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For socialist renewal!




For workers' liberty!

Peace in the Middle East?



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What's wrong with democracy?



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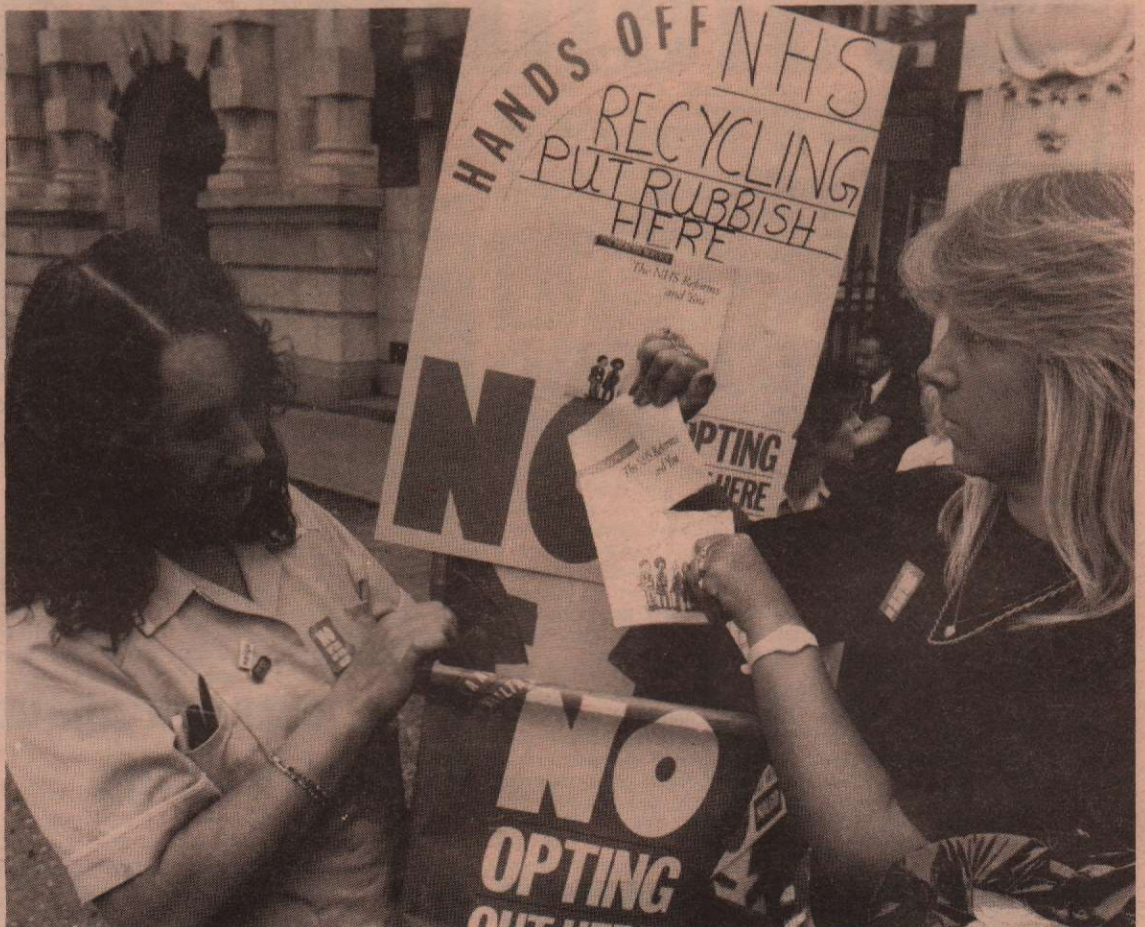
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Tories pull one-third of hospitals out of the NHS

Fight to save the NHS!



Manchester protest at opt-out. Photo: John Smith (Profile)

By Richard Bayley, York NALGO (Health)

The Government's announcement that the second wave of NHS opt-outs is to proceed at full pace shows that the Tories intend to rip the heart

out of the NHS before the next election.

118 applications for "Trust Status" (ie. opt-outs) are being made this year. 57 hospitals have already opted out.

If all 118 applications are approved — and there is every

indication that the vast majority will be — then fully one-third of all NHS activities will be "opted out". Run by unaccountable Boards of Directors with the power to wheel and deal in patient services as they see fit, the so-called "NHS Trusts" will be on the road to privatisation. No expense has been spared in

preparing the Trust applications. Some hospitals have spent as much as £½ million on getting ready to opt-out.

Cynically using the argument that they are, in John Major's words, "opting out of bureaucracy", Health Authorities up and down the country have been employing an

army of accountants and administration managers to run the Tory-style NHS.

"Business secrets" are now part of the health service. None of the 118 Trust applicants have published their business plans for public

Turn to page 2

Labour/TUC call a day of action!

Finish off the poll tax! Millions more refuse to pay

By Cate Murphy

Poll tax non-payment is rising, with one in four people having made no payment for 1991.

Some councils have received less than 10% of their poll tax charged, and three in four councils are facing collection problems because people are objecting to being asked to pay extra — in some cases £20 or more — to compensate for last year's non-payment.

In Scotland non-payment figures rose from 13.7 per cent in the first year to 25.7 per cent in the second, and England and Wales look set to follow that pattern. Now that the government has admitted that the poll tax is unfair and unworkable, more and more people are joining the ranks of the poll tax non-payment campaign. And the government's "bribe" of £140 off poll tax bills has had little success in encouraging payment.

Nor have the court cases and jailings made much impact on the non-payment figures. 4.5 million sum-

mons have been issued already, and that figure is likely to rise to 7.5 million by the end of 1991, but poll tax debts are already nearing £1.5 billion.

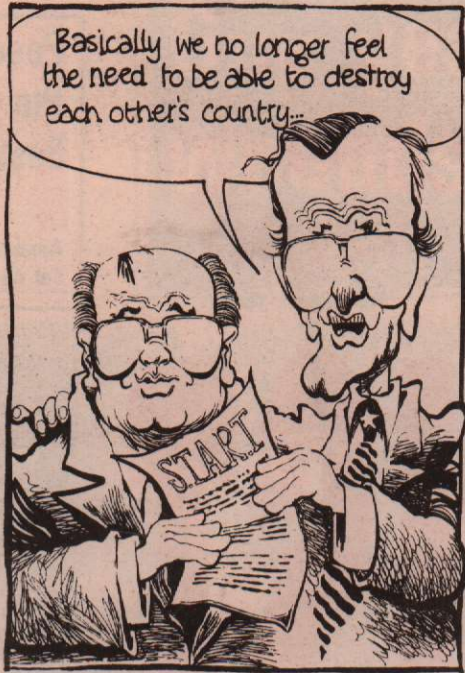
The scale of the non-payment means that next year's bills will rise even more sharply, and the proposed replacement for the poll tax, the "council tax" will be equally hard to collect.

The poll tax campaign may no longer be front-page news, but its impact is still being felt by councils throughout Britain.

We should continue to fight to boost non-payment, and link that fight with the council workers' fight against job losses and cuts in services.

With the general election looming, we must fight in the Labour Party to commit a Labour government to immediate abolition of the poll tax and its replacement with a fair system of local government financing, with central government funding restored — and raised — to adequate levels.

And we must demand an amnesty for all non-payers, and for all poll tax prisoners.



Big debates coming on union rights

The TUC and Labour Party conferences this autumn should see a big fight over trade union rights.

Britain's biggest union, the TGWU, has a motion calling for the repeal of all anti-union laws and a new legal framework.

The furniture workers' union, FTAT, will call for workers to have a legal right to strike in solidarity with others in struggle.

A counter-motion from the telecom union, NCU, accepts the Labour leaders' line of keeping most of the Tory laws in place. Michael Meacher spelled out the line in 1989: "Would it be lawful [under a Labour Govern-

ment] for workers to refuse to handle imports from South Africa? Answer, no.

"Would meat porters be allowed to take action in support of nurses? Answer, no... We would retain the current Code of Practice on peaceful picketing which limits the number of picket [to six]" (Independent, 9 October 1989).

TUC General Secretary, Norman Willis, will want the TUC congress at the start of September to fudge the issues, and probably some TGWU leaders will help him. But strong feeling among rank and file trade unionists has recently been reflected in the vote by the rail and sea union, RMT, to drop its previous support for the Labour leaders' line and go for full trade union rights.

Another major union, NALGO, was won to full trade union rights at its conference in 1990.

The agenda for the Labour Party conference at the end of September also shows a strong push from the rank and file. The campaign by Socialist Organiser and others over the last few years for a "Workers' Charter" of positive rights — the right to unionise, the right to strike, the right to picket, the right to take solidarity action, and the right for unions to regulate their own affairs — has yielded some 17 motions

to conference.

Of all the most controversial sections of the conference agenda, trade union rights is probably the one with the biggest input from Constituency Labour Parties.

The debate is made more urgent by the Tories' new plans for yet more curbs on the unions. If they win the coming General Election, the Tories will impose:

- Postal — not workplace — ballots before strikes.
- Seven days' notice to the bosses of all strikes.
- A right for any union-basher to go to court for damages against local government, rail or any other public service unions which strike "illegally".
- Industrial agreements will be legally binding unless stated otherwise — which means that strikes can be illegal, even after all the proper ballots and limitations, if they break a procedure agreement with the bosses.
- Agreements for union dues to be "checked off" from wages must have the signed consent of every member, renewed at least once a year.
- The TUC will lose all power to arbitrate inter-union disputes.

The wretched Labour leaders can do no better than whine that the Tories' plans seem a bit excessive and unnecessary. The rank and file must make our voice heard!

Left candidates for National Executive elections

Treasurer: Gavin Strang MP
Constituency Section: Diane Abbott MP; Tony Benn MP; Jeremy Corbyn MP; Ken Livingstone MP; Alice Mahon MP; Kanta Patel; Dennis Skinner MP.

Women's Section: Leonora Lloyd; Anni Marjoram; Pauline Purnell.

National Constitutional Committee: Richard Hanford (CLP seat); Bill Murphy (CLP seat).
Conference Arrangements Committee: Pete Willsman (CLP seat).

Unity planned against Kinnock's purge

Labour activists across the country are organising for a united conference against Kinnock's purges. The conference will be held on 21 September in Manchester.

Socialist Organiser supporters face attempts to purge them in Sheffield Brightside, Sheffield Central, Southampton and Nottingham East Labour Parties. The worst of the attacks is in Sheffield, where local right wingers boast that their aim is to root out SO supporters across the city because they would otherwise soon gain influence comparable to that of Militant in Liverpool. So far no SO supporter has

been expelled from the Labour Party in consequence of the "ban" on the paper confirmed by last October's Labour Party conference — evidently the Party managers decided that the strong opposition to the ban at the conference meant that a immediate moves would be too troublesome — but now a witch-hunt seems to be gathering speed across the board.

The Kinnockites hope to push through their purges in Lambeth, Brighton and many other areas on the coat-tails of their drive against Militant.

Details of the 21 September conference from Steve French, 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Road, London SW9 7SL.

Liberal threat in Broadgreen

The Labour Party National Executive's threat to expel Terry Fields, MP for Liverpool Broadgreen, has angered local Labour Party supporters. A local Labour activist spoke to Anne Field

Even people who are ambivalent about supporting Terry because of the poll tax issue or anything else, such as the Walton by-election, in comparison with which the poll tax is almost a side issue, would be very angry if the Labour Party National Executive Committee decided to suspend or expel him.

The lie machine



Is this an army pressure group pulling Public Relations strings? "Queen's stony silence at announcement of Army cuts". Did it happen like that? Is Elizabeth Windsor (aged 65) really unhappy about losing her toy soldiers?



Hey ho! A change of public image for the future king and queen. "The royal soap opera" is, of course, a whopping great cliché by now — but, I ask you! Do you still believe that there isn't a team of live-in scribblers at Buckingham Palace controlling it all? Obviously the people we see here are actors. I wonder what the real Princess Di and Prince Charles look like...



And this paper, the Mirror, with this news coverage, is probably the best of the mass-circulation press...

Should the left back aid for Gorbachev?

By Martin Thomas

In the first half of this year, production in the USSR went down 12 per cent.

Productivity in the state sector decreased by 11 per cent, imports went down by half and exports by nearly a quarter, and prices went up 48 per cent. The state budget deficit was 46% bigger than planned.

All those are official figures. The chief statistician also reckons that 1200 or so of the country's 20,000 biggest enterprises are idle for lack of supplies at any given time.

No wonder Mikhail Gorbachev wants aid from the West; and no wonder some Western leaders who want to keep Gorbachev in power are in favour of giving aid.

The advocates of aid appear more humane, more generous, than the opponents. But that Jeffrey Sachs — whose plan reduced almost the whole Bolivian industrial working class to paupers — is among them should make us think. The aim of the aid is always to help Gorbachev introduce western-type capitalism in the USSR.

The Economist magazine argues against aid for Gor-

bachev, and also against economic sanctions against police-state China, on the grounds that "China has done more to become the sort of economy the West wants to encourage than has the Soviet Union." Despite all the Chinese government's talk of recentralising, non-state enterprise now produces nearly half its industrial output, and the proportion is increasing fast.

The Soviet bureaucracy, bigger, older, and more solid than the East European bureaucracies, has not smoothly adapted itself to a new order, but instead fragmented into a welter of factions divided on political and national lines. A military dictatorship probably "makes sense" for those who want free-market measures quickly and effectively.

Whether the pro-aid faction in the West is right or the anti-aid faction is nearer the mark, the left has no interest in supporting handouts to Gorbachev.

What we should campaign for is assistance to the new independent trade unions in the USSR. Only the development of the Soviet workers' movement can halt the USSR's slide towards pauperisation, civil war between nationalities, and a probable military coup.

Save the NHS!

From front page

scrutiny, and the general public have no access to facts and figures about the existing opted-out hospitals. Those facts and figures are now "confidential business information"!

Many opted out hospitals are introducing new staff contracts that make disclosure of information about what the hospitals are, and aren't, doing to anybody outside a disciplinary offence. This paves the way for the sacking of any employee that blows the whistle on the state of an opted-out hospital.

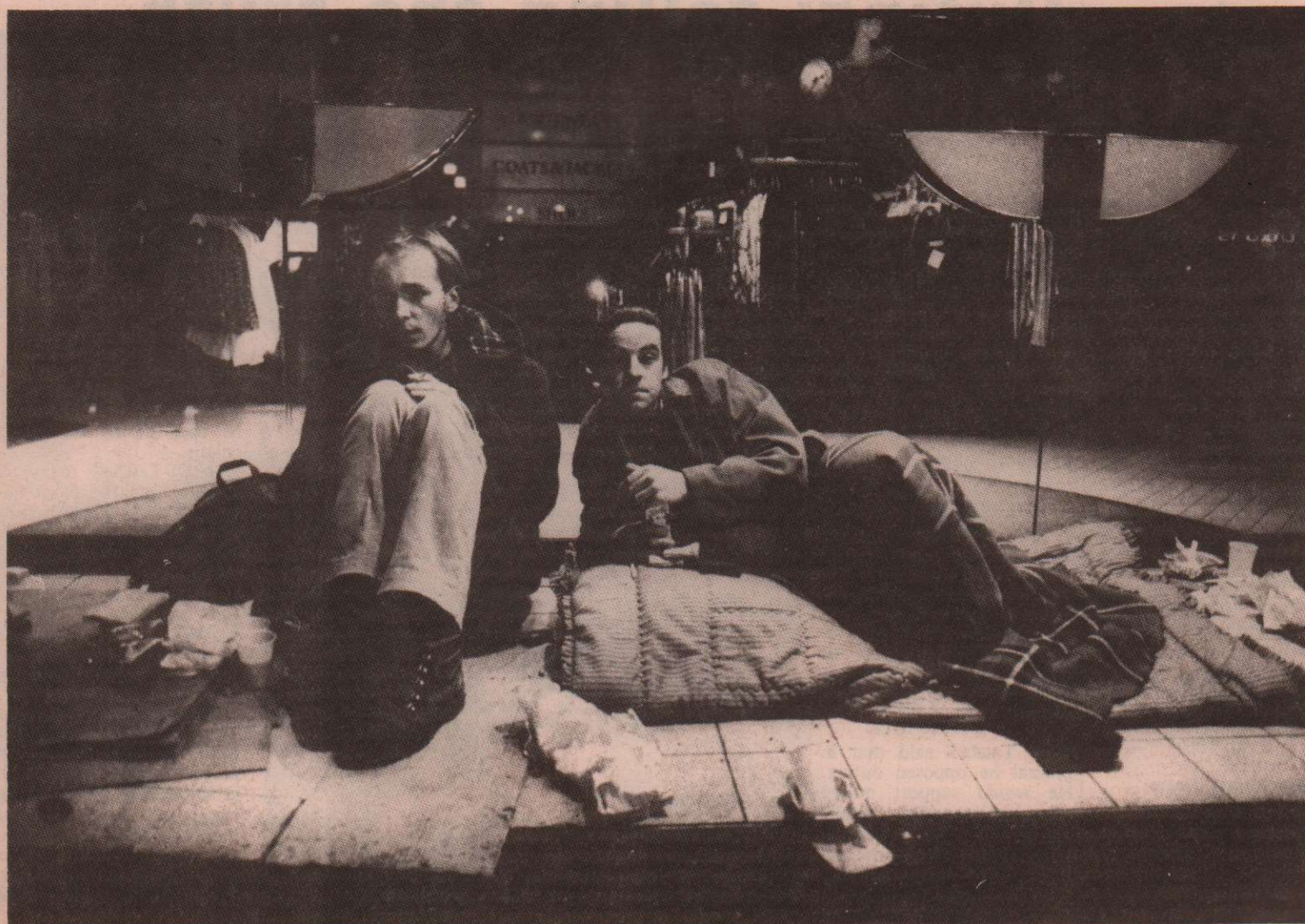
The NHS Trusts are a disaster for patients and staff, with

thousands of NHS ancillary workers due to be made redundant, in order to balance the books in the new profit-and-loss health service. Serious campaigning now can still stop the Tories and will help Labour kick the Tories out at the same time.

Major and his cronies still peddle the lie that people don't yet understand the "benefits" of his attacks on the NHS — talk the language of the poll tax to him!

Labour will never have a better opportunity to mobilise millions than in a campaign to defend the NHS. A Labour Party/TUC demonstration against the Tories' NHS plans would be the biggest march seen in Britain for decades.

Start organising now!



• 471 people died from living on the streets — through hypothermia and other causes — in 1989, the last year for which there are official figures. Doctors who work with the homeless reckon that living on the streets takes 20 years off your life. Diseases like TB, long in decline, have increased again since the late '80s.

• In four central London courts alone, 1400 people were prosecuted in 1989 under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, under which "every person wandering abroad and lodging in the open air" or "endeavouring to gather alms" is liable to 3 months' jail. Although the 1824 law had been in disuse for many years before the 1980s, the Government has blocked moves to repeal it.

• Last year it was estimated that about 3000 people were sleeping rough on the average night in London. The Government claims that the figure has been reduced to a few hundred this year by a drive to open more hostel places and drive the homeless into them, but groups working with the homeless question the claim.

• 6.6 million people in Britain live in "relative poverty", according to a European Community report this year. More people are poor in Britain, proportionately, than in any other EC country.

Police and press whip up anti-beggar hysteria

Driving the homeless off the streets

Evening Standard
LONDON TUESDAY 8 AUGUST 1991
Don't give cash to these scroungers, warn police
TRUTH ABOUT BEGGAR GANGS

The London police are notoriously unable to stop crimes against working people. Their representatives are always moaning that they are understaffed and overworked.

But they can find the time for a major new effort to drive homeless beggars off London's streets.

500 beggars have been arrested so far this year by the heroes of

Scotland Yard's drive to push naked poverty and homelessness in London out of sight of the tourists and the well-to-do Londoners.

With the push to drive the homeless away from the streets where they beg comes the propaganda drive.

Not all beggars, say the police, are utterly destitute; some of them have homes and hovels to go to. Many are "intelligent and able bodied".

And the police have made the discovery that groups of small-time gangsters prey on London's vast population of homeless beggars.

And their conclusion? That something should be done about London's vast problem of homelessness and unemployment, especially among young people?

No, that is not the point of the exercise. The point is to whip up fear and loathing against the outcasts who make central London these days look like a Third World city.

The policeman who runs the drive to terrorise the poor off London's streets — they call it "Operation Taurus" — Detective Chief Inspector Robin Jackson, knows what message he is pushing. He told the *Evening Standard*:

"There is one lesson we want to pass on. That is, that you don't give money to anyone. Nobody at all, until we have cleaned the parasites off the streets."

Not only are they all parasites, and fake beggars "with good homes to go to", the *Evening Standard*

tells stories about beggars turning violent.

Despise them, hate them, loathe them — drive them off the streets! It is not that London is awash with the needy and the dispossessed, but that honest, prosperous Londoners are being preyed upon by lazy, "intelligent and able bodied" parasites.

Despise, hate, loathe — back the police! Do not feel a bad conscience at the sight of hungry youngsters; don't be soft — and remember to vote Tory at the next election!

Of course you will get gangs preying on homeless beggars — where you get large numbers of homeless beggars. Of course you will get "fake" beggars, people who have some choice in the matter — where begging has become established as the only means of life for a lot of people; where those who can afford to give a few coins know that vast numbers really are destitute.

Thus the Tories set up a regime of police terror against the homeless

• Between 1978 and 1987 the average real income of the bottom ten per cent of the population fell by 5.7%, while the better-off gained an improvement of around 30%.

• The top 5 per cent in Britain own 37% of all marketable wealth and about three-quarters of all land and shares. The bottom 50 per cent own just 7% of all marketable wealth.

on the streets of London and back it up by propaganda, a drive based on the lying pretence that the majority of the people begging on London streets are there because they have freely chosen that way of life!

It is a plain bourgeois obscenity. With unemployment growing and set to continue growing for at least a year ahead, pitching young people out to swell the ranks of the destitute in London — now the Tories and their police launch a drive to clean up central London!

It is the operation of the pattern noted long ago by the French writer Anatole France, when he commented wryly: "The law in its majesty forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under the bridges of the Seine".

No doubt Scotland Yard will prove its impartiality by arresting any millionaire or drunken refugee from the Henley Regatta who turns up at Piccadilly and starts begging or busking.

With their craven, bootlicking, support for the Tories on all "law and order questions" Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition helps make possible this new move to drive the homeless and the destitute out of sight by police terrorisation.

The Labour MPs live in a London where you cannot walk down a central London street at the height of a bitter cold winter without passing human beings, many of them

youngsters starting out in life, lying on cardboard in the doorways of large buildings, wrapped in rags.

They live in a capital city with its own "cardboard city".

They represent — those Labour MPs — constituencies from which these destitute young people are driven to London by poverty and unemployment to see what they can find there.

Will they protest at the brutal "Operation Taurus"? The labour movement should demand of them that they do.

"Operation Taurus" — Taurus the Bull. Operation Bullshit!

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

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Bullshit on the shopfloor

That old misery-guts Orwell may have got a few things wrong in 1984 but he was dead right about "Newspeak". These days, insurance salesmen are "financial advisers", and PR men are "image consultants". In industrial relations all the talk is of "Human Resource Management" (HRM), "Quality of Working Life" (QWL) and the "Groupleader" (GL) concept.

The motor industry seems to be particularly prone to industrial Newspeak, so it was refreshing to read (in *Trade Union News*) a carworker sum up what all these fancy concepts really mean: "Bullshit!"

"The real reasons for GLs are: (i) to reduce supervision; (ii) to weaken/eliminate shopfloor organisation and trade union influence; (iii) to be party to, and party of, cost-cutting...through combining parts of separate job allocations, and so on."

Other names associated with this process are "team working", "flexibility", "versatility", "multi-skilling" and "quality circles". It all amounts to the same thing: a concerted employers' offensive to introduce "Japanisation". The precise details vary from company to company, but in general "Japanese work methods" involve abolishing traditional skills demarcations, introducing "teams" and "quality circles" that by-pass existing union structures, and appointing "Groupleaders" from the shopfloor, to "lead" groups of three to 12 workers and monitor quality, job performance, etc.

The package is often accompanied by single union no-strike deals and accompanied by "sweeteners" like improved wages, consolidation of bonus payments and shorter hours.

These methods were pioneered in Britain by Nissan at its greenfield site in Tyne and Wear. When Isuzu took over the Bedford van plant at Luton (now IBC) in 1987, a similar agreement was forced in, using the threat of closure to ensure acceptance (by the narrowest of margins).

Vauxhall has been easing Japanese methods into its Ellesmere Port plant since 1986, and Ford is bringing in the Groupleader concept at Halewood. The response, even from militant shopfloor trade unionists, has tended to be that "Japanisation" is now inevitable and the best that can be done is to attempt to limit the worst excesses of the new working methods and maintain basic union structures alongside (or within) them. This is essentially the approach that has been adopted by the unions at Ellesmere Port. The problem with this response is that it concedes victory to the employer in advance.

In fact, the battle against new working methods is far from lost. A recent (unpublished) study by one Michael Cross, a "visiting fellow at Manchester Business School", suggests that the new methods have yet to gain widespread acceptance in British manufacturing plants. While there has been an increase in multi-skilled team working, it is only from 0.75 per cent in 1981 to 2.75 per cent in the first quarter of this year. And only 22 of a sample of 405 plants in which new working methods have been introduced have developed "world-class" flexible working patterns compared to those in Japan and the US.

All of which is not to underestimate the difficulties faced by shopfloor activists, especially in the recession-hit motor industry. There may, indeed, come a point at which we have to accept that outright opposition is no longer viable and instead attempt to negotiate the best deal possible under the circumstances. But that point hasn't (in most cases) been reached yet. Despite all the bullshit.

Mr J Dromey — an apology

In last week's Sleeper column it was suggested that Mr Jack Dromey, Public Services Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, was a shameless careerist, motivated by personal ambition and the desire for high office. It was further suggested that Mr Dromey's decision to withdraw his candidature for the position of Deputy General Secretary of the union was a mere ploy designed to further his long-term plans for self-advancement.

We now accept that there is not a scintilla of truth in these statements. Mr Dromey's decision to re-submit his candidature is conclusive proof that he is a selfless, dedicated servant of the labour movement whose integrity is beyond question. We wish to unreservedly withdraw these allegations and apologise for any distress and embarrassment caused to Mr Dromey and his family.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

OUT AND PROUD

Kevin Sexton talked to Peter Tatchell about the recent furore in the Press over the "outing" of closet gays

Outing has been in all the major tabloids. The "Faggots Rooting Out Closeted Sexuality" (FROCS) used a hoax outing of prominent public figures to show up media hypocrisy when it comes to respecting people's private lives.

Peter Tatchell said that in general he opposed outing. He would support outing when lesbian and gay public figures advocate policies damaging to the homosexual community. "If lesbians and gays in public life are not actively harming our community, then it's their decision whether or not to come out; that decision should be left up to them".

Tatchell believes that the FROCS campaign provided much-needed debate. The normally brutal tabloid press was very cleverly manoeuvred into condemning outing and defending a person's right to privacy.

Tatchell believes that what the tabloids said will make it much more difficult for them to continue with their own savage "outings".

Would Tatchell support the outing of Tory MPs as a tactic during the General Election Campaign? Yes, against those Tory MPs who have a record of voting for anti-lesbian and gay legislation.

He believes that there are strong moral arguments in favour of the outing tactic.

Why, he asks, is it wrong to tell the truth about a person's sexuality? No-one complains if a public figure's heterosexuality is discussed.

One of the key issues behind this campaign is Freedom of Speech. People shouldn't run the risk of libel suits for simply stating the fact that certain well-known celebrities are lesbian and gay.

The recent Jason Donovan decision to sue the "Face" magazine for libel is collusion with homophobia.

By suing the "Face", Donovan is effectively saying that there is something terribly wrong with being described as a homosexual.

"I'm not Jewish, but if someone described me as being Jewish, I wouldn't bother denying it; there is nothing wrong with being Jewish".

Peter Tatchell thinks it is extraordinary that it is still considered defamatory under British law to say that a person is gay.

Tatchell insists that instead of attacking the outers, the heterosexual hypocrites should be attacking society's homophobia, which forces lesbians and gays to hide their sexuality. Tatchell cites as examples the outing of Peter Mandelson, the Labour Party Publicity guru, Allan Roberts, the late MP for

Outing: telling the truth or an invasion of privacy?



The lesbian and gay movement needs more than good stunts. It needs to organise within the labour movement

Bootle and Maureen Colquhoun, MP for Northampton North in the 70's.

Tatchell believes that the vulnerability of certain closet gay and lesbian Labour MPs could become politically very important.

"There are several quite

senior MPs who are either lesbian, gay or bisexual. They could be exposed by the tabloid press whenever Murdoch and friends choose. It would be far better for them to come out voluntarily to avoid the risk of being involuntarily exposed by the

sleazy tabloids. "These people have been Labour MPs for more than a decade and are well-established in their own constituencies and have rock-solid majorities; they can easily afford to come out."

Campaigns such as outing cannot be part of a vacuum. The tactic of outing should be used during mass campaigns.

Peter Tatchell raises important points about the tabloids, and their hypocritical lip-smacking response to mass outing.

Personally, I believe that Tory MPs who voted for and will continue to vote for legislation such as Paragraph 16 and Clause 25 should be outed by lesbian and gay activists.

However, I believe that Tatchell places unjustified faith in the FROCS campaign's ability to force the tabloids to be more cautious regarding discussion of homosexuality. The Murdoch and Maxwell press will continue to expose and use people's sexuality when it suits them.

For socialists, the most important issue to face in the coming months is the General Election. We must support and build a lesbian and gay movement which carries out more than press stunts. We must organise within the Labour Party to force the leadership to commit itself to the repeal of Section 28, Section 30 (Clause 25 previously) and all homophobic legislation passed under the last twelve years of the Tories.

But that can only be done by an organised mass Labour movement-based lesbian and gay movement.

Get out! Get active! Get even!



Peter Tatchell

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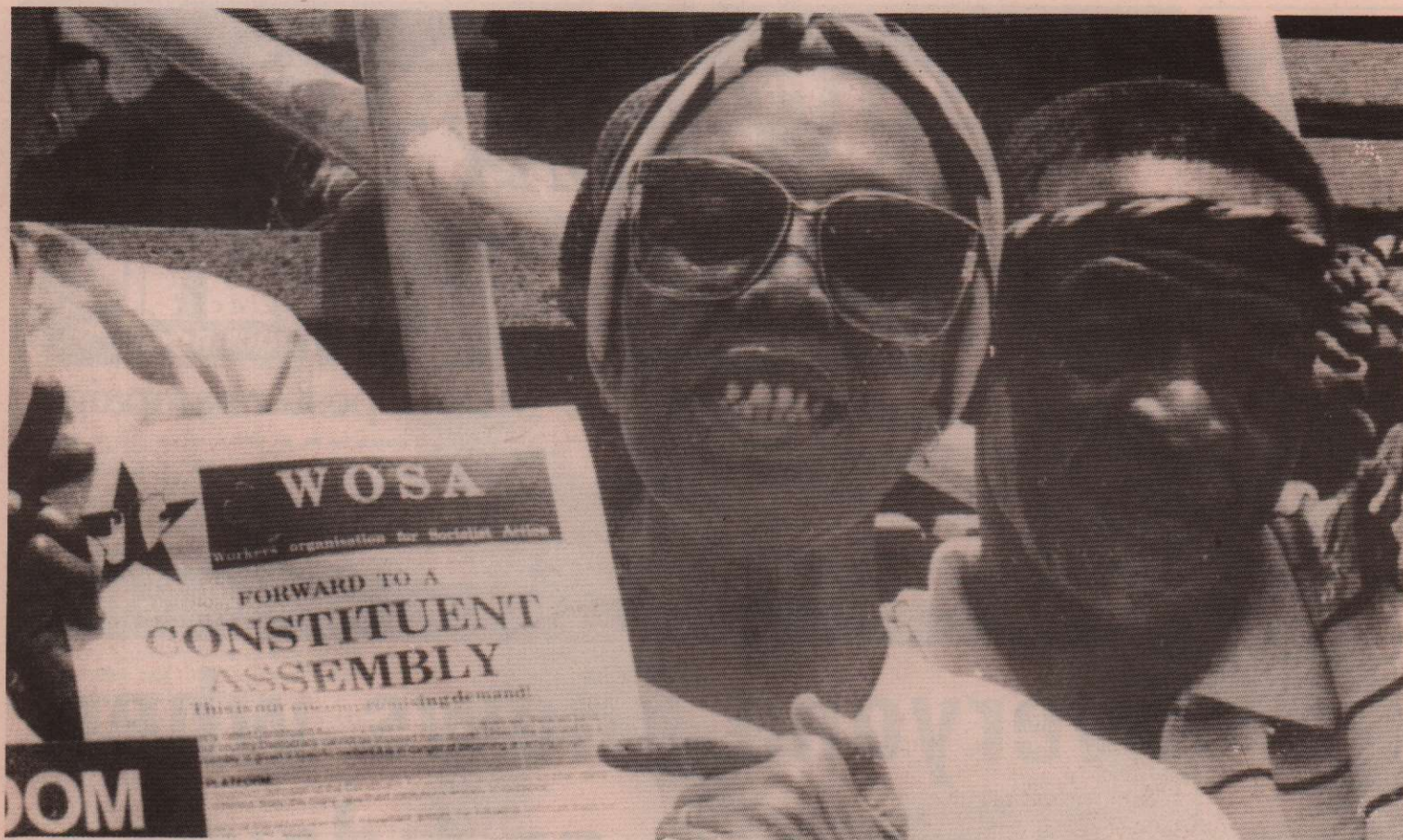
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Mass demonstration in Johannesburg. Workers must take advantage of the Inkathagate scandal to press for constituent assembly.

South Africa's workers must lead the fight for a constituent assembly

A member of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), active in the independent trade union movement, advocates a working class campaign for a constituent assembly

Organised labour must put its stamp on the campaign for the democratically elected Constituent Assembly.

It is clearly a demand which the ruling class has no intention of acceding to. There are currently attempts to find a "compromise". This may come in the form of an all-party conference which "transforms itself" into a "constituent assembly".

It might come in the form of certain prior agreements to restrict the nature of the constitution which the Constituent Assembly can agree to.

If such restrictions were to succeed in pulling out enough of the teeth of the Constituent Assembly before it is even elected then it is possible that the ruling class would allow it to go ahead.

The organisations of the working class must make it clear that none of these "compromises" is acceptable. Sometimes we are told that we are the ones who understand negotiation; after all we negotiate with capital every day.

This apparent truth is a deception. While we negotiate the terms under which we will continue to be exploited, we do not negotiate the taking of power in the factories.

The issue of the Constituent Assembly is the dividing line for us on the question of democracy. If the new constitution is made by any forum other than one which we freely elect then it cannot be a democratic constitution. That is not negotiable.

We must call for a reconvened Workers' Summit (a rank and file delegate meeting of workers only from the two big union federations COSATU and NACTU) to express the united view of the organised working class on this issue — and to identify the campaign of mass action which will bring the Constituent Assembly into being.

From Workers' Voice journal of WOSA.

Inkathagate: the president is in trouble

De Klerk raises more questions than he answers

By Tom Rigby

South African president FW De Klerk looks like he is in big trouble over allegations that his government has been backing Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement.

Last Tuesday, 30 July, De Klerk announced that he was demoting his Law and Order and Defence Ministers to the Prisons and Forestry portfolios.

He also categorically denied any security force involvement in the brutal factional violence that has been ripping South Africa's townships apart.

Inkatha, as is well known, is one of the major protagonists in this

violence.

The problem for De Klerk is that his story is just not consistent. By demoting two key ministers he may have unwittingly helped to focus attention on himself.

Is it really plausible that the president knew nothing of covert funding to Inkatha — major prospective allies for the National Party in any post-apartheid election? This claim looks particularly hollow when we take into account De Klerk's boast that the cabinet works as one unit: "The whole cabinet, man for man, exactly because of the think scrums and thorough pre-planning, operates as one team," he said.

Why has the Defence Minister been demoted when none of the recent "Inkathagate" allegations focus on the armed forces?

Is this to dampen the effect of recent press revelations about army involvement in the township carnage, or is De Klerk bowing to the pressure of the ANC, who have been demanding Malan's resignation for months?

Or perhaps by sacking Malan De Klerk has admitted that previously published allegations about hit squads are true?

Such a weak show from De Klerk will hardly strengthen his standing with his own supporters, particularly the Afrikaner middle class and workers who have been deserting the National Party in recent times for the hard-right Conservative Party.

At the same time the ANC has been emboldened by the crisis. Quite rightly they are calling for an amnesty for all those involved in the

township violence and an inquiry into allegations of police and army involvement.

The key to benefiting from De Klerk's trouble lies with a renewed offensive by the mass movement around the demand for a constituent assembly (directly elected constitution-making body). This makes far more sense than the demand for an interim government of the National Party and ANC leaders that the ANC is presently concentrating on.

It is a more clearly democratic demand and avoids the trap of pretending that the South African armed forces can be "democratised" by placing them under the partial, formal control of a handful of ANC nominees from the unelected interim government.

The BCCI scandal unfolds

As capitalist as apple pie

By Martin Thomas

"Violence," said the American black power leader Bobby Seale, "is as American as apple pie". And fraud is as capitalist as the almighty dollar.

Day after day, from the tap opened by the investigations into the collapsed Bank of Commerce and Credit International, come more revelations, of fraud and sleaze stretching further and further.

The sober *Financial Times* comments: "BCCI's frauds were not only fundamental to the branch's operations, but also required the collusion of...customers...shareholders...and even other banks."

"BCCI appears to have been helped by a disinclination among supervisors and auditors to suspect fraud."

All that is typical of the way the big financial markets operate — the

special casinos which regulate how accumulated wealth is deployed, directed and distributed. Not everyone in those markets breaks the rules, but their working assumption is that it is better to turn a blind eye to a bit of rule-breaking than to risk panics and collapses.

Two years ago a survey by the City Police Fraud Squad in London found that nearly one in six of the City's financial institutions had suffered frauds — sometimes very big ones — without reporting them to the police. They preferred to sack the criminal quietly, limit the losses, and avoid the discredit and trouble which would be caused by court cases.

Now it seems that the CIA, the government of Abu Dhabi, and probably MIS, the Bank of England and British government departments all had a pretty good idea of the goings-on at BCCI long ago, and decided to keep quiet.

In a capitalist economy you do not get rich by producing. You get

rich by having, and deploying, capital. Whether the capital is deployed in the production of cigarettes or cancer treatments — or not directly in production at all — is irrelevant. Profit, which in the last analysis can only come from grabbing the product of workers' labour, appears to come, and in immediate terms does come, from capital's magic ability to expand itself.

The legal, legitimate, respectable profits of high finance are hardly less of a swindle than the gains of fraud. They all come from taking cuts out of accumulated money-wealth as it swishes round between one sphere of production and another. Extra-large profits come — can only come — from taking advantage of the foolish or duped, or from sheer luck.

Fraud or no fraud, high finance is no way to run a human society. The Labour Party should commit itself to public ownership and democratic control of all the banks and financial institutions.

Inkathagate: the allegations

* £30,000 was paid to Inkatha by the state to help them finance a rally in the centre of "white" Durban.

* That the police secretly funded and controlled Inkatha's "trade union" UWUSA. The organisation has been used to attack genuine trade unions, particularly in the mines where the workforce is more directly segregated on racial lines. One police document even complains about the UWUSA operation being financially sloppy: "The Minister [of Law and Order] is concerned how a project [ie. UWUSA] under the control of the

South African police could have been allowed to develop in such a way."

* That Inkatha and the security services are so intertwined that the hated BOSS — the old name for the secret police — used to write Chief Buthelezi's speeches and send them via a special high security scrambled fax machine. BOSS also provided information for Buthelezi about political opponents of Inkatha.

* Other allegations include: state sponsored death squads in the townships and "homelands" and that a special army unit was behind some of the recent township train massacres.



What prospect for a Palestinian state?

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir has drawn a series of defensive lines. When he has to retreat, he withdraws to the next line.

For a long time, Shamir demanded that there would not be a United Nations representative at any peace conference and that any conference would be a one-off event.

Now Shamir has given up on these demands. But he is arguing about Palestinian participation. He insists that there should be no Palestinian representation from East Jerusalem.

His argument is: Israel will talk only to Arabs of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip; we will not talk to anyone from East Jerusalem because this is part of Israel.

The arrangements for this peace conference are in fact very unfair to the Palestinians and the PLO. They have no right to a delegation of their own. They have been forced to accept a second-class status.

The Palestinians seem to be having to accept the idea of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. There are many Palestinians in Jordan. In fact the Prime Minister of Jordan is a Palestinian.

Palestinians as part of a Jordanian delegation could be interpreted as being representatives of the Palestinian diaspora.

But the Palestinians are also insistent about the East Jerusalem question. If Palestinians from East Jerusalem are ruled out this means Faisal Husseini, a spokesperson for the Intifada, will be unable to attend. In fact, many of the people who have been at the recent discussions with James Baker will be unable to attend.

The Israeli government will object to any diplomacy which implies that the Palestinians are an independent entity.

The Israeli press has reported Shamir as demanding that only Jordanians on the Jordanian delegation will have speaking rights; the Palestinians will not have speaking rights. Also, Shamir wants to see the Jordanian speech in advance. He wants to make sure that "PLO" is not mentioned.

The next stumbling points are: who, exactly, will receive the invitations?

Will the Palestinians? If so, which Palestinians? How will the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation be formed?

It is more or less decided that the joint convenors of the conference will be the USA and the USSR.

The negotiations will be conducted the following way — there will be one or two days of plenary sessions.

Then the conference will divide into five working groups. Israel will have separate talks with Syria, Lebanon, Saudi and the Gulf States and Palestine-Jordan. The fifth group will discuss general regional problems.

The traditional Likud position has been that it is better to have separate direct negotiations between Israel and each one of the Arab states than to have a conference where all the Arabs are together. The official reason is to isolate the most extreme positions. The unofficial reason is to divide the Arabs.

The question now is what will Syria do? There are two issues: the



Is Shamir backtracking?

Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

The price Assad got from the US in return for his support during the Gulf War, was a free hand in Lebanon. Assad wants Lebanon as a Syrian satellite. Historically, Syrian nationalism has never accepted Lebanon's independence. They regard Lebanon as artificially constructed by French colonialism. In fact, Syria's attitude to Lebanon parallels Iraq's attitude to Kuwait.

But Assad is a cautious man. He is not trying to formally annex Lebanon. He wants to give the appearance of co-operation between two sovereign states. He is setting himself up as the arbiter of internal Lebanese politics.

To achieve his ends, Assad favours a Lebanese army which has real power over Lebanese territory. But the extension of Lebanese army power southwards first brought them into conflict with the PLO, then with the Israeli-run South Lebanon Army (SLA).

After the Lebanon war, the Israeli government declared a security zone in South Lebanon controlled by the SLA. Assad hopes for US pressure to get Israel out of South Lebanon.

Israel has already declared that it will not negotiate with Syria about Lebanon.

The second issue for Israel and Syria is the Golan Heights. A few days ago, the Syrian Foreign Minister, said the US had promised pressure to get an Israeli withdrawal. The Americans have denied this. But the US has also said that they never recognised the occupation of Golan.

Of course, the big questions behind all this are: What, exactly,

does America want? and how much pressure are they prepared to exert?

It seems clear that they are determined to see this peace conference convened.

Firstly, it is the personal concern of Bush and especially Baker. It will be humiliating if they fail.

The immediate problem is the question of East Jerusalem. It is possible that the first stage of the negotiations will agree some sort of autonomy for the Occupied Territories from which East Jerusalem will be excluded and their representatives will not take part in these initial negotiations.

It is possible that there are some conflicts between the Palestinians — between the Arafat leadership looking for diplomatic openings, and the Palestinian leadership in East Jerusalem. People like Faisal Husseini have been under a lot of pressure from the Palestinian public who regard all the manoeuvring with great suspicion.

I understand that Faisal Husseini's life has also been threatened by the Islamic fundamentalists.

An opinion poll published recently in an East Jerusalem Arab paper suggested 60% Arab opposition to talks with Baker. There is the strong feeling that it is always the Palestinians who are asked to compromise and have had nothing in return.

Then there is the question of the Israeli settlements. It is clear that the US will not demand an end to the building programme as a precondition for talks. Saudi Arabia has offered to begin trading with Israel if the building programme is ended.

Inside Israel there is a lot of speculation about early elections. The position of the

Labour Party is that if the extreme right try to break up the government to stop the negotiations, Labour will back Likud in order to maintain the talks. Labour's position has, so far, held the government together.

However, Labour's position is ambiguous. It is very right wing on the question of the Golan Heights. Most of the settlers there are Labour kibbutzniks. On the other hand, the Labour Party is very pro-American.

Mapam and Ratz have fallen in behind the Americans.

If Shamir is leaning towards withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, he could do it with the current internal political line-up. Will Shamir do it? This depends on the Americans and no-one knows their attitude for sure.

Readers of Socialist Organiser will be pleased to learn that the Israeli authorities have dropped proceedings against Adam Keller which were started when Adam spoke alongside a PLO member at the November 3 Campaign Against War in the Gulf conference in London.

Adam had deliberately broken the Israeli law which prohibits contact with the PLO.

Adam Keller is Editor of "The Other Israel" alternative news digest. For more information write to: PO Box 956, Tel Aviv, 61009, Israel.

Japan seeks new imperial rule

Takeo Shin from the Socialist Workers' Party of Japan reports on the tasks and prospects for the Japanese left

Japanese politics is now at one of its most crucial stages since World War II.

As everyone knows, Japan, along with Germany, leads the world economy. The ruling class, and the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) as its political spokesperson, are using this "chance", trying to "complete" Japan's development as a new-born imperialist state.

Last April they sent a minesweeper and troops to the Gulf on the pretext of defending Japanese oil tankers. Japan's constitutional ban on sending any military force abroad was broken for the first time since the War.

The LDP also want to seize the chance for political reformation, including the introduction of a new electoral district system. We also see a drive for patriotism in education and reactionary laws against foreign workers. We must struggle against every single policy of the LDP.

However, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), which was relatively radical in the past, is now "reflecting" on its "socialist" past and trying to "renew" itself as a "sensible" opposition just like the Kinnockites. The JSP was totally defeated in the local elections last April, and that is accelerating its rightward shift.

The Japanese Communist Party (JCP), which has 400,000 members is also rotten to its core. After the Gulf War they issued this statement: "The US military action on Iraq had a certain significance to liberate Kuwait". According to the JCP the Gulf War was a "just war"!

But the JCP, like all Stalinist parties, is in a great crisis since the revolutions in Eastern Europe and the USSR. The JCP had kept up fraternal relations with the Romanian Communist Party, calling Ceaucescu "comrade" until just before the revolution in 1989.

The majority of the JCP members began to criticise their leadership, and the whole party has been thrown into chaos.

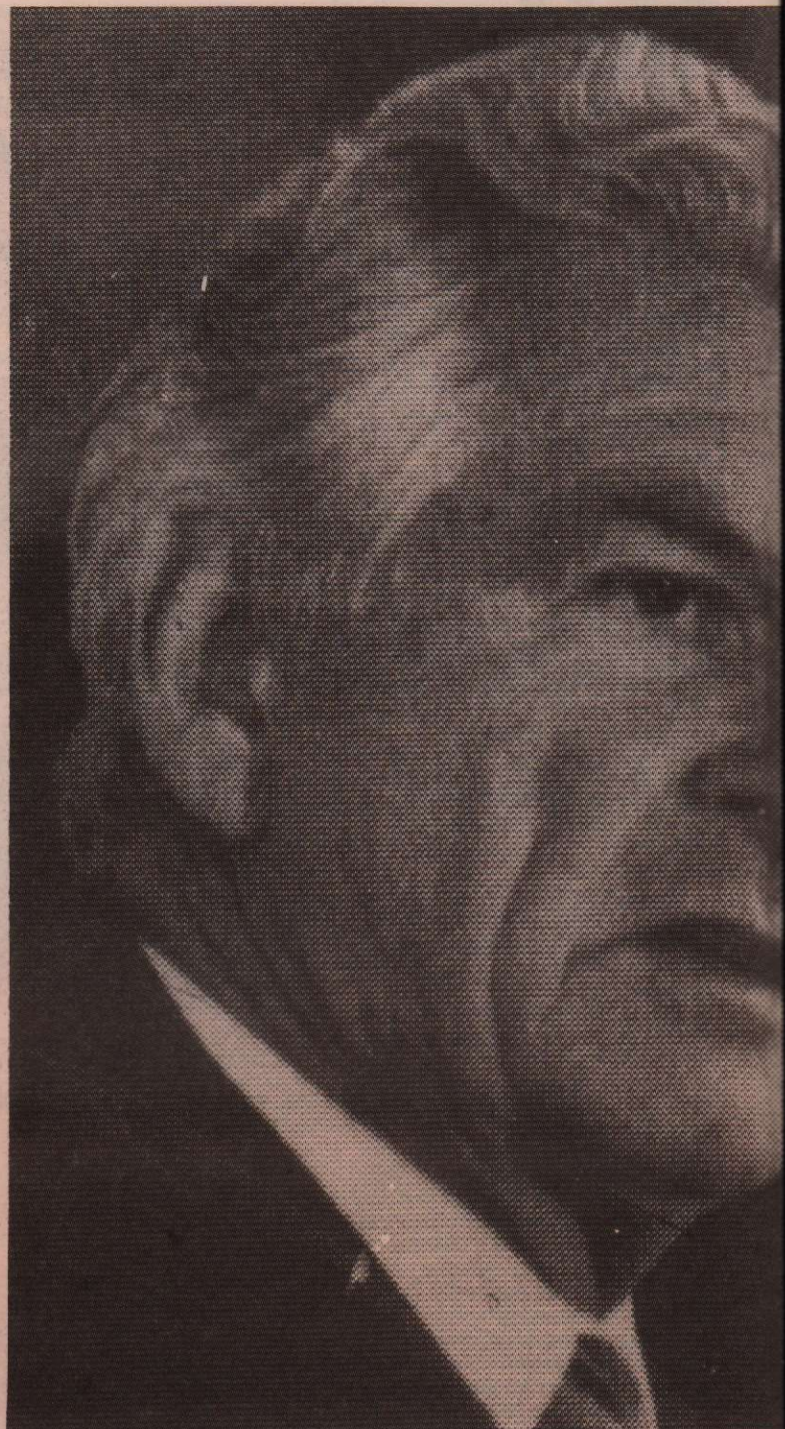
This party, which still demands "Japan's real independence from the US" and "reform within the capitalist system" with "respect for the present constitution" is doomed to collapse sooner or later.

Unfortunately, most of the Japanese so-called New Left groups, desperate at this difficult situation, have escaped into various minority movements, abandoning the struggle in trade unions.

The most typical of these movements is the one against the expansion of the New Tokyo International Airport. They are struggling to defend the land of the peasants who live near there, instead of organising the working class. Moreover, some fanatical sects have killed more than one hundred activists in in-fighting since the 1970s, and some sects are competing to invent brand-new rockets to attack the Imperial Palace and so on.

But to get into the mass of workers everywhere, and organise them, however difficult it is — that is the only Marxist answer in Japan as well as the rest of the world.

Kinnockism Australian style



Hawke and Finance Minister Paul Keating — they have implemented a Thatcherite project. (Inset 'The Observer', 14th February 1988, explains the nature of the Labor government).

Bob Hawke's Australian Labor Party in government is more right wing than the Labour Party of Neil Kinnock, according to many Labour Party supporters in Britain.

Therefore socialists can expect that under a Kinnock Labour government the working class would fare better than under Hawke's governments since 1983.

Bob Hawke and Paul Keating (when Treasurer) implemented a Thatcherite project of deregulating the economy, cutting the public sector in areas such as health, education and welfare, restricting union rights, pushing down the spending power of workers, and redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich.

But what of Kinnock? He recoils from making any commitments to repeal Thatcher's anti-union laws or to restore the cuts made by the Tories. He may sound more concerned than Hawke, but that is about all, even from the position of the Opposition, where it's easier to make promises.

Kinnock is appealing to the same logic as Hawke. Both have claimed that they can manage capitalism better than the conservatives, that they can revitalise industry, enhance their country's international competitiveness, and achieve this with more co-operation and less social disruption than the conservatives.

Hawke and Keating had some successes on the economy — though they have been totally destroyed in the current recession. There was an increase in jobs. There was a patch of improvement in Australia's balance of payments, and inflation and interest rates eventually were lowered, but not until there had been a long period of very high figures. Their greatest success, though, was the one proclaimed by Keating to the bosses — the significant fall in wages share of the cost of production. And this was achieved without any serious disruption from the unions.

style

The most important issue facing the British working class now is to break the Tory government at the next election. The only labour movement-based alternative to the Tories is Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. We fight to return a Labour government.

But a Kinnock Labour government will be a long way from socialism. Kinnock promises us policies not too removed from Tory policies.

Whether Kinnock can make such policies stick will depend on how the labour movement reacts to them. A vigorous fightback can wreck Prime Minister Kinnock's policies — and a fightback will be easier once the spell of the Tories' long rule is broken.

But we must not underestimate the power of the trade union leaders to hold the labour movement quiet under a Labour government.

Here the lessons of countries like Australia, where recent right-wing Labor governments have been 'Thatcherite' governments, needs to be learned by the Labour left, and brought by the Labour left to the broader working class movement.

The Tories are the main enemy. Kicking out the Tories is our most important immediate task. But we have to fight a war on two fronts, and arm ourselves politically to fight it.

Janet Burstall compares the Australian experience with what the Kinnockites plan for a Labour government after the next election.

These "successes" of the Australian Labor Party government are successes essentially for the bosses, and at the expense of the working class.

These are the successes that Kinnock hopes to emulate. Kinnock will be wanting above all to demonstrate to the bosses that he is in control of the Labour Party and the unions. Before the elections, he is witchhunting in Lambeth and Liverpool to show that he controls the Party. Twelve years of the

Tories have done the job on the unions for now, but how will Kinnock keep them down once the Tories are gone?

Undoubtedly Kinnock will be keen to emulate the Australian Labor Government. It is worth understanding what Kinnock is trying to emulate, in order to be better prepared to work for Kinnock's failure.

So, how did the Australian Labor government manage to erode the living standards and rights of the

working class, with only a few isolated cries of opposition?

Step one: the Accord. During the 1983 election campaign, the ALP and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) announced they had reached an Accord, or social contract. The substance of the Accord was that unions would accept decisions on wages made by the Arbitration Commission, and would not take industrial action on wages.

There were a handful of sweeteners in there, which enabled different factions to sell the Accord with different arguments. The sweeteners were all part of Labor Party policy in any case, and so the Accord conceded nothing in return for a huge giveaway by the unions.

The Accord was not adopted by

the rank and file membership of unions, or even in most cases by elected union bodies. It was imposed in a rush by the ACTU Executive, without dissent, locking gutless higher officials into imposing it down the line.

Step two: isolation. The undemocratic nature of the adoption of the Accord, and the expectations of better wages under Labor, were the basis on which parts of the left hoped that rank and file workers would soon break free of the Accord.

This break out did not happen, despite the optimism of the left. The major unions were all tightly in the grip of pro-Accord leaders. Any unions which attempted to gain wage rises outside of the industrial courts were isolated and marginalised. These unions were usually too

SOCIALIST FIGHT 30c (P47) Political Centre Pages 1-10

SOCIALIST FIGHT 30c (P48-49) THE ACCORD DON'T GET CAUGHT!

SOCIALIST FIGHT 30c (P46-47) HAWKE'S WAR ON ALP POLICY

SOCIALIST FIGHT 30c (P46-47) FREE ENTERPRISE HOW WELL IT WORKS! INDEXATION: ORGANISED THEFT

SOCIALIST FIGHT 30c (P46-47) INSIDE: UNITE DEMANDS RESTRAINT DOESN'T PAY!

The Australian socialist paper *Socialist Fight* charts the course of the Australian Labor government from 1983 to 1987



notebook

MICHAEL DAVIE

Why the rich are backing Hawke

IN ITS Bicentennial year, Australia is adding to the inventions it has already given the world. The Minister, and then he wanted to retire from politics and make a fortune. Hungary, and now in Australia, through his TNT company, dominates the road transport business.

small and weak to win alone. There was some opposition from within the ALP to the Accord, and to the anti-working class policies of the government, and these were met with disciplinary action, suspensions and expulsions. These served as examples, but they were not on a large scale, and were not directed against groups but individuals. There were barely enough socialists organised into groups in the Labor Party to be banned.

Step three: intimidation. Legislation was put through by Labor against the Builders Labourers union (BLF) which was strong enough to win independently. The BLF was denied access to industrial courts. Another supposedly left union, the BWIU, took over the right to legally represent that industry, and police were brought on to building sites by the BIWU to prevent the BLF from organising.

Anti-union laws on the books from the previous conservative government were conveniently left unrepealed on a technicality, by the ALP.

The official left which were backing the Accord pointed constantly to the New Right, and its Thatcherite demagoguery, as the main danger facing workers. The New Right obliged by backing and mounting a number of specific company attacks on union rights. When workers responded with strike action bosses used the above mentioned anti-union laws to sue workers and unions for damages. This compounded the atmosphere of intimidation of workers from taking action.

Step four: the left isolates itself. The revolutionary socialist left had a very poor record of attempting to work in the ALP especially, and, to a lesser extent, the trade unions. This partially accounts for their isolation at the time of the election of Labor in 1983.

At first the anti-Accord left was quite small, but there were a number of attempts to organise a united left campaign against the Accord, combining propaganda to expose the Accord, and solidarity campaigns with workers struggles.

Workers who had felt the wrath of the Hawke government, the ACTU leaders and the courts were drawn to these campaigns in larger numbers than expected, so desperate were they for support.

"But the left was almost entirely antagonistic to the idea that a political fight was needed to reshape the existing labour movement. Work inside the Labor Party was totally rejected."

The far left had the opportunity to reach those workers with their ideas, and the workers were hungry for a way forward.

But the anti-Accord left was almost entirely antagonistic to the idea that a political fight was needed to reshape the existing labour movement. Work inside the Labor Party was totally rejected. Work in the unions was focused on the need for strike action and solidarity with strike action. If strike action had materialised this may not have been so disastrous. But as there was no broad strike action, the result was demoralisation of the left.

Two other developments were relevant. There was a spurt of growth in peace and green campaigns, which attracted radical youth. The growing political crisis

in the USSR reverberated through the Stalinoid left. Many on the far left turned their hopes towards green politics or structural rearrangements amongst left groups.

Candidates were run against Labor, ostensibly to demonstrate and give voice to the positive development of working class consciousness in breaking with Labor. In New South Wales the dead end of this approach was brought home with a rude shock when the conservative Greiner government replaced a long-standing Labor government.

The left had achieved zero, the working class had lost considerably with a vicious programme of law and order and of cuts in education, health, welfare, public transport and public works.

Lessons for Britain:

1. Beware of deals between trade union and Labour Party leaders, fight them tooth and nail. Democracy and accountability in the unions is vital. A movement to fight for democracy and accountability is the only way to give this meaning.

2. Trade union laws are a tool of a capitalist Labour government as much as of a conservative government. Campaigning to defeat them is also essential.

3. Disillusion with Labour is not inherently positive, in fact it can be the reverse. It is essential to persevere with the fight inside the labour movement and to expose the bankruptcy of schemes such as the Mahmood election campaign in Walton.

4. While workers do have higher expectations of a new Labour government than an old Tory government, this does not guarantee an imminent wave of industrial militancy. It is necessary to be prepared for a variety of developments, to avoid demoralisation in case militancy is delayed in developing.

Has Benn abandoned hope?

PLATFORM

By Danny Nicol

It is sad that Tony Benn should have spent five years preparing something that is a gift to Labour's enemies.

He claims (*Campaign Group News*, June 1991) that his Commonwealth of Britain Bill will "establish popular sovereignty". But his Bill, which provides for a written constitution, is just what the Liberals always lobbied for, later the SDP, and now as Liberal Democrats.

It's a sad example of Tony's inveterate populism that he has jumped on the bandwagon of Charter 88 with seemingly no conception of the horrendous implications these changes would have for the struggle for democratic socialism.

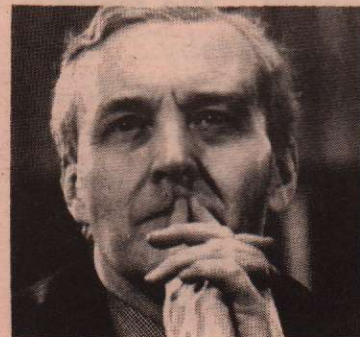
Tony's proposed constitution will enshrine a High Court with responsibilities which "include the safeguarding of the Commonwealth Constitution". This is absolute folly. It means — indeed, any written constitution means — that the courts are able to declare legislation invalid if they believe it falls outside the confines of the constitution. Given the record of the judiciary and how they are likely to interpret constitutional provisions, there is no case at all for giving them the opportunity, *carte blanche*, to nullify progressive legislation.

Our present constitution is based on the doctrine of Parliamentary Sovereignty. (A doctrine admired by many other countries with different systems.) Parliament is the supreme law-making body and its Acts cannot be challenged in any court of law. In other words, the courts must enforce statutes, they cannot question their validity.

This keeps judges out of the political arena which is essential for Labour governments. No-one familiar with, for example, the case-law on industrial conflict, for example during the miners' strike, can doubt that legislation which set the unions free from the Tory anti-union laws would fall foul of a High Court.

This is so even though Tony suggests, with the eclecticism which pervades his Bill, that the judges be nominated by a President and confirmed by a Commons committee. Just look at the United States, where the Supreme Court only this month ruled, against the wishes of elected representatives, that legislation to give information about abortion is unlawful.

In Britain, subordinate legislation and administrative actions are not subject to Parliamentary Sovereignty, and are therefore amendable to judicial review. Remember how Ken Livingstone's "Fares Fair" policy was held to be illegal when attacked in the courts by Bromley Council. It's ludicrous to go out of our way to ensure



Tony Benn

that Labour Acts of Parliament should suffer a similar fate.

Tony claims that "the House of Commons is a shell concealing its political impotence against the Executive". But there is another side to this argument: the right of the British people to elect a government with the power to govern, and which they can hold accountable. Britain needs a strong socialist government, resolute in carrying out its policies. A decade of Thatcherism seems to have left some socialists running scared of strong government.

Of course the balance between the executive and legislature isn't right. Backbench Labour MPs should have more power. At the same time they should be more accountable to the Party membership for the way they use it.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has long campaigned for changes in the Parliamentary Labour Party that would bring this about. What Tony is proposing, however, is a USA-style Separation of Powers, a system of checks and balances, fitted to administer capitalist society and obstruct the efforts of future governments to shift wealth and power in favour of working people.

The Queen's constitutional position is to be abolished, replaced by a President elected by Parliament. This policy would be highly unpopular with the British public; but — as important — it's also a case of failing to see the wood for the trees.

The last time the Royal Assent was refused was 1707. The prerogative powers which Tony complains of have long ceased to be exercised by the monarch. They are now a Prime Ministerial prerogative in all but name. Removing these powers, or at least making them subject to a Commons vote, has nothing to do with the Queen, and is a matter of changing the balance of power between government and Commons. To bring the Queen into it merely obscures this fundamental issue.

Tony suggests a second chamber, "elected in such a way as to represent England, Scotland and Wales in proportion to their populations" with delaying power of one year. This is a retreat from the left's traditional policy of abolition of the House of Lords in favour of a sovereign House of Commons. Having it elected in a different way from the Commons invites a clash between the two.

A second chamber endowed with the legitimacy of popular election would have considerable moral and political authority in standing up to a House of Commons prepared to pass radical laws. No wonder it's embodied in the Policy Review as official Labour policy!

Although some of the measures in Tony's Bill are desirable, they are outweighed by the dangers involved in a written constitution, placing future Labour governments at the mercy of the judiciary.

I fear that — consciously or unconsciously — Tony has abandoned any hope of a socialist government coming to power through existing constitutional channels. He has fallen victim to the present climate of despair which seeks refuge in building constitutional castles in the air.

Rather than attempt a thoroughgoing analysis of why the left lost the battle for the Labour Party and how it can learn from its mistakes, Tony's proposals sidetrack the depleted forces of the left into channels which can only give succour to the capitalists.

Critics of 'democracy' include Einstein, Benn and Lenin

What is wrong with parliamentary democracy?

In the British labour movement the Kinnockites use the crude charge that Marxists are against democracy as a cudgel against Labour Party socialists. They are as ignorant as they are demagogic!

The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels defined socialism as a matter of 'winning the battle of democracy'. But for decades after 1917 democracy and socialism seemed to have parted company. The 'democrats' in the labour movement were mainly pro-capitalist; the Stalin-poisoned revolutionary movements wanted one-party dictatorships. Those in the Trotskyist tradition who still said: 'He who is not a democrat is not a socialist' were an isolated handful.

In this second extract from the SO pamphlet 'Socialists and Democracy', John O'Mahony discusses the Marxist criticism of the existing parliamentary system.

The decline of the direct controlling power of the elected chamber, the House of Commons, has been going on for over 100 years. In parallel to the extensions of the franchise after 1867, the ruling class has systematically created parallel levers of power, diminishing parliament.

Real power has shifted from parliament to the cabinet, and then to the prime minister, backed by the unelected permanent bureaucracy.

The cry that parliamentary democracy is in danger is a truly ridiculous weapon to find in the hands of Labour parliamentarians who — like Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock for example — have for years and decades, in government and out, allowed themselves to function as so many mere parliamentary gargoyles, decorating and camouflaging the structure of unelected bureaucratic and military power which has grown to dominance within the facade of Britain's ancient parliamentary system.

Those who say we are the enemies of democracy have themselves sur-

rendered many of the ancient rights of parliament to the civil service and the military. Many of them bear direct personal responsibility for the diminishing of parliamentary democracy, and for the consequent growth of political cynicism.

And now they discover that parliamentary democracy is in danger — and in danger from their critics and opponents in the labour movement!

Tony Benn has done tremendous work to bring to the attention of the labour movement the reality that now clothes itself in the traditional garb of the British parliamentary democratic system. He brings from his experiences as a government minister examples of the realities lurking behind the democratic facade, vindicating what revolutionary Marxists have said for many decades.

The permanent civil service to an enormous extent determines policy and ensures its continuity whatever government is in power: Benn once received a civil service brief marked, "For the new Minister, if not Mr Benn". Prime ministerial patronage ensures that Parliament's role as a scrutineer of government is undercut and atrophied.



"Private capital tends to be concentrated in few hands... the result is an oligarchy... with enormous power that cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society."

Albert Einstein

Real control of the armed forces — whose subordination to parliament at the end of the 17th century was the decisive final act in securing parliamentary rule in England — is therefore less and less exercised by parliament.

The former Chief of the General Staff, Lord Carver, has publicly admitted that in February 1974, when the last Labour government was returned amidst massive industrial struggles. In a debate with Pat Arrowsmith, Carver confirmed that army officers had discussed a coup in February 1974. "Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it." The top brass put a stop to it — but the top brass of the Chilean armed forces who were represented in Salvador Allende's cabinet didn't stop the fascist coup of 1973 which pulverised the Chilean labour movement. They organised it.

In Britain the "fairly senior officers" of 1974 are now probably "senior".

The list could be vastly extended. The point is that parliamentary democracy is hollowed out, decrepit, enfeebled in face of the permanent state apparatus. The ruling class increasingly exercises its rule through direct ties to that apparatus. And in its international relations parliamentary democracy is subordinate to the dictates of forces not elected by the British people; in fact not elected by anybody at all.

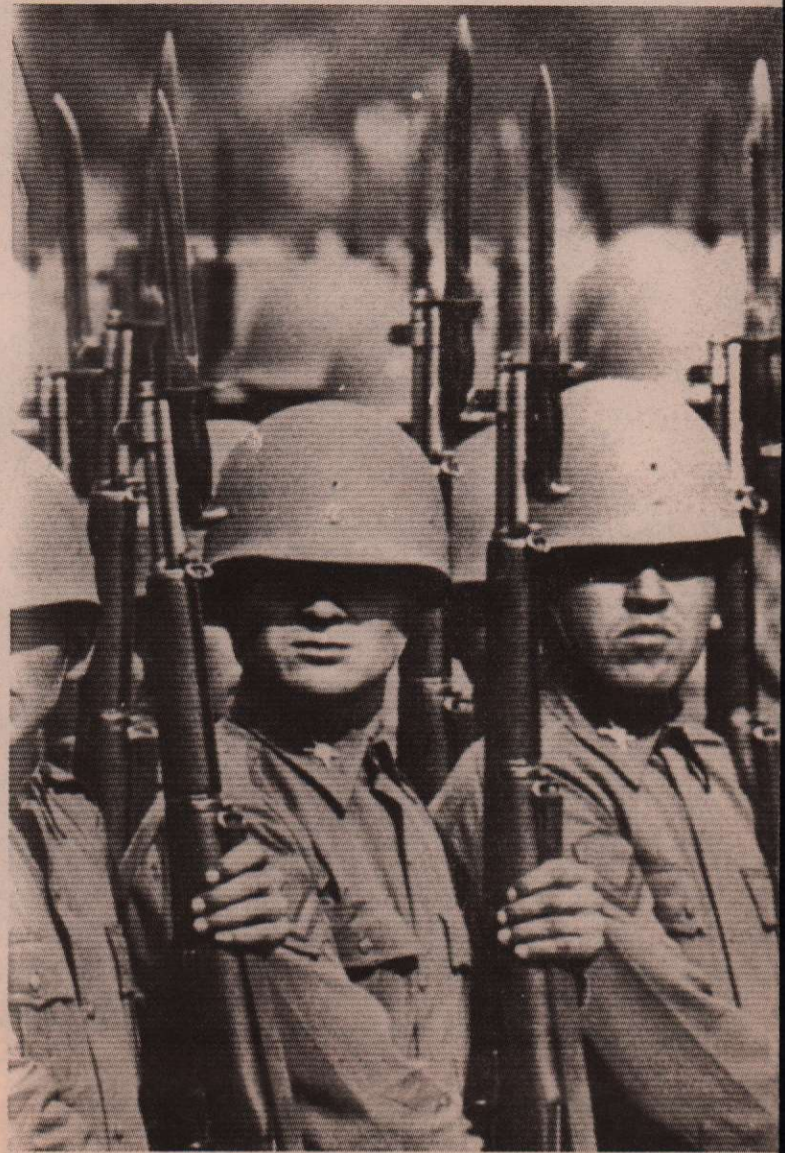
Not the British parliament but the IMF decided on the savage cuts introduced by the Labour Party champions of parliamentary democracy when they held power in 1976: when they had control of parliament, they accepted the IMF's dictates.

But there is a more basic criticism than this: bourgeois democracy is a chimera; it is not true, whatever the formalities, that the people can rule politically while the very rich own the means of production and dispose of all the power which their immense wealth brings them.

No less a person than the great scientist Albert Einstein, who was not a Marxist, as far as I know, truly summed up the class reality of bourgeois democracy in the following profound passage from an article he wrote in 1949:

"Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, [people] feel insecure, lonely and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labour — not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realise that the means of production — that is to say, the entire pro-



Chilean soldiers in parade: the military top brass in Salvador Allende's cabinet in 1973 didn't

ductive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods — may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production — although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labour power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker

'Bourgeois democracy is a chimera: it is not true, whatever the formalities, that the people can rule politically while the very rich own the means of production and dispose of all the power which their immense wealth brings them.'

produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labour contract is "free", what the worker receives is determined not by the value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labour power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labour encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy

of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights."

Tony Benn, 11 years a member of Labour governments in the '60s and '70s, governments supposedly in control of Britain, has summed up the state of British democracy thus:

"Despite all that is said about democracy and our traditional freedoms, the people of Britain have much less control over their destiny than they are led to believe...and a great deal less than they had a generation ago. In short, the powers which control our lives and our futures have become progressively more concentrated, more centralised, more internationalised, more secretive and less accountable.

The democracy of which we boast is becoming a decorous facade behind which those who have power exercise it for their own advantage and to the detriment of the public welfare."

Benn is especially concerned with the loss of British autonomy to the IMF and the EEC. But the following has nothing directly to do with Britain's position in the world:

"A hereditary House of Lords, topped up by the pliable recipients of prime ministerial patronage, still has great power to delay or obstruct the policies adopted by an elected House of Commons. It also has an unfettered veto, in law, to protect

IN PERSPECTIVE

Workers' dictatorship?

When Lenin here talks about "dictatorship" he means the rule of a class, not the rule of a Hitler or a Stalin. He sees "the dictatorship of the proletariat" as a great expansion of democracy. This is an abridged version of Lenin's "Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", adopted by the Founding Congress of the Communist International in March 1919

Faced with the growth of the revolutionary workers' movement in every country, the bourgeoisie and their agents in the workers' organisations are making desperate attempts to find ideological and political arguments in defence of the rule of the exploiters.

Condemnation of dictatorship and defence of democracy are particularly prominent among these arguments. The falsity and hypocrisy of this argument are obvious to all who refuse to betray the fundamental principles of socialism.

First, this argument employs the concepts of "democracy in general" and "dictatorship in general", without posing the question of the class concerned. This nonclass or above-class presentation, which supposedly is popular, is an outright travesty of the basic tenet of socialism, namely, its theory of class struggle. For in no civilised capitalist country does "democracy in general" exist. All that exists is bourgeois democracy, and it is not a question of "dictatorship in general", but of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, ie. the proletariat, over its oppressors and exploiters, ie. the bourgeoisie, in order to overcome the resistance offered by the exploiters in their fight to maintain their domination.

History teaches us that no oppressed class ever did, or could, achieve power without going through a period of dictatorship, ie. the conquest of political power and forcible suppression of the resistance always offered by the exploiters — a resistance that is most desperate, most furious, and that stops at nothing.

The bourgeoisie, whose domination is now defended by the Socialists who denounce "dictatorship in general" and extol "democracy in general", won power in the advanced countries through a series of insurrections, civil wars, and the forcible suppression of kings, feudal lords, slaveowners, and their attempts at restoration.

In books, pamphlets, congress resolutions, and propaganda speeches socialists everywhere have thousands and millions of times explained to the people the class nature of these bourgeois revolutions and this bourgeois dictatorship.

The most democratic bourgeois republic is no more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the working people by a handful of capitalists.

It was Marx who best appraised the historical significance of the [Paris] Commune [of 1871]. In his analysis, he revealed the exploiting nature of bourgeois democracy and the bourgeois parliamentary system under which the oppressed classes enjoy the right to decide once in several years which representative of the propertied classes shall "represent and suppress" the people in parliament.

The significance of the Commune, furthermore, lies in the fact that it endeavoured to crush, to smash to its very foundations, the bourgeois state apparatus, the bureaucratic, judicial, military, and police machine, and to replace it by a self-governing, mass workers' organisation in which there was no division between legislative and executive power. All contemporary bourgeois-democracy republics, including the German republic, which the traitors to socialism, in mockery of the truth, describe as a proletarian republic, retain this state apparatus. We therefore again get quite clear confirmation of the point that shouting in defence of "democracy in general" is actually defence of the bourgeoisie and their privileges as exploiters.

"Freedom of the press" is another of the principal slogans of "pure democracy". And here, too, the workers know — and socialists everywhere have admitted it millions of times — that this freedom is a deception while the best printing presses and the biggest stocks of paper are appropriated by the capitalists and while capitalist rule over the press

remains, a rule that is manifested throughout the world all the more strikingly, sharply, and cynically, the more democracy and the republican system are developed, as in America for example. The first thing to do to win real equality and genuine democracy for the working people, for the workers and peasants, is to deprive capital of the possibility of hiring writers, buying up publishing houses, and bribing newspapers. And to do that the capitalists and exploiters have to be overthrown and their resistance suppressed.

The capitalists have always used the term "freedom" to mean freedom for the rich to get richer and for the workers to starve to death.

In capitalist usage, freedom of the press means freedom of the rich to bribe the press, freedom to use their wealth to shape and fabricate so-called public opinion.

In this respect, too, the defenders of "pure democracy" prove to be defenders of an utterly foul and venal system that gives the rich control over the mass media. They prove to be deceivers of the people who, with the aid of plausible, fine-sounding, but thoroughly false phrases, divert them from the concrete historical task of liberating the press from capitalist enslavement.

Genuine freedom and equality will be embodied in the system which the communists are building and in which



Lenin

there will be no opportunity for amassing wealth at the expense of others, no objective opportunities for putting the press under the direct or indirect power of money, and no impediments in the way of any workingman (or groups of workingmen, in any numbers) for enjoying and practising equal rights in the use of public printing presses and public stocks of paper.

The imperialist war of 1914-18 conclusively revealed even to backward workers the true nature of bourgeois democracy, even in the freest republics, as being a dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Tens of millions were killed for the sake of enriching the German or the British group of millionaires and multimillionaires.

The main thing that [Reformist] Socialists fail to understand and that constitutes their shortsightedness in matters of theory, their subservience to bourgeois prejudices, and their political betrayal of the proletariat is that in capitalist society, whenever there is any serious aggravation of the class struggle intrinsic to that society, there can be no alternative but the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Dreams of some third way are reactionary, petty-bourgeois lamentations. That is borne out by more than a century of development of bourgeois democracy and the working class movement in all the advanced countries and notably by the experience of the past five years.

This is also borne out by the whole science of political economy, by the entire content of Marxism, which reveals the economic inevitability, wherever commodity economy prevails, of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie that can be replaced only by the class which the very growth of capitalism develops, multiplies, welds together, and strengthens, that is, the proletarian class.

Proletarian dictatorship is similar to the dictatorship of other classes in that it arises out of the need, as every other dictatorship does, to suppress forcibly

the resistance of the class that is losing its political sway. The fundamental distinction between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of other classes — landlord dictatorship in the Middle Ages and bourgeois dictatorship in all the civilised capitalist countries — consists in the fact that the dictatorship of the landowners and bourgeoisie was the forcible suppression of the resistance offered by the vast majority of the population, namely, the working people. In contrast, proletarian dictatorship is the forcible suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, ie. an insignificant minority of the population, the landowners and capitalists.

It follows that proletarian dictatorship must inevitably entail not only a change in democratic forms and institutions, generally speaking, but precisely such a change as provides an unparalleled extension of the actual enjoyment of democracy by those oppressed by capitalism — the toiling classes.

The substance of Soviet government is that the permanent and only foundations of state power, the entire machinery of state, is the mass-scale organisation of the classes oppressed by capitalism, ie. the workers and semiproletarians (peasants who do not exploit the labour of others and regularly resort to the sale of at least part of their own labour power). It is the people, who even in the most democratic bourgeois republics, while possessing equal rights by law, have in fact been debarred by thousands of devices and subterfuges from participation in political life and enjoyment of democratic rights and liberties, that are now drawn into constant and unending, moreover, decisive, participation in the democratic administration of the state.

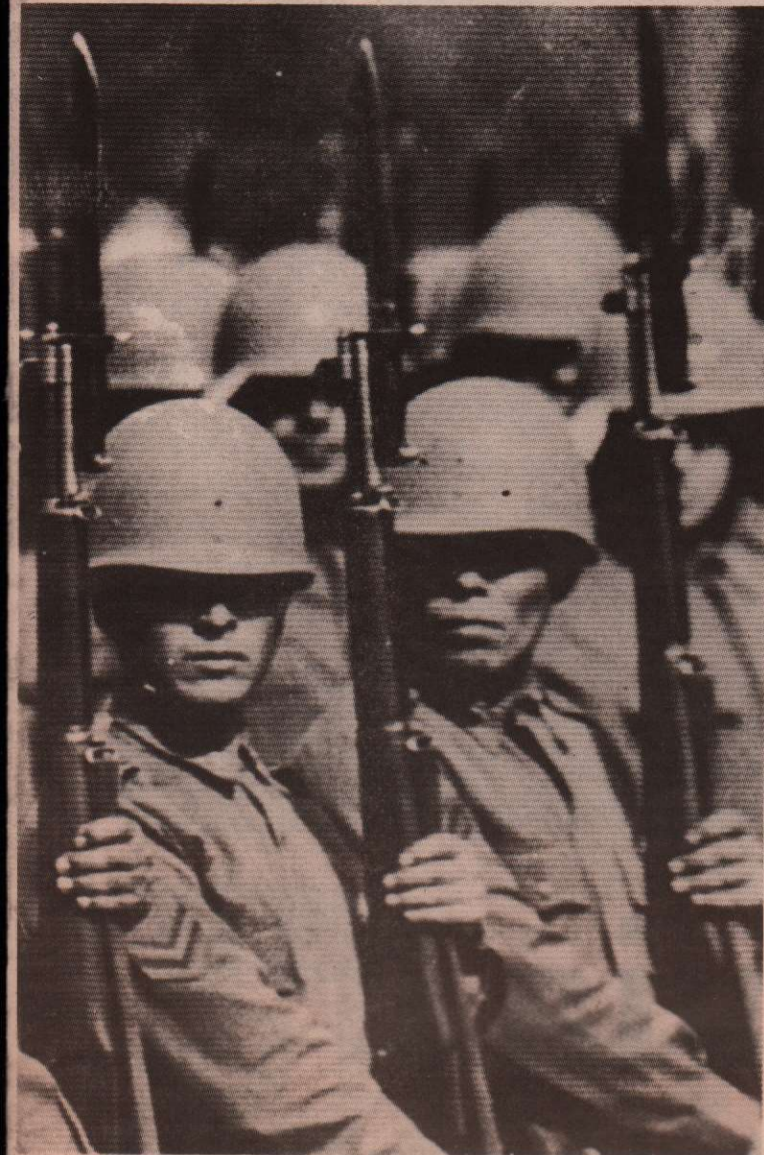
The old, ie. bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system were so organised that it was the mass of working people who were kept furthest away from the machinery of government. Soviet power, ie. the dictatorship of the proletariat, on the other hand, is so organised as to bring the working people close to the machinery of government. That, too, is the purpose of combining the legislative and executive authority under the soviet organisation of the state and of replacing territorial constituencies by production units — the factory.

The army was a machine of oppression under not only the monarchy. It remains as such in all bourgeois republics, even the most democratic ones. Only the soviets, the permanent organisations of government authority of the classes that were oppressed by capitalism, are in a position to destroy the army's subordination to bourgeois commanders and really merge the proletariat with the army; only the soviets can effectively arm the proletariat and disarm the bourgeoisie. Unless this is done, the victory of socialism is impossible.

Only the soviet organisation of the state can really effect the immediate breakup and total destruction of the old, ie. bourgeois, bureaucratic and judicial machinery, which has been, and has inevitably had to be, retained under capitalism even in the most democratic republics, and which is, in actual fact, the greatest obstacle to the practical implementation of democracy for the workers and the working people generally. The Paris Commune took the first epoch-making step along this path. The soviet system has taken the second.

Destruction of state power is the aim set by all socialists, including Marx above all. Genuine democracy, ie. liberty and equality, is unrealisable unless this aim is achieved. But its practical achievement is possible only through soviet, or proletarian democracy, for by enlisting the mass organisations of the working people in constant and unending participation in the administration of the state, it immediately begins to prepare the complete withering away of any state.

That proposal indicates the complete ideological bankruptcy of the theorists who defended democracy and failed to see its bourgeois character. This ludicrous attempt to combine the soviet system, ie. proletarian dictatorship, with the National Assembly, ie. bourgeois dictatorship, utterly exposes the paucity of thought of the Yellow Socialists and Social Democrats, their reactionary petty-bourgeois political outlook, and their cowardly concessions to the irresistibly growing strength of the new, proletarian democracy.



stop a fascist coup — they organised it!

itself from abolition."

The Crown still retains an unfettered legal authority to dismiss an elected government, dissolve an elected House of Commons, and precipitate a general election at any time it chooses. To do so it need only call upon its prerogative powers as used by the Governor General of Australia when the Labour government of Gough Whitlam was dismissed...

"All cabinet ministers derive their executive authority, in its legal sense, not from election as leaders of the majority party in the Commons, but as members of Her Majesty's Government, formed by the prime minister at the Crown's invitation...But the courts and the armed forces swear allegiance to the Crown and not to the elected government."

Though Benn's writings are of great value in opening the eyes of the broad labour movement to the realities behind the parliamentary facade, none of this is very startling to Marxists. For example, Trotsky wrote this in *Where is Britain Going?* in 1925:

"The royal power", declare the Labour Party leaders, "does not interfere" with the country's progress...The royal power is weak because the instrument of bourgeois rule is the bourgeois parliament, and because the bourgeoisie does not need any special activities outside of parliament. But in case of need, the bourgeoisie will make use of the royal power as a concentration of all non-parliamentary, ie. real forces, aimed against the working class."

Tony Benn sums up: "The democratic rights of the people can, in a crisis, be adjudicated to be illegal, thus legitimising the military in extinguishing them" (from 'Britain as a Colony', in *Arguments for Socialism*).

It is the ruling class who will threaten the democracy we have now. Read what Ian Gilmour, a former chair of the Tory Party, says:

"Conservatives do not worship democracy. For them majority rule is a device...Majorities do not always see where their best interests lie and then act upon that understanding. For Conservatives, therefore, democracy is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

"In Dr Hayek's words, democracy 'is not an ultimate or absolute value and must be judged by what it will achieve'. And if it is leading to an end that is undesirable or inconsistent with itself, then there is a theoretical case for ending it. 'Numbers in a state', said Burke, 'are always of consideration, but they are not the whole consideration'. In practice no alternative to majority rule exists, though it has to be used in conjunction with other devices."

Listen to the brutal truth expressed by Bonar Law, Tory leader during a Tory/landlord revolt against a Liberal government (and later a prime minister): "There are things stronger than parliamentary majorities".

On the eve of World War 1, sections of the British ruling class and the army, and the entire Tory party, raised a storm of revolt against the Liberal government's decision to give Ireland Home Rule. There was an officers' revolt in the British army in Ireland. They armed and drilled a large — Orange — private army (with German guns).

They succeeded. They forced the Liberal government to abandon its plan to solve Ireland's British problem by way of an all-Ireland Home Rule parliament. Eventually, partition and all that has flowed from it was the direct result of the Tory revolt. Listen to Bonar Law again: "We regard the government as a revolutionary committee which has seized upon despotic power by fraud. In our opposition to them we shall not be guided by the considerations or bound by the restraints which would influence us in an ordinary constitutional struggle...I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I should not be prepared to support them, and in which, in my belief, they would not be supported by the overwhelming majority of the British people."



Bulgarian troops and dead after an assault on a Turkish fort in the war of 1912

How Yugoslavia came into being

By Steven Holt

As fighting continues in Croatia, with over 300 people killed in the past month, and with EC-sponsored peace talks having recently failed, it is important to have some knowledge of the historical background to the conflicts now raging.

The various Slavic tribes — Slovenes, Croats and Serbs — migrated to what is now Yugoslavia around AD 500-700, displacing or assimilating the Roman settlers and the earlier extant ethnic groups.

A fairly large and centralised Croatian kingdom was important from around 925 until 1102, when it was absorbed by Hungary, under the control of which state it remained for over 800 years. Bosnia existed as an independent kingdom from 1180 to 1254, before being absorbed by Hungary.

A Serbian state was established in 1168; at its most powerful it became an empire covering the areas of modern-day Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albanian and the northern half of Greece.

The Ottoman Turkish invasion of Europe resulted in the battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1389, at which the Serbs were defeated and subjugated under Turkish rule for nearly 500 years. Following this victory, the Turks were able to occupy Bosnia (1463), Hercegovina (1482), Montenegro (1499) and much of Croatia (1526) (but not Zagreb).

The coastal strip, Dalmatia, came under the control of Venice until 1797, when it was annexed by the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1809 Napoleon annexed Dalmatia, Slovenia and part of Croatia, but this area returned to Hapsburg control in 1813. Throughout the Turkish occupation, Montenegrin guerrilla forces

resisted from bases in the mountains that were inaccessible to the occupying forces.

A Serbian national uprising against the Turks managed to hold Belgrade from 1804 to 1813, and in 1815 another Serb uprising forced the Turks to grant a large measure of autonomy.

In the 1870s Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, helped by Tsarist Russia, fought against Turkey to support uprisings in Bosnia-Hercegovina and elsewhere. In 1878 this led to Serbia and Montenegro being recognised as fully independent states, whilst Bosnia-Hercegovina came under military occupation by Austria-Hungary. This caused resentment in Serbia, whose Pan-Slavists wanted to unite all the Slav peoples under Serbian control.

In 1908 Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina, inflaming nationalist feeling in Serbia. In the Balkan wars of 1912 (against Turkey) and 1913 (against Bulgaria), Serbia gained Macedonia and what is now Southern Serbia.

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated by Bosnian nationalists, whose cause was supported by Serbia. The subsequent Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia led directly to the outbreak of the First World War. After three attempts at invasion by Austria-Hungary, Serbia was finally occupied, but the survivors from the Serbian army fought on throughout the war.

The First World War ended with defeat for all Serbia's enemies — Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey. In 1918 Serbia was able to establish the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes", which incorporated Montenegro also, in addition to the former Serb territory and areas previously in Austria-Hungary. In the Treaty of Rapallo (1920), some of the coastal areas of Dalmatia came under Italian con-

trol.

The newly established state was unpopular right from the start, the main antagonism being that between the Croats, who argued for regional autonomy, and the Serbian ruling class, whose aim was a Greater Serb state (which in practice was repressive to all nationalities, including the Serbs). Croatian nationalists in exile formed the Ustase movement, led by Ante Pavelić. The Italian fascist leader Mussolini funded the Ustasi, and they later ran a pro-Nazi state whose atrocities at least equalled those of Hitler in Germany, Antonescu in Romania and Szálasi in Hungary.

The Yugoslav Communist Party, which was growing in support among the peasants and the numerically small working class, was banned in 1921 and many of its leaders were imprisoned. Following the assassination of the Croat Peasant Party leader Stefan Radić in 1928, a Croat national assembly started agitation for independence. King Alexander responded to this by establishing a dictatorship in 1929 over the country now named Yugoslavia (country of the Southern Slavs). Some attempts were made from 1931 to 1939 to placate Croatian nationalism, but the Yugoslav state remained essentially under Serbian control.

In 1941 the Yugoslav government gave in to German demands to sign a treaty allowing German troops free passage through Yugoslav territory. This enraged Serbian extreme nationalist army officers, who staged a coup on March 27th. This led to an invasion of Yugoslavia by Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, plus the Italian puppet-state Albania.

Yugoslavia was ill-equipped to resist this invasion from all sides, having an obsolete air force and few tanks, most of which were out of

date. The invasion was also assisted by Ustasi guerrillas, and many army officers who were members of the Ustase or Ljotić (the Serb fascist movement) readily surrendered their troops.

Much of the Yugoslav territory was annexed by the invading states: Slovenia (where there were large numbers of ethnic Germans and Italians) was divided between Germany and Italy; Italy also took much of Dalmatia and re-established Montenegro as a puppet-state; Albania was enlarged; Bulgaria took Macedonia and part of Serbia; Hungary took the Banat and other areas with a large Hungarian population. Croatia became an independent fascist state (whose army fought at Stalingrad and elsewhere) while the remnant of Serbia became a puppet state under German military administration.

Severe repression was practiced in all these areas, and resistance to occupation grew to a level only equalled by Greece, Poland and parts of the USSR. There were several resistance movements, the most important being Tito's Partisans, who operated throughout Yugoslavia with a loose command structure allowing autonomy to regional forces.

In 1942 the Montenegrin Partisans led by Milovan Djilas temporarily liberated Montenegro, but were eventually defeated by Italian and Albanian forces. By 1944 much of Yugoslavia was under Partisan control and Tito was recognised (reluctantly) even by Churchill (as opposed to the situation in Greece, where British troops invaded to crush the Communist administration after the Germans had evacuated Greece).

Another resistance group was led by Draza Mihailović, whose Cetniks were Serb nationalists who fought the Partisans as well as the occupying forces. Contrary to current propaganda from Milosević,

many Croats fought against the fascists, in the Partisans, and also the Croat Peasant Party.

After the Second World War, the 1918 borders were re-established, with the addition of the coastal ports formerly under Italian rule. The port of Trieste, against Yugoslav wishes, was allocated to Italy in 1954.

Under Tito, the various regions and nationalities (with the exception of the Germans, who were brutally expelled, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe) were granted a large degree of autonomy and inter-communal tensions decreased.

The recent resurgence of nationalist hatreds has an economic basis in the relative wealth of Slovenia, Croatia and Vojvodina and the relative impoverishment of the rest, but has been greatly exacerbated by the media; initially the state-controlled Belgrade press and television, and the other republics have responded.

Of the main Yugoslav languages, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Macedonian are very similar. Other languages spoken include Slovenian, Bulgarian and non-Slavic languages (Albanian in Kosovo, around one million people; Hungarian in Vojvodina and Slavonia, around half a million people; with smaller numbers speaking Italian, Romanian and Turkish). Religion is divided between Catholics (Croats), Muslims (Bosnians, Albanians and some areas of Serbia) and Orthodox Christians (Serbia and other southern areas).

The nationalists in Belgrade, Zagreb and elsewhere have stirred up hatred by emphasising the linguistic, religious and cultural differences between the various communities. Socialists should argue for the common interests of the working class people of all the communities.



Former dictator Tito



Robin Hood (Kevin Costner) and Little John (Nick Brimble) in a fight for supremacy

Two poems by Bertolt Brecht

REPORT FROM GERMANY

We learn that in Germany
In the days of the brown plague
On the roof of an engineering
works suddenly
A red flag fluttered in the
November wind
The outlawed flag of freedom!
In the grey mid-November from
the sky
Fell rain mixed with snow
It was the 7th, though: day of
the Revolution!

And look! the red flag!

The workers stand in the yards
Shield their eyes with their
hands and stare
At the roof through the flurries
of icy rain.

Then lorries roll up filled with
stormtroopers
And they drive to the wall any
who wear work clothes
And with cords bind any fists
that are calloused
And from the sheds after their
interrogation
Stumble the beaten and bloody
Not one of whom has named
the man
Who was on the roof.

So they drive away those who
kept silent
And the rest have had enough.
But next day there waves again
The red flag of the proletariat
On the engineering works roof.

Again
Through the dead-still
town
The stormtroopers' tread. In
the yards
There are no men to be seen
now. Only women
Stand with stony faces; hands
shielding their eyes, they gaze
At the roof through the flurries
of icy rain.

And the beatings begin once
more. Under interrogation
The women testify: that flag
Is a bedsheet in which
We bore away one who died
yesterday.
You can't blame us for the
colour it is.
It is red with the murdered
man's blood, you should
know.

THE LAST WISH

In Altona, when they raided the
working-class districts
They caught four of our people.
For their execution
Seventy-five were dragged along
to watch.
This is what they saw: the
youngest, a big chap, when
asked
His last wish (in line with
standard procedure)
Drily said he wanted once more
to stretch his limbs.
Freed from his bonds, he
stretched and with both fists
Hit the Nazi commander on the
chin
With all his strength. After
which they strapped him
To the narrow board, face
upwards, and cut
His head off.



January 1933: Hitler comes to power because the German working class movement did not mobilise its united strength to defeat him.

A right-on Robin

Cinema

Tony Brown reviews "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves"

Robin Hood is both in the tradition of, and a departure from, earlier portrayals of the 12th century outlaw of Sherwood Forest.

There are no real surprises which is only to be expected. What is interesting is that this version is rooted in the 1990s.

From the very first scenes in the Jerusalem dungeon to the final flower-child wedding in the forest,

what we get is a modern, political/psychological, right-on, anti-authoritarian play.

For a film-maker, myths both constrict and allow great freedom. The basic storyline has to be told, but that story is so widely applicable that it can be moulded to explore new ideas.

Certainly Errol Flynn didn't need to take account of a feminist Lady Marian. Indeed, in the 1930s she was Maid Marian — perhaps a different translation from the original? Richard Greene relied on his own wits and made do without a black Moor as his right hand man.

And neither Flynn nor Greene gave a second thought that their noble origin should be questioned

as something that artificially separated them from their salt of the earth comrades.

But in between sword-fights, derring do, romance and oppressive plunder by the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, we reflect on these and other important questions.

Returning from the Crusades to find his father murdered and his lands stolen, Robin is outlawed after defending a young boy who has stolen a deer from the loathsome Guy of Gisborne.

Forced to flee into Sherwood Forest he encounters a rag-tag bunch led by Little John, who he beats in a quarterstaff fight, and eventually stays to lead the men in their fight against injustice, official

pillage and a heavily regressive tax system.

Robin considers the Crusades wrong, an adventure against the Muslims that should never have been waged. Through his experience he has become an anti-militarist, though not a pacifist. He embraces Azeem, his fellow escapee, as an equal and discovers from his wisdom, new technology and a new form of birth delivery (I told you this was a modern interpretation).

The core of the Robin Hood myth remains the same — a simple fight back against oppression. It is necessary to take from the rich to redistribute to the poor in order to right the wrong. It is a simple evocation of socialism.

In order to make the point crystal clear, the oppressor — the Sheriff of Nottingham — is drawn as heartless, tyrannical and blood-thirsty, and Alan Rickman (the Germanic terrorist leader of Die Hard I) gives us a very camp, satanical Sheriff.

I was reminded of Neil Kinnock who, only days earlier, had said that 'the Labour Party does not and never will support breaking the law'. At the time I wondered about his attitude to those who had refused conscription to fight in Vietnam.

But as I sat in the Enfield Cannon, I realised that Kinnock would have supported the Sheriff of Nottingham and called for a stiff sentence for Robin before expelling him from the Sherwood branch.

Forget the mean-spirited criticism of Kevin Costner's accent and instead enjoy the garrulous bon viveur Friar Tuck, the tormented Will Scarlett, the fat, corrupt Bishop and the heroic Little John. And there is of course the romance between a newly-assertive Lady Marian and a sensitive Robin.

It's all there, including a woman cameo King Richard who suddenly appears so he can give Marian away (well, it's not all new-age) typifying the good humour of the film.

An antidote to Neighbours stereotyping

Revenge but no answers

Television

By Belinda Weaver

Shame (two weeks ago, Channel 4) provided an antidote to the Neighbours Australian fantasy.

In this small Western Australian town, the neighbours were either rapists or apologists for rapists.

The double standard was alive and well. Boys forcing girls to have sex were just "having fun"; the girls were sluts for not having avoided gang-rape.

In this blame-the-victim town, women were too afraid to lay charges. One woman who tried was laughed out of the police station.

Economic pressure was also used to shut women up. One of the rapists was a boy whose family owned the local meatworks, the biggest — practically the only — employer in town. Any girl complaining would never work again.

Then into town came Asta, an independent, motor-bike-riding lawyer, who met and felt sorry for Lizzie, the latest young victim of rape.

Asta had a fine line in quips. When one of the local yobs, affronted by her jeans, asked her whether she had a dress, she replied, "Yes, but not in your size." Unlike most women in town, she took the piss out of the guys, making them look foolish.

Predictably, they tried to get their revenge by attacking and raping her, but she defended herself and got away. Her example made the other women in town decide to join

forces to end the conspiracy of fear.

If ever a set of women needed to learn to fight back, it was these women, their whole lives fenced in by fear — fear of rape, fear of the stigma of rape.

But "Shame" didn't really provide answers for them. At the end, they joined up and were pressuring the police for action, but only after Asta had stirred them up. Had she never turned up, they'd probably have gone on as they were, miserable, angry, but resigned.

Asta was like some superwoman — articulate, forceful, game, able to defend herself against a gang of men, schooled in the law. How many women could live up to that? "Shame" was a different kind of fantasy, but a fantasy all the same, a feminist revenge fantasy that didn't tackle why rape happens, but merely kneed the rapists in the balls.

'Freedom of choice' ignores the reality of power

The case for censoring pornography

Pornography consists of images that say: women are like this, sex is like this. Pornography presents unreal images of women and their sexuality (and men's sexuality for that matter).

It degrades sex as well as degrading women.

Our sexuality as women is kept under more repressive social control than men's — though ultimately both men and women and the relationships between them suffer as a consequence of this inequality. Given this unequal power structure it is of crucial importance that women have positive images of sex and their own sexuality to counteract the narrow role defined for them by bourgeois patriarchy.

Women are not intimidated by explicit sexual images or descriptions of sexual fantasies. But we are threatened by images that presume a sexist ordering of society.

By re-presenting men's power over women in images of women as all-desirable, all-available, ever responsive to men, in short, public property for the use of men, pornography reinforces the status quo and keeps women "in their place".

But real women are not like this, sex is not like this. To be critical of the way sex is represented in por-

nographic images is not to be anti-sex.

Censorship of pornography is criticised by those who see it as attacking the problem of sexism at the wrong place — ie. attacking the symptom, not the cause — and consequently unworkable.

And some see censorship of pornography as opening the way for the abuse of state power against minority groups.

These criticisms are important and must be taken seriously, but neither of these criticisms is conclusive against restricting pornography by law.

The question of censorship goes wider than the law. A sexist society censors women's expression of themselves — their free choice and their sexuality.

We already have censorship, both of this kind and in the interpretation of obscenity and indecency in law; these are usually interpreted in a sexist and heterosexist way in order to make judgements on, and penalise, those who "deviate" from the so-called norm.

Much freedom for women could be gained by legislation to restrict pornography, although ultimately the removal of all sexist images (pornographic or not) will only happen when we have created a non-sexist society. Pornography is a symptom, yes: a symptom that rein-



By Maria Exall

forces men's control over women's environment, a symptom of our hypocritical society that is happier with negative, furtive, "not-in-front-of-the-children" notions of sexuality than any open expressions of sexuality that show the variety of human sexual being.

Banning sexist images does not create a non-sexist society, but we should be aware of too simplistic a dismissal of the challenge to a propaganda fight.

Pornography has a place in the system of ideas and culture arising from an exploitative society. An ideological challenge is not mere abstract speculation, but is a struggle to win over people's understanding.

In other areas, the fact

that we are only attacking the symptom not the cause is no argument against legislation, neither is the fact that the aim of the legislation is unworkable.

Health and safety legislation is unworkable in practice in a capitalist economic system. Capitalism is the cause, unsafe working practices are the symptom, but attacking the symptoms has improved the health and safety of workers.

What about the argument that any legislation will lead to power being used against such groups as lesbians and gay men?

It is undoubtedly true that police will pursue with greater vigour any infringements by lesbians and gay men of any law.

Already lesbian and gay writings are seized and obscenity laws are applied to ludicrous situations.

What this means is that any legislation must protect the rights of lesbians and gay men to express their sexuality. We are socialists and not anarchists. We believe that the law can be used as a tool to seek concessions from capitalism and a way of building for socialism.

If pornography is about sex — defining it in such a way as to maintain unequal power relations — then lesbians and gay men have little to gain from a society that gives licence to the proliferation of pornography.

The experience of liberalisation and deregulation in the 1980s has been that it has increased the power of the already powerful against those who had a small amount of power. There is no guarantee that increased liberalising of pornography legislation will be beneficial to lesbians and gays.

A small market in images that show a variety of sexual experiences and question sexual orthodoxy may be encouraged, but the mass marketing of blatant heterosexual images will be the more significant result.

The danger of handing the state legislative power to censor certain images is that the harmful negative images we wish to see removed will not be the same ones that much of the bourgeois establishment and popular prejudice wish to act against.

This is not an argument against legislation. It is an argument against legislation that has no safeguards for lesbians and gay men.

The liberal bourgeois ideal that we should all be free to choose what we wish that does not harm others is very similar to the Tory rhetoric of individuals competing as free agents harmonizing in the free market. It totally ignores the political realities of economic power in the situation.

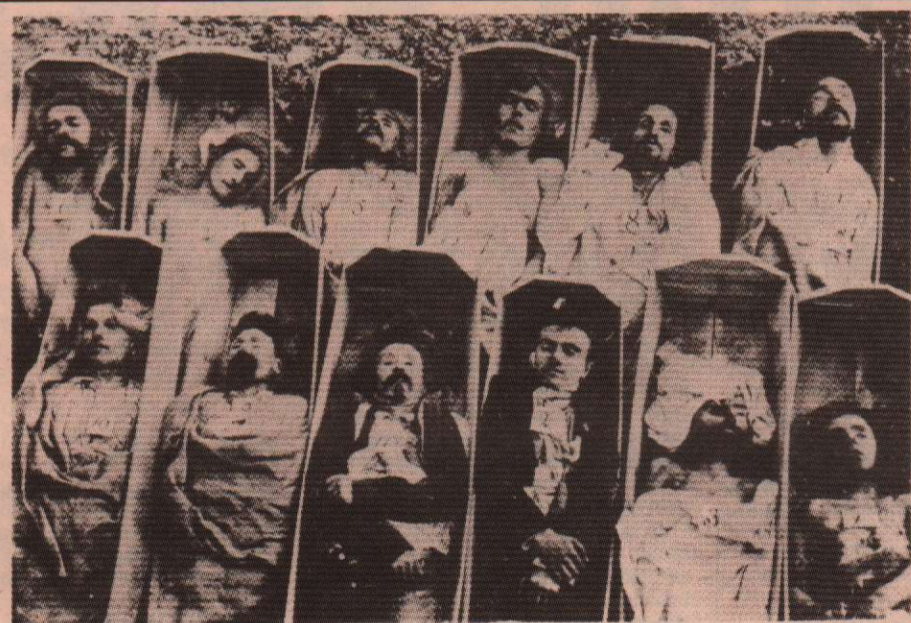
There is a danger that by advocating no censorship we go along with an individualistic libertarian ethic that has no place in a socialist society. The sort of freedom that we as socialists should be about is less to do with "free choice" and more to do with access to free choice.

In our present society free choice means free choice for some at the expense of others. To ignore the power relations between men and women when considering restrictions on free choice is to ignore political realities. In order to be free to choose, we have to control our own lives. For women to be free to choose we must have control and this means being free from being controlled.

Our sexuality is kept repressed: to be free from negative images of sex and sexuality especially at a time of vulnerability such as childhood is surely a prerequisite to growing up free to choose.

As socialists we support working people taking control — not just putting up with how things are.

When working class men and women take a stand and say they are not putting up with being exploited or degraded, we support them. When women take a stand against pornography because it exploits and degrades them, we must support them.



'1871': confused and obscure

I think that Steven Holt was a little too uncritical of 1871 in his review in last week's *SO* (493). Engels claimed the Paris Commune of 1871 as the first dictatorship of the proletariat.

While only shortlived it demonstrated that workers could seize power in their own name and in their own interests and create a new, better society. It is undoubtedly one of the most important events of the last 150 years.

Its savage repression by the French army, in which over 30,000 men and women were systematically murdered in only seven days, demonstrated the extraordinarily brutal and blood-

thirsty means that the ruling class were prepared to adopt in order to defend their rule.

The Catholic Church built the magnificent Sacre Coeur as a monument to the soldiers who butchered the Communards.

It's a tragedy then that Ken McMullen's 1871 is such a confused, deliberately obscure attempt to capture the spirit of Paris in the period leading up to the revolution.

The action predominantly focuses on a small theatre company, but the film's non-naturalistic style and slow pace make for difficult viewing.

McMullen couldn't really have wanted a wide audience for 1871 as it is virtually impossible to understand unless one has the most intimate

knowledge of the individuals of the time. No attempt is made to set the scene, to introduce the characters or explain their role in the events.

It is not until the final scene when the company sings the Internationale that any life is displayed.

Don't, however, ignore all of McMullen's films. His previous movie, *Zina*, about Trotsky's daughter who committed suicide in Berlin as the Nazis came to power, is a rich and moving film about psychoanalysis, fascism, Trotskyism and father/daughter relationships.

But if it's the Commune you are interested in, buy Marx's *The Civil War in France*, it's a much better investment.

Tony Bruce
North London

The issue is independence for Croatia and Slovenia

Socialists should argue for the retention of a loose federal Yugoslavia," states Steven Holt in *SO* 493. The main problem with this formulation is that it fails to answer the key question — should Croatia and Slovenia be allowed to form independent states?

Socialists generally are in favour of the widest level of unity of peoples in a state. "Other conditions being equal, the class conscious proletariat will always stand for the larger state", was how Lenin summed it up.

This general principle means that socialists would not have advocated the break up of Yugoslavia. However, events have moved on in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is breaking up before our eyes.

While we would not have advocated Slovene and Croatian separatism, clear majorities in both nations want to secede and form independent nation states.

Socialists, while wanting to see larger states, also put forward a clear principle of defending the right of nations to self-determination. Lenin stated: "It would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state".

The right of nations to self-determination is not confined to big nations, "progressive" nations, good nations, or op-

pressed nations. A consistent democratic and socialist national policy is based on the right of all nations to self-determination.

Croatia and Slovenia have voted overwhelmingly in referendums to secede from

Yugoslavia. Socialists should defend their right to separate.

We must be in favour of Slovenia and Croatia being allowed to form independent nation states.

Tony Dale
Manchester

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 8 August

"Women's Liberation": SW London SO meeting. Speaker: Cath Crosby. 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall
"Socialists and the General Election": Hull SO meeting. Speaker: Ruth Cockcroft. 7.30, Queens Pub

Saturday 10 August

Course on Marxist economics. Speaker: Martin Thomas. Hosted by Manchester SO. 11.00-5.00, Manchester Town Hall
Left Unity Dayschool, Newcastle. More details from Nick: 091-284 6347

Sunday 11 August

South Africa Women's Day. 3.00, Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre

Monday 12 August

"Socialists and Democracy", Manchester SO meeting. Speaker: Dan Judelson. 8.00, Manchester Town Hall

Wednesday 14 August

"Israel-Palestine: what solution?", London SO Forum. Debate between Tony Greenstein ('Return') and John

O'Mahony (editor: Socialist Organiser). 7.30, Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road

Thursday 15 August

"Socialism and Democracy", Glasgow SO meeting. 7.30, City Hall
"Socialism and Democracy", Brighton SO meeting. Details: Garry on 0273-694251

Sunday 18 August

March against racism. 2.00, meet at mosque and cultural centre, Gladstone Street, Nottingham

Monday 19 August

"Socialists and the Labour Party", Southwark SO meeting. Speaker: Vincent Brown. 7.30, Two Eagles, Elephant & Castle

Wednesday 28 August

"The Politics of Identity", SO London Forum. 7.30, Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road

Saturday 7 September

Socialists for Labour Conference. Sheffield University. More details from Cate Murphy on 071-277 7217

INDUSTRIAL

Workers offered 7.3% Chairman gets 43% Telecom workers: vote yes for action!

By a Central London BT engineer

Next week (12 August) the National Communications Union starts balloting on the offer from BT of a 7.3% pay rise for 1991.

The executive is recommending acceptance of this offer, and is calling for a "no" vote for strike action.

Many branches, however, feel the offer is wholly inadequate (conference in June decided on a claim of 15%) and are recommending that their membership do not accept the offer and vote

to take action for a better deal. There is widespread feeling that 7.3% is an insult to us as workers in a highly profitable industry which can afford to pay its chairman a 43% rise and its shareholders over 12%.

This state of affairs is typical of the situation in the years since privatisation. Since then the increase in our wages has been 155% whilst the increase in shareholders' dividend has been 249%.

This year it is crucially important that we make a stand. A vote for action over pay will strengthen the union in the fight to defend jobs as well. What is at stake is the massive selling off of working people's jobs in BT.

Are we really going to roll over and play dead while BT hit us with firstly, a pathetic pay rise

that will not improve our standard of living, and secondly, with more redundancies?

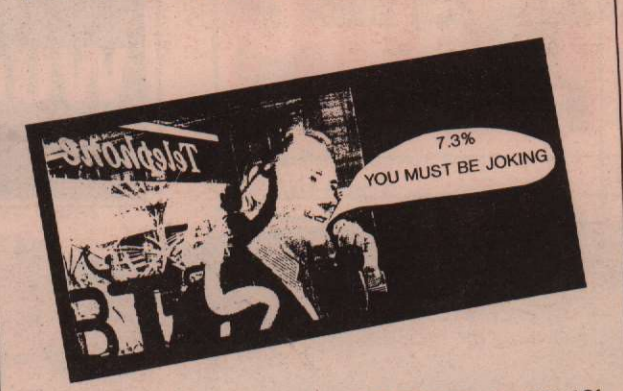
The increase in BT's wage bill this year will be well under the rate of inflation (estimates are a mere 1.5%) due to the large numbers of jobs shed.

We allowed 19,000 of our colleagues' jobs to go last year and BT's plan for this year is 11,000. Management's ruthless plan for our industry promises nothing for the workers and very little for our customers.

Our answer to redundancies should be to campaign for a long-overdue shorter working week of 32 hours (4 days) and an end to selling jobs. We must start now — reject the pathetic 7.3%.

Vote no to 7.3% and yes for action!

1991 PAY BALLOT



*CHAIRMAN = 43% *DIRECTORS = 23.4% PROFITS = 14.2% *SHAREHOLDERS = 12.7%

7.3% DON'T YOU DESERVE MORE TOO?
WESTMINSTER BRANCH RECOMMENDS THAT YOU REJECT THE OFFER AND VOTE YES TO ACTION FOR A FAIRER DEAL.

The left branches are campaigning for a no vote

Setback in Liverpool

By Dale Street

The fight to prevent the imposition of compulsory redundancies by Liverpool City Council suffered a major setback last week when members of the GMB voted against strike action.

A ballot of 1700 GMB members resulted in 63% of those who returned their ballot papers voting against strike action, and 55% against other in-

dustrial action short of strike action.

Reasons given by GMB members for the outcome of the ballot include:

- The "points" system, under which workers who take strike action are "awarded" points and are thereby more likely to lose their jobs in a future wave of redundancies;

- The fear of private contractors being brought in to do their work if they go on strike, thus undermining the impact of the strike;

- Financial problems from previous industrial action, and fear of further financial problems in the event of extended industrial action;

- Demoralisation with a dispute which has already lasted 3½ months and which, as far as many council workers were concerned, was increasingly lacking a sense of direction.

1,000 members of NALGO remain on strike, and NALGO leaders have pledged that they will remain on strike until redundant NALGO members are reinstated.

But the belief that local NALGO leaders will use the GMB ballot result as a pretext to end industrial action is not confined to hardened cynics. On more than one occasion NALGO has already dragged its feet in this dispute.

The council will regard the GMB ballot result as a green light for a further batch of redundancies. The result was announced last Thursday (1 August) and the Labour Group is already considering further job losses at the time of writing.

Last week also saw the City Council get its pay-off from the government, when Liverpool was named as one of the eleven councils to receive money from the Tories' "City Challenge" scheme.

The document submitted by Labour Group leader Harry Rimmer (which many members of the Labour Group were not allowed to see) in support of Liverpool's bid for money proposed a series of tourist-oriented renovation projects for the eastern part of the city centre.

Lewisham NALGO strike ballot

By Liz Dickinson, Lewisham NALGO

At a recent branch meeting a motion was overwhelmingly carried to ballot members for 2 and 3 day strikes in September.

The motion followed on from two moderately successful one-day strikes in July against the council's compulsory redundancy policy, in solidarity with other council unions.

Lewisham council's new redeployment procedure now means that any worker who is made a redeployee faces the prospect of compulsory redundancy after three months.

Lewisham has already cut back on vital services, and an autumn of discontent is in the offing, with the forthcoming social services "policy review" in October — a euphemism for more cuts, job losses and compulsory redundancies.

All this from a local authority which prides itself on being a "flagship of Labour authorities".

The only members to vote against a ballot were three SWP members who, in true SWP democratic fashion, wanted to call strikes without one!

CPSA ballot

By Mark Serwotka, Chair Rotherham DSS

Four weeks after the left won a majority on the DHSS Section Executive of the CPSA, they are still to be allowed to take up office.

An 18-9 left wing majority was revealed 4 weeks ago, but in a last ditch effort by the right wing to cling onto power, a private balloting firm has been called in to recount the votes. This is a clear attempt to stall for time while efforts are made to invent

an excuse to invalidate the original result. Every passing week makes this easier for the right wing.

To date, protest letters from branches and members have been greeted by the a one line response from Marian Chambers to the effect that she was looking into it.

We cannot allow the right wing to get away with this. Activists must ensure that hundreds of protests are sent into Union HQ. All members' meetings must be called and resolutions passed condemning the leadership's complete dishonesty.

London DSS branches should be looking to call a lobby of the Union's HQ on the issue

The Keith Harvey case — a tremendous victory!

By Steve Price, Branch Secretary, DHSS South Staffs

Keith Harvey, a Registered Disabled CPSPA member from Smethwick office recently sacked by "caring" DSS management has won his job back.

It was great news for Keith, a 31 year old counter-clerk who has worked for the Department since 1986. It was a great victory for the union (and its members) who fought his case all the way.

It was a defeat for the Department which pays out benefit to the sick and disabled yet cannot even meet its minimum 3% quota for employing disabled staff. Is it any wonder when they treat the disabled so badly?

Keith is a chronic asthmatic who has been absent for approximately one year out of the five he has been employed (6 months of this occurred in one spell). In effect, he has been on permanent probation since he started.

At the end of five years, management reviewed his position and, although his health had improved over the last year, he was given notice of dismissal from 30th June. After discussion with his union reps, he decided to appeal.

Keith's brave struggle with his asthmatic condition has won the

Asthmatic clerk wins job back

An asthmatic social security clerk has won his job back after being sacked for taking too much time off sick.

Mr Keith Harvey, who was employed at the Smethwick office under the department's equal opportunities policy, was dismissed "for his own good" — "because of his asthma".

He said: "It's just great — it's like a load weight off my shoulders!"

Mr Harvey had won the backing of the Civil and Public Services Association, which took his case up at national level.

admiration of his colleagues.

They have seen him drag himself to work when he should have been off sick. Many times. This was partly because he has been so desperate to hold onto his job; it was also due to financial necessity as he had exhausted his paid sick leave and was therefore not being paid when off work. They also respected him because he did a good job on reception and management never found fault with the quality of his work.

Keith desperately wanted to win this appeal; he has had his house repossessed and the Disablement Register Officer made it quite clear that if he was sacked, his future job prospects would be negligible.

Keith's final working day was to be the 28th June. Local reps built up quite a campaign in the days and weeks leading up to that date; petitions went around a number of local offices, the local media were involved including local radio, three Labour MPs and the major disability organisations were contacted. The most significant day was Wednesday 26th when a meeting of CPSPA, NUCPS and even non-members was held. Over 100 people crammed into the canteen and the message was clear; his

colleagues were with him all the way.

On the 27th we met again and it was decided to demand Keith be kept on pending his appeal. Under threat of strike action, management "wholly exceptionally" backed down and gave him another 3 weeks. Staff decided to work to rule and boycott management's "caring for staff" group pending the appeal. National Officer Doug Murdoch was handling Keith's appeal. He was supportive though not directly involved in most of the activity. District Manager, Gary Clifford, is one of the new breed of Benefits Agency managers and he showed little interest in Keith's case.

On the 12th of July, we were told that Keith had won his fight. He was very emotional: "I just can't believe it... the best day of my week, month, year...". Members were equally affected. But they were also concerned to see the small print of Keith's new contract and decided unanimously to continue the work to rule until he gets the right terms.

Keith suffers from asthma, a very common complaint. He suffers very severely. In our view, the Department have contributed to Keith's condition; for five years he has had no job security, has been subjected to continuous health monitoring, and asthma is a condition that is very much affected by stress. It is also a condition that fluctuates over time and there have been periods when Keith has been very poorly and others when he has been relatively well. For these reasons, he needs a contract that provides proper job security but allows flexibility in when he can attend. We want Keith to be allowed to work when he is able — which is most of the time — without his feeling under pressure to come into work when he is poorly.

Keith's new contract will break new ground for disabled workers; in turn it is hoped that any gain Keith makes will benefit others. Members at Smethwick Office will accept nothing less. But there are other injustices suffered by disabled workers and the Agency's fine words about "equal opportunities" and "caring for staff" have to be judged by their actions. And they are found seriously wanting. Let there be no illusions: Keith Harvey was sacked and the union got him his job back!



Keith Harvey

London DSS branches should be looking to call a lobby of the Union's HQ on the issue

British Timken pay freeze — daylight robbery

By an AEU member

While top managers in British industry have awarded themselves such massive wage rises that it even makes the tabloids squeak, British Timken management have announced on Tuesday 16 July that there would be a pay freeze for workers.

It was nicely timed: just before the factory fortnight.

Timken is using the recession as an excuse to attack union organisation at its Duxton plant. They hope that the workers will accept their dictates passively, and be cowed by the prospects of more job cuts in the period ahead.

Nothing is ever guaranteed, of course, but if the strike vote to defend shop steward Pat Markey

from being sacked had been 58 to 38 in favour instead of against strike action; if there had been a concerted fight over the last round of redundancies — who knows? Maybe Timken wouldn't have felt so confident about imposing a wage freeze now.

Timken is spending millions on the modernisation programme at Duxton. So the bosses must be pretty confident of future production there. The reality is that the bosses are expecting the workers to pay for the economic mess, not of our, but of their making.

They expect us, who day in and day out, morning, afternoon and night, work in sometimes shifting conditions, who produce products which rake in fortunes for the bosses; to, in effect, take a pay cut in real terms because their profits are being squeezed.

Again, we should say, loudly and clearly: "on yer bike!"

Support the Camden social workers

2 striking Camden social workers talked to SO about their dispute

The dispute is about additional responsibilities that social workers were undertaking with the new legislation... we've been out since 23rd May and on 4th June we were balloted and the result was unanimous — 76% of an 81% return of ballot. So that was a very, very strong message to our employers that we were angry enough because we've been waiting for approximately two years for them to work towards implementing that agreement. They have failed to take any responsibility for doing so, and pushed it back onto the union.

"Management have done a number of things to weaken our morale including contacting our banks, which is an invasion of the Data Protection Act, telling them that we're on strike; one or two individuals have been refused loans as a result. They've also misused the law. While there is provision for subpoenaing social workers to court, the way and the speed with which it has been done has shown us it's the biggest instrument management have for suppressing our action. But they haven't succeeded — after 7 weeks all of us are still out on strike, we're very solid, and we think it's a disgrace that clients are being used to try and intimidate us. People have been harassed at home, and are quite frightened about being contacted by the Courts' officers."

"Management are running the cover on a limited budget and they are saying to us that they can't afford to honour the claim because of the deficit. We say it's their responsibility, not ours and that they cannot misuse the clients and us to compensate for their mismanagement.

"A lot of us in the workforce are women, and a lot of the senior management are men. We cannot continually be told, like nurses and other caring professions, that we should know our place and that the day nursery will be closed if we get our pay. Divide and rule is their tactic, and I hope our resistance to that will be an example, as others have been — like the housing strike in Camden."

"Yes, we are going to win, and we are going to hold out. If we don't win this, then we might as well just forget it for everything else. Our strike is about a principle — our conditions of service, how they're negotiated and how our employers treat us. We can't not win this."

"We've received tremendous support from collections and meetings at NALGO conference, at various branch meetings up and down the country and from the Labour Party locally."

NALGO agreed to go to ACAS, but has heard nothing from the council or ACAS since. A branch meeting on July 29 agreed to work out how best to further the dispute. These include balloting key sections of the membership for all-out action, and building for a branch-wide Day of Action in August.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

One year on, the wounds fester

By Gerry Bates

Torture! Horror! Suddenly the newspapers are full of stories of the mistreatment of American and British prisoners of war by Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War earlier this year.

None of these stories can be fresh news to the governments which are releasing them. The governments are using the stories to deflect and drown critical thinking as the first anniversary of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait comes round.

Two hundred thousand Iraqis are dead — or about that number: no-one except the American government knows how many lie in the mass graves, and they are not telling. Tens of thousands more have been killed, tortured or injured as Saddam Hussein suppressed the uprisings by Shi'ites in southern Iraq and Kurds in northern Iraq.

Even in the Arab Sunni heartland of Iraq, malnutrition, disease and desperate poverty are rife, caused by the attacks which bombed Iraq back into the nineteenth century and the Western economic blockade. Babies, children and frail elderly people are dying.

The Kurds, through their courage and determination, and the pressure they were able to put on the Western powers through public opinion, have won some precarious autonomy and safety in their corner of Iraq. Elsewhere in Iraq Saddam still rules, as brutal and totalitarian as ever, a modern Stalin.

Kuwait is "liberated" — so they say. Many thousands of Palestinians have been murdered by lynch mobs, driven to flee, or condemned to live in fear for their lives. Iraqi oppositionists exiled there who managed to survive Saddam's invasion have been shoved back into Saddam's hands.

The US has elbow-twisted the Arab states and Israel into agreeing to a peace conference. But the Palestinians will get no justice from this conference.

The *Sunday Times* reports that Britain exported 8.6 tonnes of uranium, suitable for developing nuclear weapons, to Saddam's Iraq in 1988-90. Britain also — according to almost everyone except the government — exported materials for chemical warfare to Iraq even after the invasion of Kuwait.

It is a certain and incontestable fact that the US and British governments backed Saddam while he was suppressing the Kurds in the 1980s.

Their objection was never to Saddam's tyranny and brutality. The Gulf War was not waged to end tyranny and brutality. It was waged to halt Iraq's desperate challenge to the control by the West, or by safely pro-Western local despots, of the Gulf's super-rich oil reserves.

It was waged to keep the oil reserves safe for the big Western capitalist powers.

It has brought, and will continue to bring, not peace and an improved "new world order", but further suffering and conflict as the US tries to maintain its new imperial power.



Council workers: time to fight against low pay

NALGO: vote yes for action!

By Sarah Cotterill, Manchester NALGO

The 6.4% offer from the employers is an insult. This year, public sector pay rises are running at an average of 9.75%. Council workers' pay

rises have repeatedly fallen short of inflation. In real terms that means pay cuts. We need a 12% pay rise to regain some of the lost ground.

Half a million NALGO members are being balloted for strike action over pay. Their claim is for a

minimum wage of £9,330, 12% for all staff, the adult wage at 18 and improvements in working hours and holidays.

The employers have offered nothing on the minimum wage claim. The figure of £9,330 is recommended as the minimum wage by the Council of Europe. Beneath this figure, workers fall below a decent standard of living. Contrary to myth, a quarter of a million workers fall below this decency threshold. That is nearly half NALGO's local government membership.

The minimum wage is not an extra which can be used as a bargaining counter in negotiations. It must be the central core of this year's pay claim. Low pay is the biggest problem facing many NALGO members. The time has come to deal with it. There should be no settlement without the

minimum wage of £9,330.

A NALGO local government delegate meeting on 22nd July voted overwhelmingly to reject the offer of 6.4%. Members are being asked to vote for 10 days of national strike action over 8 weeks. It will be combined with selected action by key groups like computers and poll tax staff.

Socialist Organiser supporters proposed that the 10 days strike action take place over 4 weeks, building up from 1 to 4 days. If this failed to win a satisfactory offer, we should consider all-out indefinite strike action to show we mean business.

But now the decision has been taken by the national delegate meeting, NALGO members must all rally to win a massive yes vote. Disagreement with the tactics of the action mustn't be used as an excuse to accept the offer.

Manual workers: reject 6.4%!

Council manual workers have also been offered 6.4%, plus 2 hours off the working week.

NUPE is opposing the offer and will be balloting its members for strike action.

For the first time, this summer may see white collar workers and manual workers striking together

for better pay.

United action would put the employers under major pressure, and show the power we'd have in a merged union.

Remember to use your vote

- Vote to fight low pay
- Vote for 12%
- Vote Yes!

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