception of the period immediately following the Falklands war, the Thatcher government would have been likely to meet defeat at the polls at most times since 1979.

If we had a proper democracy they would not have been able to hang on in office, to manoeuvre, to secure their base by beating down and demoralising the working class, and then to choose the best time for the five yearly poll.

On the level of the economic affairs which in the final analysis govern society, we have no democracy at all. The Tories waged a sustained propaganda war on the miners during their heroic strike, demanding that they have a ballot. None of the Tories or the Fleet Street editors, and not even any of the Labour Party leaders, suggested that there was anything wrong in the fact that miners were not balloted on pit closures.

There is no economic democracy in Britain. On the most basic things in their workaday — or dole-a-day — lives, fifty million people in Britain have no say. We are at the mercy of an industrial and financial oligarchy, an oligarchy that doesn't even accept that workers have the right to live except on condition that they can be exploited for profit.

Yes, we need democracy. It is summed up how to in a single sentence: workers, after winning power, will smash the economic apparatus

shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels:

- (1) not only election, but also recall at any time;
  - (2) pay not to exceed that of a worker;
  - (3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become 'bureaucrats' for a time and that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a 'bureaucrat'.
- What does *Tribune* say? "It must be our purpose to extend the responsibility for decision-making in our society to the greatest possible number of people". How? *Tribune* doesn't know. But it is sure that "This should be reflected in our style (their emphasis) of politics, which should emphasise not only parliamentary activity but also political involvement at all levels in our communities and at work."

End of programme for democracy! A serious fight by the Labour movement — under Neil Kinnock's leadership or even under Roy Hattersley's — for an extension of democracy would be a tremendously energising and progressive development. Marxists would argue that we will not get a linear extension of democracy from now to working-class democracy as described by Lenin without a revolution; but we would support any, even limited, fight to extend democracy.

*Tribune* wants democracy? Good for *Tribune*! What does it propose we do about it? Nothing! Nothing at all. Well, Nigel Williamson might say, we do want to do something: we want to elect a Labour government.

That's the standard response to everything these days. So do we want to elect a Labour government — even the one we are likely to get under a Neil Kinnock premiership.

But that is not going to change the system: it will slot into it. Socialists and democrats will have to pressure, resist, and fight against that government in defence of working class interests. We will have to do battle against the operation of the present state machine, which will not change its character by having Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley perched on top of it.

Government office and "power" for its own sake; a general amnesty for the Labour establishment from the party; self-induced amnesia about the bitter experiences when Labour was last in government; eyes tightly shut, ears blocked, and minds rigidly locked against any consideration of what exactly a Kinnock government will do in office to achieve either "democracy" or "socialism" — and all wrapped up in soothing words about "our style of politics" — that's what characterises the "democratic socialism" of *Tribune*.

In truth it is neither democratic nor socialist: a sad and empty example of the politics of the increasingly de-politicised careerist new left, who are forced to rely on the vague catchphrases and vapid "themes" of the advertising agency because they have dropped all clear commitments in their scramble for office.

They will "win the ideological battle against the Marxists" armed with a manifesto like this only if they use it as kindling for the witch-burners' fires in the auto-da-fé that Neil Kinnock talks of to Nigel Williamson in the same issue of *Tribune*.

## Don't write off Bob Dylan

### LETTERS



Bob Dylan

**P**aul Mellelieu's case against Bob Dylan (*SO* 488) is that old fools on TV say stupid things about him, that he has done nothing good for 15 years, and that he has shoddy imitators. It is all beside the point.

Most of what Dylan has produced in the last 15 years, or even the last 25 years (after *Blonde on Blonde* in 1966) is largely beside the point, too. But in what he wrote and recorded between 1962 and 1966 he brought something new, and still powerful, to song-writing and music.

The very range of cover versions of Dylan's songs from those five years — some of them not at all bad, as Mellelieu admits — and of imitations of him is evidence of their strength and novelty. So is the fact that during this year's Gulf War *SO* still found Dylan's 1963 *Masters of War* a powerful song worth reprinting.

Dylan's deliberately rough style and his ironic, paradoxical and surreal language were chimes of freedom against the stifling orthodoxies of the 1950s.

Yes, politically he never went further than vague opposition to war, patriotism, racism and the Establishment. Even in his earliest songs there are strands of smart-alec cynicism (*My Back Pages*, 1964), and freedom is "flashing for the warriors whose strength is not to fight" (*Chimes of Freedom*, also 1964).

Yet — for example — surely love songs like *All I Really Want to Do* ("...is be friend with you") and *She Belongs to Me* (the point of which is that she doesn't) represented a new departure in popular music, something beside which even Dylan's most creative contemporaries (like the Beatles — "She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah; she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah; And you know that can't be bad...") sound shoddy.

Colin Foster  
Islington

## 'PC' is an attack from the right

**W**hile many of Jim Denham's individual criticisms of "Politically Correct" programmes in the USA may be correct, the main thrust of his article is out of context and aimed at the wrong target.

The "PC" issue is all about an attack by the right on anti-racist and anti-sexist attitudes — the very term "PC" was devised by the right, who have ludicrously put themselves in the same bracket as the Civil Rights protestors of the '50s and '60s — as if they were being clubbed and shot!

The issue has arisen

because a number of educational and other institutions have created codes of conduct designed to outlaw racist and sexist opinions. This approach is a wrong one, but the critics are attacking "PC" because they want to be "free" to express precisely those opinions.

In that context socialists take sides with the defenders of blacks, gays and women — and against their enemies. In this struggle Jim Denham appears to be on the wrong side.

Incidentally, since when did socialists with any knowledge of history use "Luddism" as a term of abuse?

Ed Horton  
Oxford

### WHAT'S ON

#### Thursday 13 June

"Organising for socialism", Sheffield University SO meeting, 1.00  
"Lesbian and Gay Liberation", Hull SO meeting, Queens Pub, 7.30. Speaker: Steph Ward  
Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee/LPS NALGO fringe meeting, "Unshackle the Unions", 7.30, Partick Burgh Halls. Speakers include Ronnie McDonald  
"Socialism and students", Oxford Poly SO meeting, 1.00, Gibbs Building. Speaker: Steve Mitchell

#### Monday 17 June

"What is socialism?", Northampton SO meeting, Emerald Club, 7.30.  
"Save the NHS", SO London Forum, Lucas Arms, 7.30. Speakers: Steven Smith and Jill Mountford

#### Tuesday 18 June

"The Bolshevik Revolution", Sheffield University SO meeting, 1.00

#### Wednesday 19 June

"Stopping the council cuts", Merseyside SO meeting, Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road, 7.30. Speakers include Sean Matgama  
"Racism and how to fight it", East London SO meeting, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2, 7.30  
"Save the NHS", Southampton SO meeting. Speaker: Darren Bloye. Details 0703 232338

#### Thursday 20 June

"Nothing to celebrate", candlelit vigil in opposition to the "Victory Parade", 9.00-midnight. Organised by Women Against War in the Gulf, Labour Against the War, and others.  
"Racist Britain — what's the answer?", Sheffield SO meeting, SSCAU, West St, 7.30. Speaker: Gail Cameron.  
"Save the NHS", Leeds SO public meeting, 7.00, Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Square  
"The case for socialist feminism", Middlesbrough SO meeting, Teeside Poly, 6.00

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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Secret privatisation by Hackney housing officials

## The other housing scandal

By Liz Millward

Housing staff at Hackney council have been suspended and sacked for running a parallel housing department for personal gain.

They worked it like this.

Homes on the council's housing stock were let "unofficially", and the rent pocketed by council Housing Department officials.

One official is alleged to have had 100(!) such homes on lease at £100 per week! In a year this person alone would make half a million pounds, tax free!

Such money is a big incentive. There are big opportunities, too. Hackney has 3,000 empty council properties, though there are 15,000 on the waiting list! So crooked officials have a lot of scope to work their own, illegal form of privatisation.

This corruption could not have gone unnoticed by others in the Housing Department, yet it has its consequences on for years.

It is virtually certain that similar corruption is practiced all over the country. It is one part of the collapse of public standards and of the moral decay that pervades Thatcherite Britain, where the biggest crime is to be poor and the supreme virtue is to be rich.

This is not the first time Hackney Housing Department has been the subject of corruption charges. In the last few years it has held a "purge" of the Masons, amid allegations that the best jobs were being kept for the boys from the Lodge.

At the same time, it was discovered that most of the decent housing was going to white families, and the worst to black families. Neither of these "scandals" received the media attention given to the latest events.

The truth is that all council Housing Departments are rotten, ripe for corruption, particularly in the inner cities. Housing Departments are bureaucracies on an almost unimaginable scale. As in most bureaucracies, "success" or good practice is judged by correctly filed paperwork rather than any real achievement.

The realities are run-down estates, several of them potential death traps. Caretakers and other estate staff have been cut back — but research, "policy" and management jobs with big salaries are constantly being advertised. Money is available for "discounts" for council tenants to buy their own property. But there is virtually no money available for repairs to prevent tenants living in dangerous squalor. The whole system is upside down.

As the real power in most councils the Executive Officers should be held accountable for their part in this chaos. The council's Executive should be forced to take responsibility for a vital department being riddled with corruption.

But much of the responsibility lies with Tory government policies towards housing. As part of their plan to remove vast areas of responsibility from local control, the Tories have been "encouraging" councils to stop providing housing.

The first part of this strategy has been to sell off as much council housing as possible, either to sitting tenants or to other landlords (eg. Housing Associations). To make it harder for councils to hang on to their housing role, the government has been reducing all types of housing funding.

Government policy has coincided  
Turn to page 2



Emma Colyer will speak on students and revolution



Terry Eagleton will speak on Oscar Wilde



Israeli socialist Adam Keller will report on the intifada and the peace movement inside Israel



Cheung Siu Ming will speak on China two years after the Tiananmen Square massacre

# Come to Workers' Liberty 1991!



## SESSIONS INCLUDE

- Forum on South Africa with Bob Fine (author of *Beyond Apartheid*) and speakers from South Africa: Graham van Wyk, Dumisane Mbanjwa, Tshepiso Mashini
- Stalinism in crisis, with Jaroslaw Wardega from Poland, Adam Novak from Czechoslovakia, a Socialist Party member from Moscow, and John O'Mahony of *SO*
- Symposium on left unity, with speakers invited from *SO*, *Socialist Outlook*, *Briefing* and the Socialist Movement
- Courses on "Introducing Marxism", "Modern Revolutions" and Marxist economics
- And much more

## SPEAKERS INCLUDE

- Robin Blackburn on the Black Jacobins • Chris Brookeman on how Hollywood portrays workers • Emma Colyer on students and revolution • Jim Denham on the press barons • John Duncan,

editor of *When Saturday Comes* on football and class • Richard Kuper on PR • Branka Magas on Yugoslavia • Joe Marino on "After the Tories" • Simon Mohun on Marxist economics • Austen Morgan on the Brooke talks • Cate Murphy on the poll tax • John O'Mahony on "Trotsky vs Shachtman" • Peter Tatchell on the lesbian and gay agenda • Elizabeth Wilson on pornography

## TICKETS FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY 1991

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28-30 JUNE

Tickets for all three days:  
Before 26 June: £6 (unwaged); £10 (low waged/student); £14.00 (waged)  
On the door: £8 (unwaged); £12 (low waged/student); £18 (waged)  
Tickets for two days are £2 less (or £1 less for unwaged). Tickets for one day are half the price for three days.  
Creche and accommodation provided free. Cheap food available.

This slip is for tickets to *Workers' Liberty 1991*, and subscriptions to *Socialist Organiser*.

Name.....

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