

Tories are the main enemy



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Unshackle the unions: Heathfield and Skinner speak out
centre pages

For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!



Adam Keller report from Tel Aviv
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Eric Heffer: a life for socialism



page 13

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

The most unequal country in Europe



Women get the worst deal

Tory Britain is the only country in the European Community which does not give women workers an automatic right to paid maternity leave.

In Britain, 40 to 50% of working women have no maternity rights, because they work too few hours, or

have not been long enough with their current employer, to qualify under British law.

Britain's women workers also lose out on pay. Full-time women workers earn 23% less than comparable male workers. The gap has scarcely closed since the years immediately after the Equal Pay Act of 1975, and is

Turn to page 2

Tories out! Fight for a Labour victory!

Cate Murphy and Steve Battlemuch report from Brighton:

The purge continues

"We're not in favour of witch-hunts, but we have to root out the *Militant* lock, stock and barrel", said the delegate from Liverpool Broadgreen on why conference should uphold the NEC's suspension of MPs Dave Nellist and Terry

Fields. So it's labour movement democracy to overturn endorsed sitting MPs on the say-so of Tory chair Chris Patten, without giving one of them even the opportunity to defend himself at the NEC.

It's traditional labour movement democracy to tell Broadgreen CLP that it can't have the MP it selected, that they're not allowed to meet, that they can't choose their

own conference delegate, and so they must be "represented" by an imposed delegate chosen because he is a *Militant*-basher!

Timetabled for first thing on Sunday evening, in order, no doubt to get it over and done with, and while the cameras weren't rolling, the debate in defence of Terry Fields and Dave Nellist was very low-key.

Kath Crosby from Norwood CLP moved the

emergency resolution calling for the lifting of the suspensions of the two MPs. Four speakers from the floor — including the Broadgreen 'delegate' — and it went to a card vote. By 5 million to 523,000, the two MPs were barred from conference. Despite the majority of CLPs supporting Nellist and Fields, the union block votes ensured Kinnock got his way. Democracy went out of the window.

But the low-key debate — and the surprisingly low vote for the two MPs — were a result of the fiasco of the *Militant*'s adventure in Walton. Activists otherwise sympathetic to victims of witch-hunts find it impossible to reconcile defence of *Militant* with the undeniable fact that they have stood, and undoubtedly will in future stand, candidates against the official Labour Party candidates.

As Tony Benn said at the Friends of Brighton Labour Party/Campaign Against the Witch-hunt fringe meeting on Saturday night, we must support the official Labour Party candidate, imposed or selected. You can't successfully fight to defend the right of free speech and the right for socialists to organise inside the Labour Party if you up tail and run when the going gets a little hard.



Four policemen have been charged for the police conspiracy which condemned 6 innocent Irish men to 17 years in jail for the 1974 Birm-

ingham Pub Bombings.

The 6, who were released from jail 6 months ago, say that "up to 20" policemen were involved. It seems that there is "no

evidence" to charge anyone else.

It is believed that the Home Secretary has expressly forbidden the police to do what they usually do when they believe they

know the culprit but have no evidence: invent evidence and perjure themselves. That, he is believed to have said, would be inappropriate in this case.

The lie machine



The election is off — until March? Thatcher's lieutenant, Major is still in Downing Street and all is well with British capitalism.

Wives are still clawing hubby's nuts off to please the *Sport*, and the *Sun* gives its front page (the first of 3) to a report that yuk TV star Jeremy Beadle is not talking to his mother-in-law.

Democratic "socialist"?

By Ruth Cockcroft, member of the Socialist Movement Organising Committee

After the better part of a year's preparation, the first regular issue of *Socialist* has been published by the Socialist Movement.

It is well-designed and good-looking, somewhat stale in content, and surprisingly lightweight for a fortnightly aimed — so the publishers said to explain once again postponing its appearance — at college lecturers (who have just gone back to work).

It looks like *Tribune* and politically it is a sort of green-tinted, anti-Labour Party version of *Tribune*.

The first issue raises sharp questions for Socialist Movement members: is *Socialist* really the

property of the Socialist Movement?

At the Socialist Movement AGM, 3 months ago, a hard fought debate resulted in a decision that the new paper would back Labour in the upcoming General Election. No.1 was put together when election fever was high, and a November election seemed probable — before the polls swung against the Tories.

But the entire slant of the paper and much of its content is hostile to Labour, amounting to a softer — more middle-class — version of the SWP's campaign to pull people out of the Labour Party.

The enthusiasm of Ms Hilary Wainwright for the tiny Liverpool ILP (the disgruntled and now divorced partners of *Militant* in the Walton by-election) gets most of a column on page 2. The "Socialists for Labour" campaign launched by Labour Party Socialists — an integral part of the Socialist Movement

— gets 2 inches at the bottom of Wainwright's column on the ILP.

A column on page 13 boosts the alleged radicalism of the Scottish Nationalists — the same organisation that last week won a council seat from Labour in inner-city Glasgow, after cashing in on a racist campaign against Labour's Asian candidate. (A white Labour candidate in a nearby inner-city ward won the seat on the same day.)

This grotesque imbalance is sharply out of line with the decision of the Socialist Movement AGM that the paper would have an anti-Kinnock but pro-Labour stance.

Is *Socialist* the property of the Socialist Movement or of a few "dignitaries" and a do-as-it-likes clique of journalists?

It is the universal experience of the labour movement that in loosely-structured groups, such as the Socialist Movement, the rank and file tends to lose its

socialist

The cold war is over — it's time to start something new!

Britain's wasted millions



rights to the "stars" and the journalist (or parliamentary) officials.

The Socialist Movement is, on the evidence of *Socialist* No.1, no exception.

One of the oddest things about *Socialist* is that as its editor — with real power of decision as to the content of the paper — they appointed Denise Searle, whose politics are close to *Marxism Today*.

Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty!

Tsarist flags on the streets in Moscow; mass renaming of streets and squares in Italy named after Marx, Lenin or Gramsci; a chorus from the media saying that socialism is dead. For sure, the struggle for a cooperative commonwealth is not fashionable these days.

It's goodbye to the "trendy lefty". Former "left intellectuals" are swinging to the right as fast as *Marxism*

Today and the *Sunday Times* can take them.

But working-class people are not so easily convinced that the future belongs to capitalism. Tucked away in a corner of the *Guardian* on 19th September was an opinion poll result showing a 30-38% majority — in the population at large, not just among Labour voters — for the proposition that "more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems". The poll shows a shift in favour of socialism since the same question was asked a

year ago.

And, West and East, the class struggle continues — as indeed it will always continue, until capitalism is overthrown.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty was set up in May this year. It declared then: "We need a crusade to clarify and restate the ideas of socialism, free from all taint of Stalinism, and to help the political reconstitution of the working class".

That crusade is even more urgently needed now. The AWL is supporting the *Stand Up for Real Socialism*

campaign launched by *Socialist Organiser*. It strives to tie together work in that campaign with daily activity in the trade unions and workplaces, in anti-poll tax groups, in colleges, and on the streets; and to link all that activity with a drive to educate ourselves politically and organise a stable, cohesive, alert contingent of Marxists.

It's time to stand up and be counted for socialism. Contact the AWL c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Women get the worst deal

From front page

almost twice as big as the gap in comparable West European countries, according to the official Equal Opportunities Commission.

Britain also has the worst under-fives provision in Western Europe. Only 2% of Britain's children under three have places in publicly-funded nurseries, as against 44% in Denmark, for example.

54% of Britain's 3-to-5 year olds are in publicly-funded day care, but only 1% are looked after for the full working-day. France and Belgium have 95% of 3-to-5 year olds in state-funded care available for up to eight hours a day.

Tory Britain is interested in workers only as *cheap labour*, and women as *cheaper labour*. And if you

have children — as Margaret Thatcher said, there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families. Don't expect society to help with bringing up its future citizens and workers!

More years of Tory rule will mean more of this inequality. That's why we need an all-out effort to defeat the Tories and get a Labour government.

Labour has promised definitely to increase child benefit, and more vaguely to improve nursery provision. At the same time as campaigning for a Labour victory, socialists and feminists should join with groups like "Socialists for Labour" to fight for Labour to commit itself firmly to improving women workers' rights at least to the level reached by other West European countries.

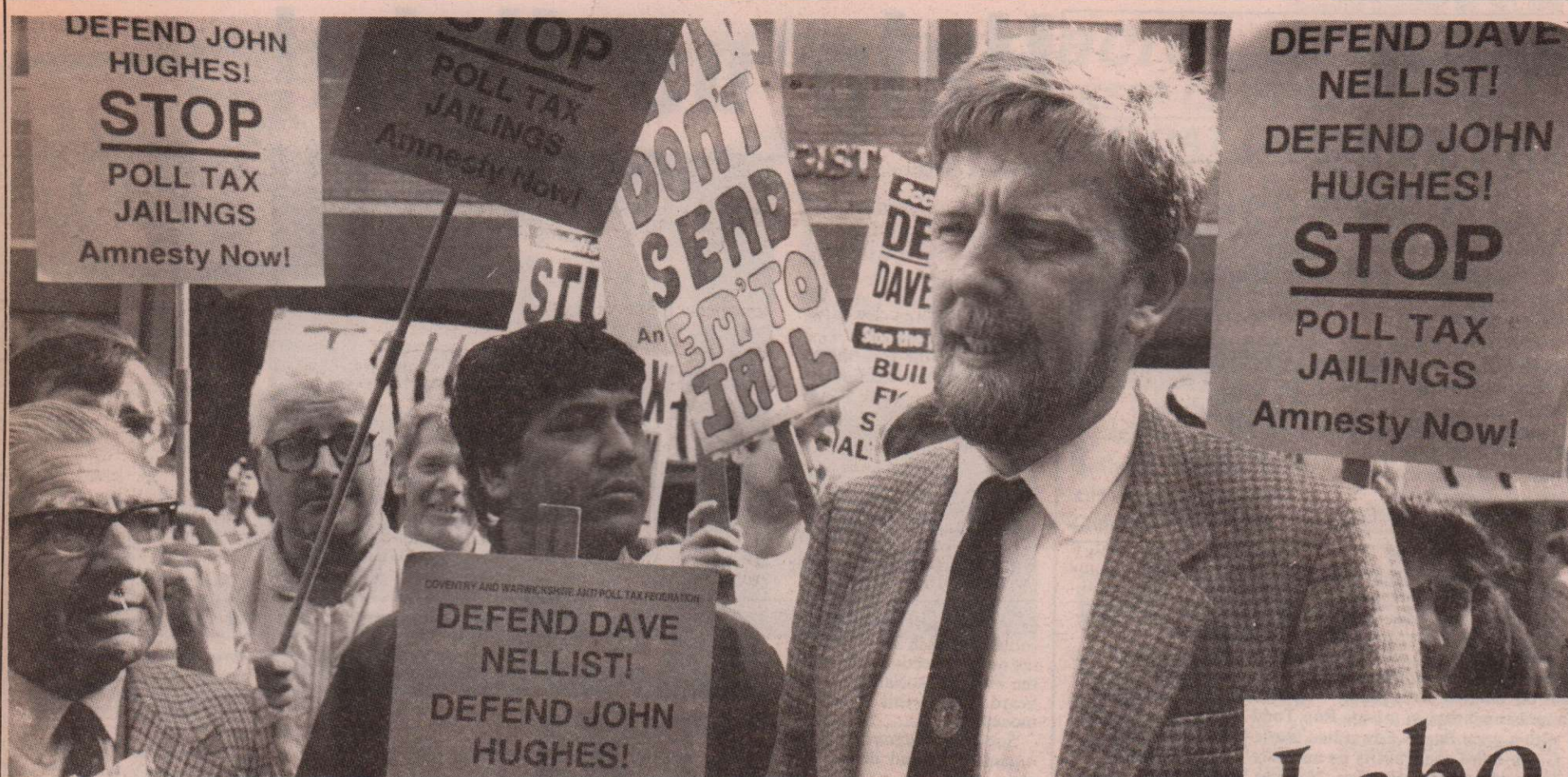


Photo: John Harris

Left must fight purge, but:

The Tories are the main enemy!



The decision of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee to suspend Dave Nellist MP and Terry Fields MP last Wednesday, 25 September, was a decision to inflict a grievous and unnecessary wound on the Labour Party in the run-up to the General Election.

It is the latest blow in the Party establishment's long campaign either to drive the left out of the Labour Party, or to silence and intimidate those who cannot be driven out. The National Executive's action cannot but undermine the morale of the Labour Party as we start campaign-

ing for a Labour victory in the General Election.

The anti-Labour *Militant* candidacy in the Walton by-election is the excuse for these suspensions, not the reason for them. The left was being driven out of the Labour Party long before *Militant* decided to try its electoral luck in Walton. For that reason the left — including those, like *Socialist Organiser*, who condemned the "Broad Left" *Militant* candidacy as a sectarian stupidity — will side with Nellist and Field and fight for *Militant* to be allowed to stay in the Labour Party.

The left is right to make an enormous fuss at this week's Labour Party conference, and to try to force the National Executive to think again.

But the left must also be clear about what is happening now and what its options are. The left must not let itself be pushed by the Kinnockite reaction into endorsing *Militant's* venture in Walton, or into apparent indifference to the new Waltons that *Militant* is preparing.

Tony Benn was right when he told supporters of *Militant* at a fringe meeting in Brighton: "I didn't agree with what you did in Walton. Whether the candidates are imposed or duly selected, you have got to campaign for them".

M*ilitant* has plainly decided to leave the Labour Party and to stand candidates against Labour in the General Election.

That being so, the left faces certain choices, especially those of us who are fighting the suspension of Nellist and Fields while rejecting —

and fighting against — the sectarian breakaway of *Militant* from the Labour Party.

It is not possible in this or any likely Labour Party — or in any organised political party — to claim the right to solidarise with an anti-Labour candidate and also seriously to claim to want to stay in the party.

Militant is not only leaving the Labour Party — choosing to allow

"The left must not let itself be pushed by the Kinnockite reaction into endorsing *Militant's* venture in Walton or into apparent indifference to the new Waltons that *Militant* is preparing"

the right wing to drive them out of the political labour movement — it is also attempting to organise as big a grouping as possible around their breakaway.

It will attempt to attach to itself as many as possible of those Labour Party members who are outraged at the latest gratuitous wound that the Kinnock establishment is inflicting on the Labour Party, and to lead them step by step out of the Party.

There may indeed be those who will choose to go with *Militant*.

Nobody should go with *Militant*, or get hooked into its perspectives on the basis of not being clear about what is happening and why.

For the purposes of political calculation here and now, the left must take the Kinnockites as a stable factor — the organised, entrenched enemy.

It has to be taken for granted that they will strike where we give them an opening. *Of course* they have seized their chance after Walton. Only a mad person would expect them to do anything else.

It was the chance they had been looking for, both to step up the purge and to let themselves be seen once more to do the bidding of the press and the Tories.

All of that was to be expected. Behaviour that allowed Kinnock and his friends to do all these things made no sense other than as preparation for a breakaway from the Labour Party across the board. *Everything else followed inexorably after Walton.*

Did *Militant* understand that? It is not clear. Drunk on its "success" in anti-poll-tax activity, *Militant* seems no longer to have a grip on the political world in which it operates. It told ridiculous lies during the Walton campaign — that it was the "real Labour" party, that Lesley Mahmood had won the selection contest against Kilfoyle but the national leadership intervened, and so on — and seems to have believed them.

Militant may have blundered into this situation, and got caught up in a momentum which it cannot control. If *Militant* did not anticipate what has happened after Walton, then that is all the more reason why Labour Party socialists should not trust their judgment.

In any case, *Militant's* intention to leave the Labour Party is now unmistakable, and that defines the situation facing the left.

It is possible to fight to stop people being picked on and expelled. It is even possible to fight to stop individual people who want to be expelled from being expelled.

It is impossible to stop a tightly

organised faction which has decided to leave the Labour Party from being expelled by an establishment eager to expel them. The problem for the non-*Militant* left is that in order for us even to mount a campaign against the suspension and expulsion of the two MPs, they have to want not to be suspended and expelled.

The battle to lift the suspensions is hamstrung by the fact that Nellist — and perhaps Fields — are in agreement with (or under discipline to abide by) *Militant's* decision to organise a breakaway from the Labour Party.

Any campaign will be an appendage of *Militant's* "perspective" of an independent "revolutionary party" unless it clearly differentiates the Labour Party left's fight against the suspensions from *Militant*.

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

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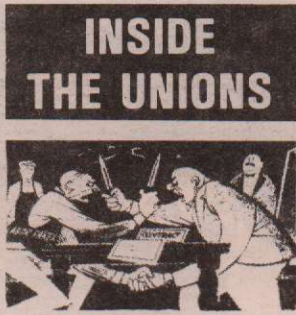
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Why are they so boring?

You must have seen that awfully clever Tory poster, "Who Pays For Labour?", with the faces of various trade union leaders peering out from behind the word "Labour".

But is it too clever by half? Far from scaring the living daylights out of your average person in the street, the poster seems to have caused general bewilderment: exactly



By Sleeper

who are those innocuous-looking, bespectacled old parties? Only one of the faces has the desired effect — that of Arthur Scargill, who is still capable of striking terror into the hearts of *Telegraph* readers and the like.

The fact is that most of the present crop of General Secretaries are about as charismatic as the General Synod of the Church of England — and about as frightening. I am assured that in private Ron Todd is a barrel of laughs, with a great line in Edwardian music-hall turns, while Gavin Laird can transfix an audience with his masterly grasp of post-structuralism. Norman Willis's poetry is, of course, legendary. John Edmonds' stamp collection is the envy of the philatelic world.

The point is not that these people were born especially dull individuals: it is the position they occupy in society, and the role they play in the class struggle, that requires them to be that way.

Ernest Bevin of the TGWU bestrode the political stage like a colossus because Churchill's National Government needed him to ensure the cooperation of the labour movement in the war effort. Jones and Scanlon, the "Terrible Twins" of the 1970s, were nationally-known bogeymen because they stood at the head of a rank and file army that had destroyed the Heath government: Wilson was forced to co-opt them in order to give the Social Contract any hope of succeeding.

But since 1979 the union movement's leaders have been lost souls — no longer even "labour lieutenants of capital" in the traditional sense, because capital (in the form of the Tory Government) had decided that it could subdue labour quite well without their help, thank you very much.

As the TUC's rhetorical defiance of the early '80s gave way to open submission, union leaders found themselves without any obvious social or political role.

"Keep your heads down, avoid confrontation, and hope for better times under Bro. Kinnock", became the order of the day. Only Scargill dared stick his head above the parapet, which is why he alone remains the kind of union leader who can still be conjured up to frighten the kids into eating their greens.

Trotsky once pondered the reasons for the uncharismatic Kerensky's rise during the first period of the Russian Revolution, and concluded: "If Kerensky had possessed clear thoughts and a strong will, he would have been completely unfit for his historic role... a radical without any social schooling whatever, Kerensky expressed more completely than anyone else the first epoch of the revolution, its 'national' formlessness".

The middle-aged nonentities on the Tory poster — the faces intended to terrify but which, in fact, go unrecognised — sum up the state of the union leadership at the moment: grey men with little to do and no ideas beyond waiting and hoping for a change of government. I fear that Tory Central Office has wasted a lot of Mr Latsis's money on those posters.



Waiting, hoping and boring

Help us fight!

By Mark Osborn

Socialist Organiser was launched in October 1978. We are thirteen years old.

For thirteen years and 500 issues, *Socialist Organiser* has been fighting the right wing and fighting the class struggle. We have covered — and been part of — every major class battle. We take the side of the working class in Britain and internationally.

We aim to provide a clear, sharp set of politics for activists. Our politics are uncompromising.

Help us expand!

We are pushing outwards to expand our influence on socialist ideas in the run-up to the general election. We want the voice of socialism to be heard. And this requires money.

Socialist Organiser has organised a fund drive. We aim to:

- Raise £10,000 by Xmas for new equipment. The result will be a better produced socialist paper;
- Raise our regular income by £1,000 per month. The result will be a higher profile for socialism in the unions, Labour Party and campaigns.

Why not send us a donation?

Donations are starting to



arrive at our office. Thanks this week include to a reader in Lancs for £100, for £2 and £50 from two readers in Northampton, £50 from readers in Merseyside, £20 from a barbecue in Nottingham, £17 from a sweepstake in Manchester and £50 from readers in Nottingham.

Thanks also to supporters in Sheffield for £57 from fundraising.

This week we raised £508.50, or 5% of our Xmas target. This means we have raised £1,461.73 or 15% of our target in three weeks. Hurry your donations down!

Take out a subscription

Make sure you get *Socialist Organiser* delivered to your door each week.

£25 (one year); £13 (six months); £5 (ten issues).

Join our 200 Club

Socialist Organiser organises a monthly draw — our 200 Club.

Entering costs £5 per month. The prize is £100 per

month given to the winner drawn from a hat.

Details of the 200 Club from *Socialist Organiser* (fund drive).

Selling our paper

Why not become a seller of *Socialist Organiser*? Take a number each week to sell in your area. Details from *Socialist Organiser* (circulation).

Last week *Socialist Organiser* sellers made a special effort to sell our 500th issue.

Twelve papers were sold at a new sale in Camden Town, London. A new sale began on a Glasgow housing estate. Comrades in Middlesborough sold 20 papers on a couple of extra sales.

In the colleges, *Socialist Organiser* is selling fast. 17 copies were sold at City Poly, London; 35 at Newcastle Poly and 40 at Sheffield University.

During the first two days of Labour Party conference, 70 papers were sold.

Tear off and return this slip

Enclosed is a subscription and/or donation (delete where appropriate)

Name
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 Return to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

The Tories are the main enemy!

From page 3

The left fighting the suspensions must not, even by implication, appear to endorse *Militant's* Walton candidacy, nor to minimise the importance of that issue. Otherwise we play straight into the hands of the Kinnockites.

Their most powerful argument, now and for a long time past, has been that the left does not care about kicking out the Tories and putting in a Labour government. That is and always was a slander against the left. If now, either out of disgust with Kinnock or out of emotional solidarity with Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, the left appears to condone breaking the Labour front in Walton — or in the upcoming General Election — then only the right wing can gain.

The left must combine with a firm commitment to the struggle to kick the Tories out and put in a Labour government.

We either relate to the labour movement and its political wing as they are — right now, after 12 years of Thatcherism — or we turn our backs on it like sectarians. The fact that it will be a right-wing Labour government will disorientate only those who — like *Militant* — had gross illusions in the prospects of a "Labour Government with a Socialist Programme".

Militant has chosen a sectarian course. On the eve of a General Election which may see a radical shift in the axis of British politics, or the beginning of such a shift, and which in any case will open up new and more favourable opportunities for the working class if Labour (even under

Kinnock) wins — at this time, *Militant* has chosen to organise a breakaway!

Its decision is governed neither by the logic of the class struggle (which is at its lowest ebb for decades), nor by the necessary logic of the ebbs and flows of the broad labour movement, but only by the logic of its own development as an organisation. It has recruited young people from the poll tax campaign and, instead of bringing them into the Labour Party and the trade unions to fight the bureaucrats, most of the old leadership of *Militant* has capitulated to the combined pressure of the raw recruits and of the witch-hunting Labour Party establishment.

The Walton candidacy was decided, it seems, without any serious discussion in *Militant*, but it was the culmination of a year-long battle inside the tendency between those who wanted to go for an independent party and those who wanted to stay with Labour. Still making it an article of faith to deny any such thing, *Militant* is nevertheless going down the road the WRP took long ago to "build the independent revolutionary party". That is what they will do in the General Election.

One of the key questions that opponents of the suspension of Dave Nellist and Terry Fields have to answer for themselves — and now, before events answer the question for them — is what they will do in the General Election when Nellist and Fields stand as part of a *Militant* slate of anti-Labour candidates.

Not to answer that question consciously and after proper deliberation now is to

be dragged along towards support for part of such a slate in the General Election.

Quite a few people on the left, loathing Kinnockism and insufficiently clear in their own heads that our priority must now be to force the Tories out and put in Labour — because that is the only way to begin to break the logjam in British politics — backed the Walton candidacy.

In Liverpool such people were to be found in the Broad

"Against both the splitting, purging right wing, and the sectarian left, we must fight for the unity of the political labour movement"

Left. The Broad Left had a *Militant* chair — Tony Mulhearn — and an "invitation only" definition of membership; it was very much a *Militant* front. Yet even that *Broad Left* could not coexist with *Militant* after its non-*Militant* members were shouldered aside in the Walton by-election.

Those non-*Militant* members have now organised the Liverpool Independent Labour Party, making it clear that supporters of *Militant* are not welcome. Those who want to repeat on a national scale in the coming General Election the experience of the non-*Militant* people in the Liverpool Broad Left should consider what it is they are getting into before all their other options vanish on the road behind them.

Our conclusions are clear. Oppose the suspensions; oppose the purge.

Believing that the central task is to defeat the Tories in the General Election and elect a Labour Government, the left should demand of Nellist and Fields that they pledge themselves to accept Labour Party decisions and not to stand in the General Election against Labour. Believing that Lesley Mahmood's candidacy in Walton was a grave mistake at best, the left must insist with Nellist and Fields that they recognise that mistake and commit themselves to oppose similar sectarian stupidities in the General Election.

The left must oppose the suspensions because they are part of the long-term right-wing drive which helped to generate the splits in the Liverpool Labour Party, but on this basis we can do so without becoming prisoners of *Militant's* still half-hidden perspective for the General Election.

Against both the purging, splitting right wing, and the sectarian left, we must fight for the unity of the political labour movement in the General Election.

Kinnockism must be fought: but the Tories, not Neil Kinnock, are the main enemy now.

Socialists and the Labour Party

Lessons of the Walton by-election campaign

A *Socialist Organiser* pamphlet
 £1.00 plus p&p
 Write to PO Box 823
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Stop the jobs massacre!

KEEP CAMMELL LAIRDS AFLOAT CAMPAIGN

"An economic catastrophe for Merseyside"

By Alec McFadden, AEU, National Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee and Keep Lairds Afloat Campaign

On 17th October 1990, VSEL Consortium plc announced the sale of its Birkenhead subsidiary, Cammell Laird Shipbuilders Ltd. VSEL declared that if its attempts to secure a buyer and a shipbuilding future for the yard fail, the yard will close on completion of the current contracts.

The loss of over 2,000 jobs at the yard and the many more which are indirectly dependent on shipbuilding, would represent an economic and social catastrophe for Wirral and Merseyside. In Wirral, one in eight of its workers (one in five males) are already unemployed. The prospects for Wirral would be bleak and the aftermath of closure would last well into the 21st century.

VSEL purchase

VSEL has a close relationship with the Tory Party and purchased the shipyard in 1986 following the strike breaking march back to work, organised by some of the present shop stewards and supported by the local MPs, particularly Frank Field and Lynda Chalker. 30 of the shop stewards and workers were imprisoned for a month in 1984.

VSEL paid only £1 to the government for Cammell Laird at the time of the privatisation in 1986. VSEL simultaneously purchased the denationalised Barrow Yard for £100 million — an immediate £60 million payment and a balance of £40 million, deferred until payments in 1992 and 1993.

In VSEL's latest preliminary results for the year end March 1991, the Company clearly states that it will not be making the £40

million deferred payments to the government. This is a national scandal. Furthermore, VSEL are attempting to sell the Birkenhead site for many millions of pounds — a price well in excess of the £1 they originally paid for it.

VSEL made massive profits and now, with the end of the Cold War, and the reduction of warship building, VSEL takes its profit and goes back to Barrow and turns its backs on the workers and the community in Wirral.

Sunderland connection

Following a BBC Panorama documentary which showed in graphic detail the secret deal between the British government and the EEC which closed the Sunderland shipyard, throwing thousands of workers on the dole, the shipbuilding paper "Lloyd's List" stated on the 22nd May 1991:

"When the bulldozers and auctioneers have been in to scrap and sell off a shipyard, there is nothing much that can be done except to find out why it happened in the first place and take the necessary precautions against it happening again."

BBC's Panorama documentary "The scuttling of British shipbuilding" about how North East Shipbuilders (NSEL) was closed down as part of a secret deal between the government and the EEC, threw some intriguing light on the imbroglio.

It is a story which has a particular relevance today since:

- one of the programme's *dramatis personae* is now involved in an escalating industrial dispute which threatens its future;
- another shipyard finds itself in a similar quandary;
- while the shipbuilding market is resuming its recovery after the hiatus of the Gulf War, shipyards in the UK seem unlikely to benefit substantially from the upturn.

Fears of the NSEL affair being repeated at Cammell Laird have been understandably expressed by the unions, and the government and the EEC have done little to allay those fears. At NESL those hopes proved tragically false since the shipyard's fate had already been sealed by the terms of the agreement between the government and the EEC. Cammell Laird can be sold successfully but it needs help of, at least, the morale boosting kind. Constant repetition by the government on the lines of "We can't do anything about subsidies because of the agreement with the EEC" does nothing to help.

No-one could have foreseen the tremendous and rapid changes that have come over the world in the last few years, resulting in the massive scaling-down of defence requirements. Warship yards, privatised in the UK under a different set of conditions, are trying to adjust painfully to the new order, but find themselves trapped by the EEC rules which appear mercilessly inflexible.



On the March for a Shorter Working Week. BAE Preston strikers, December 1990.

British Aerospace

Just another caring company

By John Reed, ex-shop steward, BAe Preston

The first thing that needs to be said about the closure of the BAe factory at Preston (no doubt the same applies to BAe Kingston) is that the number of job losses are not confined to the workers at those two sites.

Certainly, at Preston it is conservatively estimated that 30,000 people will be affected across hundreds of small sub-contractors and suppliers. In the area of the Preston factory — which is vast — goodness knows how many other shops will go to the wall.

The trade union side here have for years attempted to persuade management of the value of a diversification plan, but to no avail. And now, in this everyday story of capitalism, there's the devil to pay, and working people are going to do the paying.

It has to be said that there are aspects of the redundancies (3,000 for starters) at Preston, Samblesbury and Warton — collectively known

as the Warton Unit — which are decidedly *not* everyday.

For instance, following the cancellation of the last batch of Tornados (40) by the MoD, worth about £1 billion, rumours of redundancies proliferated.

Months went by in mid-1990 without any statement whatsoever by the company. Numerous attempts were made by the unions to extract some indication from the Preston management. The best they got was, "no decision has been made".

In late October the local newspaper's [Lancs Daily Post] headline news was that the Strand Road factory of BAe was to close. This was followed the next day on NW television by similar news.

When the unions — now angry — tackled the Preston management they were again told no decision had been taken. About three weeks later management called in the unions and told them that it was indeed true that Preston would close by early 1993 and that 3,000 jobs would go across the Warton Unit.

At that meeting the works manager was asked by a shop

steward, "In the event of us requiring any further information, should we approach you or the *Lancs Daily Post*?"

The next set-to was about "volunteers". The BAe early retirement scheme of course favours older people. For the younger it is little better than ordinary statutory redundancy in terms of money. The company refused to let all volunteers go.

"In this everyday story of capitalism, there's the devil to pay, and working people are going to do the paying"

Arguing that they had to have "the best team for 1993" in order to begin the regeneration with the European Fighter Aircraft (the EFA is by no means a certain starter — if it is not, what then?). So there are those — sometimes in their late 50s, who want to go and can't, and those who are young and have families who don't want to go who will have to.

And, finally. Early this year the company, in a "day of the long knives" removed most of the Personnel Department. They were given 12 weeks pay and escorted off site.

To the surprise of the company, three of the junior victims were in a union. These were eventually found other jobs. There is a lesson there which I hope is not lost on the others.

Anyway, Personnel, together with the Industrial Relations Department, were disbanded and subsumed into a broad new set-up called the Human Resources Department. (Could Orwell or Huxley have thought up a better title?) So now we have a Human Resources Department whose task is to get rid

of human resources.

In an attempt to invest the process of compulsory redundancies with a veneer of fairness, HR invented a "selection criteria" system based on a points system. The criteria were such as "flexibility", "adaptability", "co-operativeness", and more sinisterly, "sickness absence".

The unions pointed out that apart from "absence", the other six categories were entirely subjective and therefore would lead to bosses settling old scores with some employees and favouring some whom perhaps they played golf with. At this point it was learnt that no employee was to be allowed to know his assessment!

The company said that fairness was ensured by the fact that there were three signatories to each individual employee assessment. These were referred to (in Human Resources lingo) as "father", "grandfather" and "great grandfather".

The anger of the unions led to the head of HR meeting the shop stewards and reps again. (He is a man named Michael Whittington, who enjoins everyone to call him Dick. It is something which we on the union side don't have a problem with.) He told us that in order to meet our objections half way, they would introduce an appeals system. But it was made clear that the appellant would still not be allowed to see his assessment!

In 1925 Franz Kafka wrote a novel called *The Trial* in which he grimly satirises the totalitarian state. Joseph K, an innocent man, is arrested and accused of an unnamed crime and is not allowed to know who has accused him.

There are about two thousand Joseph Ks walking around the Warton Unit today. The company issues 521 compulsory redundancies on 10 September. No walk out. In case it needs to be said, I can confirm that the workforce in the Warton Units has never been militant.

Nobody came to the party

On Wednesday evening, 4th September, BAe, as is their way, threw a lavish buffet supper for union bigwigs and delegates at the superb Central Hotel, Glasgow.

The TUC conference was on. A group of trade unionists from the doomed Preston and Kingston factories were on the hotel steps to meet them.

First to arrive were the BAe management crew. They had flown up. The

picket line asked every delegate not to go in and got a 90% response.

Gill, Lyons, Grantham et al all honoured the request. Good on them. Apparently there was no one from the union side who the company even knew. It was a total failure.

Just one question the trade unionist in the street might ask, why do union leaders go to parties thrown by employers? Especially those who are about to sack thousands of their members.

GRAFFITI

Defend Cap'n Bob



What the free market brings: food distribution in Eastern Europe

Making mischief

GRAFFITI

Replying for the Labour Party's National Executive to the debate on trade union laws (or "New Rights for Employees", in Kinnock-speak), Diana Jeuda called Wallasey CLP's motion on positive rights for trade unionists and repeal of all Tory anti-union laws "calculated mischief-making".

For those who don't know, Diana Jeuda is a national officer for USDAW, the union representing low-paid shop workers, the same union that organised a strike of its members at Harrods over recognition. What naughty, mischievous USDAW members! Perhaps Jeuda should have a word with them.

The camera closes in on the Welsh Windbag during the debate on the "trigger mechanism" for reselection of MPs.

"I love you", he mouths, blowing kisses. Does he have a passion for Sky TV? A secret message to Chris Patten? Or just practising for the next Labour Party political broadcast? Answers on a postcard to Glenys...

Be reassured that the Labour Party NEC is on top of world affairs.

Look at the resolution it passed at its meeting last November, for example. Thatcher had just been ditched by Tory MPs panicking about the poll tax. The march to war in the Gulf continued. Events in the USSR looked like moving to a climax. And the NEC passed a resolution condemning... underwater activity by submarines off the British coast.

It's pretty clear how the workers are faring in Eastern Europe as it rushes towards market capitalism:

wages have plummeted, unemployment has soared, and welfare provision has been cut.

But how are the capitalists doing? A recent survey in the *Economist* magazine reckons that about 40% of Poland's output, and 25 to 30% of Hungary's, is now in private hands. Poland's government says it is selling off 20 businesses a week — mostly to the bureaucrats who used to run them as state managers.

Western capitalists have started over 10,000 joint ven-

tures in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, but most of them are very tiny. The *Economist* lists 22 sizeable ventures, 13 in Hungary, 6 in Czechoslovakia, 2 in Poland and 1 in Romania.

By far the biggest of the ventures is Volkswagen's \$6.6 billion investment in Skoda in Czechoslovakia. The 13 big projects in Hungary involve a total investment of just over \$1 billion.

Paradoxically, even Poland and Hungary lag well behind still-Stalinist China in the drive for private enterprise. By now, it is reckoned, about 50% of China's industrial output comes from private enterprise

It is, unfortunately, nothing new that *Socialist Organiser* should be urging "Militant" to condemn Derek Hatton.

We started doing that in 1985, I think. At that time Hatton was the leading public figure on Liverpool City Council, which still looked as if it just might lead a mass struggle against the Tory Government.

He was also, in effect, the public face of "Militant". Hatton's offensive flash-harry manner, flaunting his expensive suits and shoes while he led (or, as it turned out, pretended to lead) a battle to win resources for one of Britain's most poverty-hit cities, brought both Liverpool and "Militant" into disrepute.

"Militant" stood four-square by Hatton. When he finally kicked dust in their faces and went off to a career as a small-time spiv, they offered no more than a mild statement that he and they had parted ways. They have defended him strongly against the fraud charges he now faces.

Now, surely, Hatton has finally done enough to earn a condemnation from "Militant". In the Walton by-election he called for a Tory vote — and on TV last week, in the "First Reaction" slot, he made a sort of unofficial Tory party political broadcast!

It was a weird affair, mostly made up of socialist-sounding denunciations of the Labour leadership for its feebleness. Hatton reached his conclusion by arguing that a Kinnock government would create chaos — workers would demand rapid improvements, and Kinnock would flounder — and so the lesser evil is the competent, established capitalist party, the Tories.

It's about time that "Militant" denounced Hatton — and looked back to see whether they should have started denouncing him long ago.

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Captain Bob Maxwell is a giant in every sense: war hero, philanthropist, self-made millionaire, leading publisher, and world statesman.

Not for the first time, this towering colossus is being tormented by pygmies, jealous of his success and ready to use the foulest calumnies in their efforts to undermine and destroy him.

I am confident that the Captain will once more reach out a mighty hand to swat his enemies like the flies they are. But still, I cannot stand by and let this great man's name be sullied.

Disreputable publications like the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist* and the *In-*

dependent have been suggesting that the Captain's business empire is in trouble, weighed down by debt and bloated by ill-advised acquisitions. It has even been suggested that he may eventually have to sell off his majority stake in the Mirror Group.

Even more outrageously, the BBC's Panorama programme (notorious for its irresponsible and inaccurate muckraking) has suggested that the Captain engaged in dubious business methods like selling shares from one of his companies to another — a practice that is, anyway, perfectly legal even if the stick-in-the-muds of the "financial community" don't like it.

Not content with these wild allegations, Panorama went on to make the laughable suggestion that the *Daily Mirror's* exciting Lotto and Spot the Ball contests were personally fiddled by the Captain to ensure that they never paid out the top prizes. Naturally, legal proceedings against the BBC are now in train.

Happily, the Captain still has some friends: the *Daily Mirror's* switchboards were jammed with callers, all expressing outrage against the BBC and its so-called



Is this the face of Gary Bushell's replacement on *The Sun*?

reporters. And Mr Neil Kinnock remains stoutly resistant to the malicious demands of extremists who want this great socialist expelled from the Labour Party.

(Copyright 1991: Joe Haines, toady-in-chief, Mirror Group Newspapers).

When leading intellectual Garry Bushell announced his in-

intention to defect to the *Star*, *Sun* editor Kelvin McKenzie, purple with rage, replied that he would replace Bushell with... Ken Livingstone.

Everyone assumed that McKenzie was joking. But was he? Red Ken has pointedly not denied the rumours, and is talking conspiratorially about the advantages of a "direct line" to ten million readers...

The plight of prisoners' wives



WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

I confess to having fallen victim to the bourgeois press's beatification of Sunnie Mann. It seems to me that Mrs Mann has had a rotten time over the last few years, abandoned in war-torn Beirut, without news of Jackie or much help from the Foreign Office. I find her nervous but determined handling of the press charming, and clearly I am not the only person to have been charmed.

But Sunnie Mann is not from a class of people I would usually find attractive,

particularly in groups! What Sunnie has done is cope in public with an ordeal most women cope with in private. Every year, thousands of women have their husbands or lovers taken away legally for an often indeterminate period of time. The only main difference between their husbands and Jackie Mann, is that when most men are taken to prison they at least know what they have been accused of.

The level of abandonment is the same. Visiting rights do exist, but as the prisoner may be at the other end of the country a visit may be expensive and time-consuming. No privacy is allowed, no cuddling or hand-holding. The visit may cause as much heartache as no visit at all. In addition, the prisoner needs gifts, comfort and support. The woman visitor has no-one to support her — the prisoner is not allowed to provide the love and support she may need on a daily basis, and the Home Office is as useful to prisoners' wives as the Foreign Office was to Sunnie Mann.

In addition to the physical absence of the husband, the wife has to cope with the loss of income, help with childcare and housing and so on. She now has to feed, clothe and look after the family by herself instead of as part of a couple. If the prisoner was the only breadwinner the woman may have to claim welfare benefits, or find a job for the first time — and this at a time when she's learning to cope with the absence of her partner. The man may be on remand — and the woman may not know how long he will be gone. She may have to try to keep his job for him, or explain to employers and colleagues what has happened.

The man may not have been given any opportunity to "sort things out" and the woman will have to pick up the pieces.

Added to the financial worries, and the explanations to children is the stigma attached to the man being "away". For the woman this stigma cannot be hidden from — in order to claim any welfare benefits she will have to tell benefit staff, to help the children she will have to tell the school, she will probably have to tell her colleagues at work if she needs time off to go to Court or to visit the prison. No matter how hard she tries, the woman is as much "in prison" as if she were behind bars herself.

The prisoner's wife, unlike Sunnie Mann, cannot even hope for the best. She knows that conditions in prison are not fit for animals, let alone human beings. Her husband may not be chained up, but he is likely to be beaten, given a poor diet and poor medical care if he is ill. He will have few rights, and may well be locked up for most of every day in a tiny cell, only let out to empty the bucket which serves as a toilet. She knows that if he protests about his condition he risks being considered a trouble-maker and having an even harder time. She knows that if she protests there is no-one to listen.

The prisoner's wife has committed no crime yet in some ways she is treated worse than her partner. At least the state guarantees to feed and clothe the prisoner and provides a lawyer to speak up for him. Once part of the prison system the man has few rights, but few responsibilities either. The woman has all the responsibilities, and few rights.



Other prisoners' wives are not given the same treatment as Sunnie Mann

Outcasts from fortress Europe

RACE AND CLASS

By Gail Cameron

As Kurds and Shi'as, displaced as a consequence of the West's intervention in the Gulf, seek refuge from the barbarous Iraqi regime, Britain and other EEC states are making it pretty clear they will not be welcome in Europe.

Worse still, applications from people able to prove incidents of torture are being thrown out because of insufficient evidence that the regime they've fled, given the chance, would wish to continue torturing them!

Attempts to tighten up immigration and the right to settlement are neither new nor peculiar to Britain. The last 30 years have seen primary immigration to Europe virtually stopped — now the attention of European states is on strictly controlling the new migrants, the refugees: Kurds, Vietnamese, Somalians, Iranians fleeing war, starvation, repression and persecution.

With the approach of 1992 the European Community are desperate to harmonise their nationality and immigration laws. When EC nationals are free to live and work anywhere in the Community, the states want a firm control of who is, and who isn't, a European citizen.

Harsh legislation, that once only operated in a minority of nations, is now being adopted by more "liberal" states, fearful of becoming a "soft touch" for



Le Pen

refugees. For example, in the early '80s West Germany started to refuse entry to people without visas, Britain has now taken a similar line.

So asylum seekers escaping persecution in Sri Lanka, Zaire, and Turkey are expected to get official documentation from their persecutors before they leave the country.

Similarly, countries throughout Europe are now

imposing fines on airlines and shipping companies who carry people with false or inadequate documentation — so it is now up to carriers to decide who is a legitimate refugee or not.

And this is just the start — EC countries have recently agreed that asylum seekers can only make one application for entry into any one of the European states; if refused they are automatically

refused entry into all other EC nations.

For those asylum seekers allowed to stay, the battle is far from over. The majority are not granted full citizenship rights, but an "exceptional leave to stay". If they step out of line they face deportation. Arriving with nothing and few rights to welfare provision, refugees are fast becoming Europe's new reserve army of labour,

forced to accept jobs and conditions no indigenous workers would.

They are flexible workers on temporary contracts who work long, unsocial hours in non-unionised workplaces. And for as long as that threat of deportation remains, they remain unwilling to organise, complain and fight for better wages and better conditions.

That is why it is vital that the labour movement in its

response to the changes that will come in 1992 do not take a knee-jerk reaction in supporting immigration controls, because immigrants undercut workers' wages and conditions. Instead, we must take up the political fight for full citizenship rights for all migrant and refugee workers, and use it as an opportunity to embrace all workers, irrespective of their status into the workers' movement.

Why the US has fallen out with Israel

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

By denying the loan credits to Israel, Bush is actually doing what we hoped for. It puts those of us who opposed the Gulf war in rather a strange position.

I think the basic reason behind Bush's stance is the changing face of world politics. The Israeli-American alliance was part of the Cold War. Israel was a reliable pro-Western country. It was a bastion

against Soviet infiltration of the region.

The threat to America from the USSR no longer exists. The major problems for the US in the Middle East are now nationalism, leaders like Saddam Hussein, and muslim fundamentalism.

As long as there is an Israel-Arab conflict, Israel is now a burden for the Americans. This was clear during the Gulf war.

The United States is more and more looking for Arab allies — to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and now Syria.

In a way we have a return to the situation of the early '50s, before

Nasser took power in Egypt. In 1948 the Arab countries were rather pro-Western and the US was cool towards Israel. They had an arms embargo against Israel in 1948, and Israel got weapons from the USSR rather than the US.

The Arab world — since Nasser assumed power — went away from the United States. This period only began to end when Sadat moved away from the USSR after 1973.

The USA has come full circle. They more or less get their way in the Arab world. Now they need Israeli-Arab peace. Shamir, with his settlement policy, is simply interfering with their plans.

A second factor is the state of the American economy. It has less money to spend abroad. The isolationist tendency on the American right is growing stronger and there is pressure to spend money on social problems at home.

Bush is also in a very strong position since the Gulf war. All the analysts expect him to be re-elected. He can afford to antagonise the Israeli lobby. In addition, the American Jews are traditionally Democrats. Bush got only 28% of the Jewish votes in 1988, despite a big attempt to present himself as pro-Israel. So, he is now calculating that if Israel is irritated his Jewish vote may go down to 10% — but this will have no effect on the elec-

tion result.

Bush obviously feels himself to be the manager of world affairs. He did not like dissent from Saddam Hussein, and now he does not like Shamir's attitude either.

In fact, Shamir is getting more crafty in his housing policy. A new settlement is being started on Tuesday 24 September. The buildings are on the Israeli side of the Green Line, but plans include expansion into the Occupied Territories.

The Jewish community in America is now very worried. The main headlines of the Israeli press on Monday 23 September all said that the American Israeli government back down. Bush has made a very angry counter attack against the Israeli lobby. A leak to the press quoted Bush as saying: "These people should decide whether they are Israelis or Americans; if they are Israelis what are they doing in America?"

Now this comes at a time when there are anti-semitic riots in New York involving poor black people. The Jewish community fears Bush's comments will spark an anti-semitic reaction from the better off WASP community. The Jews will be caught in the middle. This is their nightmare.

Bush is also undermining the traditional argument of the pro-

Israeli lobby: that the interests of the US and Israel are identical. Bush is saying that refusing the loan guarantees is in America's national security interest.

What do the Americans want? The outline seems to be the return of the Golan Heights to Syria; a five year transition period for the Occupied Territories away from Israel. Precisely what the Americans want the Palestinians to end up with will be partly dependent on the other Arab states.

Perhaps it will be a federation or confederation with Jordan; perhaps it will be independence. I think independence would also depend on a calculation as to whether a Palestinian state would be pro-American.

Would this be possible for a government to accept? I think the great majority of Likud voters are not really committed to a Greater Israel. They would like to have the Territories — as long as it does not cost too much. They would not break with American money.

I think that the people who want to keep the Territories at all costs are about 5-10% of the population.

What about the army? Contrary to expectations the leaders of the army are more dovish than the general population. Until 1971 it was very difficult to make an army career without being a Labour supporter.

Protests over land seizures

There are now large protests against Sharon's policy of seizing Arab land inside Israel.

Attention is concentrating on the small village of Ramiya. This village is not recognised by the government. It has about 100 Arab inhabitants. It has been denied water, electricity, sanitation, and telephones.

The contrast is quite stark between this village and a nearby Jewish town, which is very well

catered for.

Now there is a court order for them to evacuate. It comes into effect on 1 October.

These have been two demonstrations in protest against the government. Another is planned for Saturday 28 October. We expect tens of thousands.

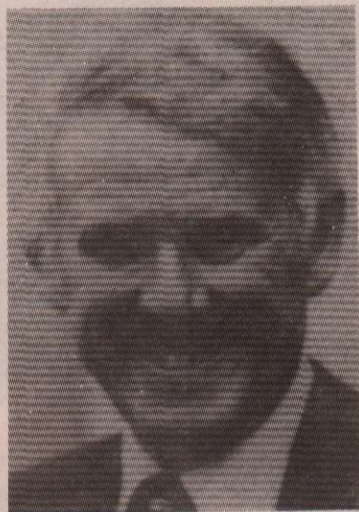
The Arab mayor's committee is backing the protests.

There is an international campaign against the land seizure. You can help by writing a letter of protest to the Israeli government in Jerusalem.

The case for free

'The laws will limit how we can defend our members'

Peter Heathfield, General Secretary of the National Union of Miners, argues that the anti-union laws have transformed the industrial scene to the employers' advantage



We have to put behind us a whole decade, the 1980s, when the labour movement became the victim of a stranglehold of anti-trade union laws.

I know from bitter experience that there is a propensity in a pre-election period for trade union leaders to keep their heads below the parapet. We are doing in 1991 what the trade union movement has done on a number of occasions in the past. But our problems are not going to be resolved by that course of action.

Look at the NUM's experience in the mining industry. We are not recognised by British Coal. We represent about 85% of the industrial workers in the mining industry, but we are not recognised.

What we've got in the mining industry now — and I'm not suggesting it's something we have an exclusive call on — is a macho type of management which pursues its policies by harassment and intimidation. Why are they able to do that?

The whole industrial scene in Britain has been transformed by seven major pieces of legislation, all designed to destroy effective trade

unionism here in Britain.

We had Margaret Thatcher advising the Russians to take to the streets in defence of Perestroika and I don't recall her saying that they should have a ballot. That's rather strange isn't it?

It's OK to have strikes in the Soviet Union, in Czechoslovakia and Poland, but not here, not here at home.

Reference has been made to the TUC decision in Glasgow. What saddens me is that they tried to create some euphoria about repealing the 1990 Act.

Just repealing the 1990 Act will still leave the trade union movement impotent, unable to defend its members within the framework of law. So the TUC is quite happy to see laws applied that prevent trade unions defending the interests of their members.

The British labour movement is prepared to accept trade union laws that our so-called partners in Europe wouldn't accept. And the trade union movement is quite happy to allow the judiciary to resolve conflicts within the trade union movement.

All trade unions within the international movement call on each other for solidarity action. When we called for solidarity in our struggle, the Australian dockers, the Danish dockers, the French railwaymen and the seamen all responded. But now we in Britain can call on the international movement to support us in our struggle, but they can't call on us to respond and help them in their struggles because it's illegal.

Everybody's preoccupied with ballots. Now I'm a supporter of ballots, and the NUM supports ballots.

For me ballots aren't a contentious issue. Postal ballots are.

It may interest you to know that British Coal has refused to sell us a membership list of our members. They said it would cost us £5,000. We said we would pay it, two years ago. We're still waiting for that list.

And if British Coal did agree to give us an up-to-date list, it'd be correct as of one month ago. The period allowed for postal balloting means that that list would be three months old if used for a postal ballot.

On the basis of the membership that we've been losing, about 700 members a month, 2,100 ex-miners would get a ballot paper who are no longer employed in the industry. Under our normal workplace balloting arrangements, where people are struck off the branch register as soon as they leave, we have an accurate reflection of all those people entitled to vote.

So I don't see a postal ballot being an extension of democracy, especially not when you're lucky to get 30% of people participating in it.

Postal balloting is not about extending the democratic process. It's about allowing the likes of Maxwell and Murdoch the right to interfere in ballots. We've just seen the *Mirror* declaring which candidate they are supporting in the T&G ballot.

There is a whole range of legislative procedures that are contained in laws set to remain if we get a Labour government which will limit how we can defend our members' interests.

The past eighteen months have been the most difficult in my trade union life. The *Mirror* campaign and the Cook Report have put a considerable amount of pressure on us.

Yes, we did things that didn't conform to the law in order to ensure that the NUM survived. Our crime was really to succeed. I'm proud of the role I've played in defending the NUM against the sequestrator and against receivership.

Most of that nonsense is behind us now. I would like to say thankyou for the support which many comrades have given us through that difficult period.

The fight goes on. Together we will overcome the difficulties and go, as Michael McGahey used to say during the miners' strike, "From defeat to defeat to defeat to final victory".

Gail Cameron, Peter Heathfield, Cate Murphy and Dennis Skinner were speaking at the Labour Party Socialists/SMTUC fringe meeting at Brighton.



Why is the front bench

Cate Murphy, Labour Party Socialists trade union officer, spelled out why the Labour front bench plans to keep the anti-union laws, and why it should be opposed.

We went into the 1987 election on a platform of repealing the Tory union legislation. Since then it has been backtracking all the way.

We now have a policy which would mean that *solidarity action* would continue to be unlawful, and unlimited fines would still be imposed on unions by the judges if they refused to accept injunctions.

If the fines were ignored, total sequestration of a union's assets could take place.

The hated Taff Vale decision, making unions financially responsible for the actions of officials — reversed in 1906 and reintroduced by Tebbit in 1982 — would continue in force. Remember, comrades, it was opposition to Taff Vale, more than any other issue, which launched the Labour Party in the first place!

Detailed requirements for ballots, compromising the right of union members to make their own rules, would continue. Restrictions on picketing would continue.

The Labour front bench's proposed new framework is inadequate, and indeed compromises hard-won and long-standing human rights. Perhaps it is worth

'This is just the beginning'

Gail Cameron, Wallasey CLP delegate, argues the case for a charter of positive rights



You can be sure that if the Tories get in again, their trade union legislation is going to make it even more difficult for trade unionists to operate in this country.

So we have to be very positive and quite forceful about our call for a Workers' Charter.

The resolution that is coming up this week at Labour Party Conference expresses ideas that we have been pushing for a number of years. We have had a number of successes.

The North West region of the Labour Party has policy to call for the repeal of the anti-trade union legislation and for a bill of positive rights for workers. But we have had setbacks too.

This year only one union put in a resolution calling for the repeal of all anti-union legislation — BETA — and in the compositing meeting they decided that they preferred to go in with the safer, cosier big resolution. So we haven't got a union backer.

A lot of the big issues are contained in that other composite — rights for homeworkers, rights for

women employees, and so on, but the only way that they are really going to be secured is if anti-union legislation is destroyed. For low-paid women workers, solidarity action is crucial if we are actually going to get the minimum wage paid.

And we should also explain that trade unionism can be popular. During the ambulance workers' dispute a couple of years ago, a poll showed that a majority of Tory voters were in favour of "secondary action" — of trade unions coming out in support of these health workers.

And we should remember that next year, win or lose the General Election, trade union rights are going to be crucial once again.

We have to keep on having those arguments. We have to keep on making sure that our opinions are voiced on conference floor.

This is just the beginning of our fight. We'll be coming back next year, and the year after, and in the end we'll win.

Copies of the Workers' Charter are available from Cate Murphy, LPS TU officer, 58 Florence Road, London SE14.

Stand up for Real Socialism!

Conference
10.30 to 5

Saturday 2 November
Caxton House, Archway,
London N19.

Debates between right and left
include:

- Socialist planning or free market economics?
- After Stalinism — is socialism dead?
- 1917 — Lenin's coup or workers' revolution?

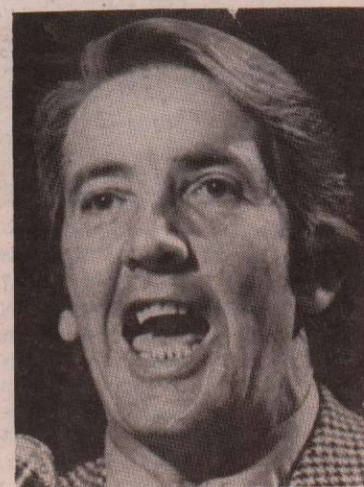
Tickets: £6 waged, £4 low-waged and students, £2 unwaged. Send cheques to 'Stand up for Real Socialism', 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

the trade unions



'These yuppie people have not experienced what it is like to work'

Dennis Skinner MP argues that society is changed by people taking action not by throwing in the towel



I spent 21 years in the pit, and I've spent 21 years in Parliament and there is a difference.

When you get to Parliament it's a different ball game altogether. You realise then why it is that the National Executive of the Labour Party and the TUC can carry resolutions to tell the Labour government not to repeal the anti-trade union laws.

They've got it made. When I went down there, the first thing was I didn't know when I'd got to turn up for work. Nobody tells you.

I phoned to ask and I was told: you're on the payroll from the moment you got elected so don't worry.

When I sit at that NEC table, I know what the yuppie people around that table are likely to do because they have not experienced having to work in a pit or work in a factory or scrub floors. They don't know about that sort of thing.

Now Gerald Kaufman is sponsored by the Boilermakers! Robin Cook is a railwayman! Tam Dalyell is in the RMT! I mean, they were educated at Eton!

More and more Labour MPs are coming from that part of the world which doesn't know what it's like to clock on.

The labour movement is losing members because of the changes taking place in industry, and we're not picking them up at the other end because we haven't got the same kind of attitude that we used to have — namely that we've got an industrial wing and a political wing and when the Labour Party is not in government it's the job of the industrial wing to fight the Tories in

an extra-parliamentary way.

Is it any wonder that the next Labour government doesn't want to repeal all those Tory trade union laws? They don't want to handle the fact that people are going to change society by taking action. But that's how society is changed. It's not changed in Parliament, it's changed outside.

The Poll Tax was defeated in Trafalgar Square and by the 14 million people that didn't pay.

Today there is a generation of trade union leaders who have thrown in the towel. That's how bad it is.

People say we should be restrained so that we can win the election. We should go softly in carpet slippers down to the polling station, and then we'll win.

But it has never worked before. All this retreat could well finish up bringing a further defeat upon us.

But when the Labour government is elected, I am going to be voting for total repeal. We are going to put amendments down and if they don't put them on the statute books, some of us are going to make them face the music.

h promising so little?



school after nine and we are educated, is that we had picket lines. The Party must remind the leadership of where we come from, or we die as a movement".

Neil should remember those words today. It's up to workers in struggle to decide how to picket, where, and in what numbers. It is not a question for the judges or anyone else.

Why is the front bench promising so little? The usual explanation we are given is that the unions are unpopular, they are a vote-loser.

I don't believe that for one minute. It seems to me that the real reason for keeping the anti-union laws is to paper over the cracks in Labour's economic policy.

The anti-union laws are going to

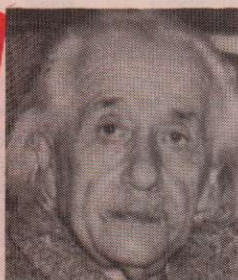
be used to force working-class people to pay for the crises of the capitalist system. They are going to be used to make sure that the wage controls involved in the "National Economic Assessment" stick. The TUC will be the front line for policing that policy, the laws the second.

We are heading for a re-run of the 1974-9 government. There is no getting round it.

We have got to face up to that reality. Either we go along with what the leadership is proposing, or we resist it. Labour Party Socialists exists, and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee exists, to organise the resistance, to defend workers in struggle, and to make sure that the anti-union laws are repealed by the next Labour Government and we get a Charter of Positive Rights for Workers.

remembering what the MP for Redwellty said when Jim Callaghan was calling on workers to cross picket lines.

"The only reason we've come so far, the reason that children stay in



"An oligarchy of private capital, the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organised political society"

Albert Einstein

The capitalists are trying to do to socialism what Stalinism did for four decades — bury it under a mountain of lies and misrepresentation. We say that Stalinism was the opposite of socialism! If you agree, join us in standing up to those who are again trying to bury socialism. Sign our declaration. Wear our badge. Join STAND UP FOR REAL SOCIALISM.



"The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself".

Karl Marx

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When the Healyites split

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

By Sean Matgamna

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

Yes — and sometimes people learn from history but go on nevertheless to relive it because time passes and they forget what they learned.

Of course, no two situations are exactly parallel, but *Militant's* departure from the Labour Party now is remarkably like events in the mid-'60s when the group that evolved into Healy's crazy WRP broke away from the Labour Party. After 17 years' work there, the Healyites left the Labour Party in 1964, on the eve of Labour forming its first government in 13 years. The similarity between those events and what is happening now is so close and so comprehensive that we could be living through one of those periodic Hollywood remakes of old movies, using the same shooting script, usually crudified.

Except that Hollywood remakes old successes. This is a re-run of one of the most destructive episodes in the history of the revolutionary left in Britain.

Militant had a prominent role in the earlier version of the events we are now living through. Its role then was that of outspoken and embittered opponent of the Healyite

breakaway. So it played the role then that *SO* is playing now? Not quite. *SO*, unlike *Militant* in 1964-5, will not under any circumstances join with the right wing in expelling other leftists from the Labour Party, nor will we support the right wing in calling in the police to eject young supporters of the breakaway group.

Militant did those things when the Healyites were making their messy break with the Labour Party. *Militant* itself split over the issue: the definitive split between *Militant* and the IMG (a tendency represented today by three factions, *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Action*, and the Communist League) occurred because of *Militant's* enthusiastic activities in 1964-5 to preserve the Labour Party against "sectarian disruption" and "hooliganism".

The Healyites were a sizeable group. Their initial nucleus had joined the Labour Party in 1947 and had helped organise the Labour Party left. They won some hundreds of people from the Communist Party in the late '50s. They made bigger gains than any Trotskyist group had anywhere in the world for the previous decade.

They were in the Labour Party, recognising it as the mass working-class party and recognising that socialists either related to that movement or marginalised themselves where mass working-class politics was concerned. They did important work in industry and in the trade unions, too.

In February 1959 they had set up a public organisation, the Socialist Labour League, which claimed to be an integral part of the Labour Party. The National Executive Com-



Organising events like this dance at a Wigan Labour Club, the Healyites recruited hundreds of young people — and then led them into the political desert...

mittee banned the organisation and its weekly paper, *The Newsletter*, within two weeks.

By 1960 the Healyites' big spurt of growth was over. They organised activity to "Defend Clause Four" from Gaitskell's attempt to jettison it; they organised against the right wing on unilateralism and expressed a proper disgust at the spinelessness of the Foot-led *Tribune* left.

Then as now, there was not a lot of life in the Labour Party. Nevertheless, that was the working-class movement in politics at that time. The situation could not be changed by will or fantasy. The Healyites understood that.

Two things changed the situation. After Labour's third General Election defeat, in 1959, the Labour youth movement — closed down in 1955 — was restarted. It grew quickly, providing an audience for the left. And the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament grew to be a mass movement. A stream of newly radicalised youth came out of it into the Young Socialists.

The Healyites had maintained a small youth paper through the years when there was no national Labour youth movement. (*Keep Left*: the name came from a Labour pressure group of the '40s, a sort of parallel to the Tory Bruges Group now).

Local Labour Parties could have youth sections, and some did: *Keep Left* linked some of them together. Their influence grew rapidly in the new youth organisation. They made a deliberate turn away from a narrow discussion-group idea of the Young Socialists, and organised social events for working-class youth, drawing them slowly into politics. Some big Young Socialists groups were built like that.

The Labour Party responded as it was wont to. *Keep Left* was banned in July 1962. They defied the ban and continued to grow in the YS. Despite Labour Party leadership harassment, and the occasional expulsion, they gained the majority on the National Committee of the Young Socialists.

This was now the Wilson Labour Party, and it was plain by 1963 that the Tories were on their way out. Labour would be in power, being tested by events and judged by workers in the Labour Party and the trade unions. It was then that the Healy group — after 17 years — decided to break with the Labour Party!

Here we need to backtrack and look a little more closely at the Healy organisation. In the

'40s, during and after the war, the Trotskyists were organised in a small party (called the Revolutionary Communist Party from 1944 to '49) which, at its biggest, reached maybe 500 members. The organisation grew during the war when the Labour Party was in a coalition government with the Tories and the then very important Communist Party was organising the breaking of strikes to help the war effort of Stalin's ally Britain.

The RCP developed the illusion that it could continue to grow in a straight line. The tremendous revival of Labour in 1944-5, leading to the 1945 victory, when workers turned to the Labour Party as the only governmental alternative to the Tories, took most of the organisation by surprise. The RCP began to fall apart, and slowly disintegrated. Its remnant, the future *Militant* and the future SWP, collapsed into the Labour Party in 1949-50 because they could not think of anything better to do.

By contrast, Gerry Healy had been part of a minority faction since 1944, arguing that the Trotskyists should work within the Labour Party, that is, within the mainstream of working-class political activity. The Healyites had often false ideas of what was likely to happen in the Labour Party in the period ahead, but their central idea made sense. They separated from the rest of the RCP in 1947 and began work in the Labour Party.

The organisation that evolved was, however, a peculiar one. It never lost the character of a factional group, so that the organisation was always rather undemocratic. This got worse as time went on. By the early '60s it was an extremely autocratic grouping, though still a long way from the vicious religious cult it became in the '70s.

The influx of raw, politically uneducated youth in the early '60s, youth with no experience of the earlier discussions on the Labour Party and linked questions, probably speeded up the process of turning the Healy group into a cult.

Healy and his friends used the youth, playing on them and demagogically exploiting their aspirations and wishes against the older cadres of the group. In the process they raised the machine above the organisation and Healy above the machine as supreme Caesar. There were always big elements of that in the Healy group, but it now became all-shaping.

Lack of honest accounting was always a feature of the Healyites. They would develop

'Independent' Young Socialists march into the wilderness

by Peter Taaffe

AT THEIR UNOFFICIAL Morecambe conference held on February 27 and 28, and attended by 1,000 young people, the expelled Young Socialist National Committee (Majority) formed a breakaway youth movement.

With the acceptance of *Keep Left* as the official paper of the new movement, the organisers have clearly split from the Labour Party. The conference merely consummated a position which has actually existed for some months. The gathering was more a rally to launch the new movement.

A number of London branches such as Clapham and Wandsworth appeared as sponsors of resolutions which they had never seen or discussed. Delegates were present from areas where the YS has been closed down (e.g. Streatham and Birkenhead).

The story appears to have been the same up and down the country. There was one resolution from a branch called Ashton (minority).

Scarcely a dissident voice was raised in debate as resolution after resolution was accepted with near unanimity. This alone should have warned David Ashby and his committee that this was a gathering of the "faithful", many of whom were unaware of the real issues at stake.

In the debate on foreign policy, a delegate drew whistling and applause when he said that there was an "instinctive hatred of America by the British working class". This display of crude nationalism was corrected, it is true, by

the editor of *Keep Left*, but the very fact that such things could be said and find a response in the conference, is an indication of the flimsy basis on which the new movement rests.

Another subject of mild disagreement was the shabby role of *Keep Left* supporters during the November apprentices' strike.

The delegate from Ashton stirred the conference when he said that "attacks by the National Committee on the apprentices' strike had split the movement". John Robertson, former YS chairman, ignored Ashby and rushed to the platform to denounce the Ashton delegate and the "conscious saboteurs" of the apprentices' movement, i.e. *Militant* and the Young Communist League.

Despite this hysteria, *Keep Left* found it difficult to apologise for the actions of Ashby, Farley and company, who broke the elementary rule of support for workers in struggle.

The advanced members — a minority at this conference — who will constitute the backbone of the new movement, should have been directed towards work inside the Labour Party. Dave Ashby, in a schizoid phrenic mood, declared at a press conference that the Labour Party is a "political expression" of the working class and yet continued the headlong plunge into the political wilderness.

For the past twelve years, the criticism levelled by the Marxist left at the Labour leadership has mainly been in the realms of ideas. It has now become possible to show the rank and file of the party just what the ideas

of Wilson & Co. mean in practice. A great job of educating the rank and file of the party by contrasting the past words and the present deeds of the Labour leaders should be undertaken by Young Socialists.

At the start of this vital period, *Keep Left* takes outside the Labour Party many comrades who can play an important role in the struggles ahead.

The history of the British labour movement is rich in examples of costly hysterical walk-outs and childish "left-turns" by sects with claims to divine leadership.

Marxists criticised the Independent Labour Party in 1933 for breaking from the Labour Party at the wrong time and on the wrong issue.

The ILP had at that time the support of 100,000 workers, yet the *Keep Left* tendency imagine that 1,000 (in reality a much smaller number) constitutes a viable alternative to the Labour Party.

Just as dangerous is the theoretical cover which is given to this escapade, namely, that the unorganised, unskilled adults and youth will not turn to the Labour Party.

But the Labour Party is not only the political expression of the organised workers, but also of the unorganised and politically backward sections. At times of crisis they will turn first to the Labour Party for solutions to their problems.

The new movement will melt away within a short period, but the existence of a mythical, unofficial, national committee will become the focal point of

walk-outs at every episodic event, both inside and outside the Labour Party. The *Keep Left* tendency are prisoners of these episodic events. They must have an unending succession of pragmatic issues to constantly activate their ranks.

The plight of the old-age pensioners and their scandalous treatment by the Labour government — an important but temporary issue — is built into the new movement's constitution.

Recent experiences should warn those comrades who support the new movement of the folly of their actions. The arch-Conservative *Daily Telegraph* commented: "The breaking away of the extreme left, although temporarily embarrassing for Transport House, may ultimately be the best thing that could happen to the Labour Party".

By the Labour Party the Tory press means the Labour leaders.

After four years of expulsions, proscriptions and bureaucratic stifling, the right wing are quite content to provoke a section of the YS into throwing in their hand. This is what the attempt to form an open youth movement means.

The enthusiasm of the comrades who make up the ranks of the new movement will be dissipated in fruitless campaigns unless they dissolve the organisation and turn towards the real struggle inside the Labour Party. A refusal to do this and join forces with other left tendencies in the struggle for a Socialist programme will doom them to isolation and gradual demoralisation.

Peter Taaffe wrote a lucid criticism of the Healyite breakaway in *Militant*. Now he helps lead a similar

breakaway, and at a time of deep depression for the industrial class struggle.

from the Labour Party



Where was *Militant* in all this? *Militant*, too, was a fragment of the old RCP, of which Ted Grant had been one of the three or four central leaders. It dwindled to very little in the '50s, revived briefly in the late '50s when it had a monthly four-page tabloid paper (*Socialist Fight*), and then declined again, unable in 1960-1 even to maintain a monthly 12-page duplicated version of *Socialist Fight*.

But *Militant*, too, grew a little in the Young Socialists, publishing a joint paper with the future SWP until 1963. Then, as the Healy group moved towards its sectarian desertion of the Labour Party, individuals here and there joined *Militant*. One of them was the technically competent journalist Roger Protz. *Militant* made a new start, publishing *Militant* from October 1964 as a well-designed eight-pager.

The future IMG, a group based in Nottingham which published a weekly duplicated paper, *The Week*, had, like *Militant*, ties to the Pablo-Mandel "Fourth International", and they now fused with *Militant*. Things were going better for *Militant* than for many years. Then the Healyites intervened.

By provoking their own expulsions where they could, they intended to make it as difficult as possible for leftists who were hostile to the dominant Labour Party right wing to stay in the Labour Party. They denounced Trotskyists who refused to go with them out of the Labour Party as "traitors", "scabs", "Labour Party finks", and so on. *Militant* quite rightly refused to be bullied and browbeaten, and insisted on exercising "self-determination".

At least one *Militant* supporter did more. A Ceylonese Trotskyist, S. Mani, was the publicly listed business manager of *Militant*, and a member of Wandsworth Young Socialists.

When several Healyite youth were being expelled there, the police were called by the right wing. Mani acquiesced and either voted for the expulsions or abstained. (The details were disputed). This was grist to the Healyites' mill. They made a great fuss about the "Mani affair".

The recent ex-Healyites in *Militant* were upset about it too — for the reason that they were still sensitive to the moral pressure of the Healyites as well as for the good political reasons. Things were heated up by the work of an undercover Healyite agent within *Militant*, one Ted Knight.

The fifth issue of *Militant* had just gone to press, so Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe, the nominal editor, put a duplicated leaflet inside the paper defending Mani. Whatever Mani had done, they said, he was right: the issue was "hooliganism". Whatever the right wing had done in Wandsworth, it had been provoked by the "hooliganism" of the Healyites!

There was hooliganism and unruliness, but to take this line was to assume the role of "left-wing political attorney" for right-wing action against the Healyite youth, putting a "political" gloss on it, forgetting that the right-wingers were expelling people long before the Healyites decided to go out with as much of a bang as possible.

It was an extraordinary performance. It split *Militant*. The Nottingham group walked out, and so did almost all the ex-Healyites, including Protz, editor of *Militant*. For a long time *Militant* was reduced to a very amateurish four pages on a not-quite-monthly schedule.

The parallels are obvious and striking. Like the Healyites, *Militant* has for long had very false ideas about the likely development of the Labour Party and the Labour Left.

Like the Healyites, it uses mystifying and nonsensical slogans like "Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme". Like the Healyites, *Militant* has recruited a lot of politically raw youth in a time of stagnation for the Labour Party. Like the Healyites, *Militant* is more and more irrational and unrealistic. The Walton by-election can-



4-page *Militant* after the 1965 split: unfunny cartoon (to understand it you had first to read a heavy article on page 2)

didacy may have been right or wrong, as you like, but the debauch of lying *Militant* went in for around it is reminiscent of nothing so much as the Healyites; so is the gross unrealism of their assessment of the vote they got.

Like the Healyites then, *Militant* has the internal life of a highly emotional religious group where strong feeling attaches to what should be empirical and practical questions of judgment. The decision to stand in Walton was made without serious discussion; the organisation was bounced by a group at its centre into a radical change; even Ted Grant himself could not get a proper hearing when he opposed the new turn.

If *Militant* can organise young people for socialism — good! Organising young people is as desirable now as it was when the leaders of *Militant* justified calling the police on some of the youth the Healyites had organised.

Ultimately, unless such youth are taught to relate to the labour movement, they will be just sect-fodder outside the labour movement. That would not necessarily exclude a period of activity outside the Labour Party. Yet *Militant* is now trying to organise revolutionary youth as part of a stupid little splurge of electoralism: necessarily they minimise or lose sight of the central question of kicking the Tories out.

They necessarily act and speak and educate the youth as if the Labour Party — even before it is in office — is the main enemy. They go off to organise "new" youth at a time when the class struggle is at a 50-year nadir: the underlying thought, or half-thought, is inescapably that it is possible to start again afresh, outside the existing labour movement. That is the idea, for example, in a recent *Militant* article on Keir Hardie, angled to suggest that there is a parallel between that pioneer and *Militant's* electioneering now and a parallel between today's Labour Party, based on the trade unions, and the 19th century Liberal Party. This is a premature RIP for the labour movement!

It is the Healyite idea all over again. For it to be sensible, you would have to assume that the labour movement will go on declining, draining into the sands of history, without any revival. And even then the question would arise: why can we believe that a new labour movement can be built in such conditions?

The results already of *Militant's* adventure in Walton have been such as to discredit its strategic architects as politically competent people for the next hundred years! In Walton they could not possibly have gained as much as they were almost certain to lose and are losing: that, plus the lies and unrealistic boasting, is sufficient to establish that *Militant's* leaders do not know what they are doing now. At the root of their new turn is bitter disgust and loss of faith not only in the preposterously optimistic perspectives *Militant* had for the Labour Party, but in the political labour movement itself. Gerry Healy died in 1990: he is being reborn in 1991.

quite wrong hopes and perspectives for the Labour Party left, and then not do a proper balance sheet to learn from their errors. In 1960-1 they developed grotesque hopes — self-evidently false to anyone not in the grip of wishful thinking — about the prospects of the nuclear disarmament issue transforming the labour movement — and then recoiled from the Labour left in bitter disappointment.

The lack of internal democracy meant that nobody could try to learn the lessons from such experiences or propose realistic assessments. The internal atmosphere was increasingly that of a religious organisation in which what should be rational and empirical questions of judgment and assessment, on which more than one view was possible from a common viewpoint and common aspirations and hopes, became infused with emotion and loyalties; and then with heresy and the fear of heresy. The leadership — orchestrated bludgeoning of any dissent, using those tools, made all internal life impossible. It also, increasingly, made rational life impossible. The raw youth were the leadership's cudgel against "fainthearts" and "do-nothings".

This was the group which, disgusted with the Labour Party's internal inertia after the unilateralist controversy, found itself growing and rapidly recruiting raw youth from campaigns against youth unemployment or police violence or from Young Socialist dances in places like the Wigan Labour Clubs. In terms of immediate growth, youth was the key.

And so they forgot about everything else, about the big questions of the necessary evolution of the labour movement and about questions of proportion. The Young Socialists was very tiny indeed compared to the broader labour movement and the Labour Party. But the Healyites began to act with their YS majority as if the YS could ignore the Labour Party and behave as an autonomous revolutionary youth group.

At some time in 1964 Healy decided to break the YS from the Labour Party. Individual expulsions were routine by now. The Healyites, looking for a break, began to court and provoke expulsions. They then used agitation against the expulsions both to line up broad support and to justify the break they had decided on. They would continue to claim that they were all expelled.

The split was consummated at Easter 1965 at a Healyite-convened Young Socialists conference. The rump, soon renamed the

Labour Party Young Socialists, met in conference in the autumn. The Healyites, those of them who remembered what they used to think about such issues, said that they had not deserted the mass labour movement, or that they would be back: they passed resolutions at their 1965 conference saying that they would build the Young Socialists and then turn back to the Labour Party.

It was all nonsense. Events had their own momentum. The Healyite youth organised a few big and impressive marches, with lots of red flags and portraits of Trotsky and Lenin, but it was all marginal to the labour movement. They got more sectarian and crazier as time went on. But that is outside my subject.

The Labour Government of 1964-70 disgusted the left, and not only the left. In the later 1960s there was a big exodus of the left from the Labour Party (the IS, forerunners of the SWP, drifted out in 1967).

Yet Labour remained the centre of working-class politics. When in 1974 a great industrial movement, in the first place the miners, led to the rejection at the polls of the Tory Government of Edward Heath, it was still the Labour Party that progressive anti-Tory workers turned to. Labour had not been discredited then, any more than it has now.



"Keep Left", paper of the youth who followed Gerry Healy out of the Labour Party. Having abandoned the political labour movement, they agitated amongst the public at large to "make the left Labour MPs — people like Michael Foot — fight!"

SWP sneers at Russian socialists

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Martin Thomas

The best thing that has happened in the USSR since the August coup is the launching of an appeal for a broad Labour Party to represent the interests of the working class against the bureaucrats and business people who now dominate politics there with their drive towards market capitalism.

The initiative has been taken by Boris Kagarlitsky's Socialist Party, and they have got the signatures of some leading Moscow trade unionists for their appeal, which we print on this page.

Whether this appeal will win broad enough support, and just how far the Socialist Party should or should not have made compromises in drafting the appeal in order to try to win support, it is impossible to say at this distance. The situation in the USSR now is not easy for socialists. Drastic changes are underway, yet the working-class movement is extremely weak, even at a trade union level, and much of it is aligned behind Yeltsin and pro-capitalist ideas.

Socialists need to try to rebuild a movement starting from basic working-class self-defence in the coming turmoil, and that, clearly, is what the Moscow socialists are trying to do.

"Socialist Worker's answer is always to organise a small 'militant minority' instead of... a broad workers' party"

Yet, in last week's *Socialist Worker* they were roundly denounced by SWP junior guru Alex Callinicos. Quoting a short excerpt from the appeal, he seized on one phrase — "a civilized form of market" — and sneered: "There's a good slogan for Neil Kinnock's (or indeed John Major's) election manifesto".

The sneer is stupid. The appeal calls for "a civilized form of market" in the context of transforming the USSR's present state sector into a "social sector" under worker management and "democratic regulation of the economy". Hardly the same as Kinnock or Major!

"A civilized form of market" is a feeble and empty slogan for Britain. In the USSR where people's lives are dominated by very uncivilized markets — markets where you have to queue for hours, pay bribes, or have influential friends in order to get anything — and where "wildcat capitalism" is fast coming in, it is not so feeble or empty.

Or does Callinicos think that socialists in Moscow should propose abolishing all market mechanisms im-

mediately? If so, how? How could even the best socialist government there collect the information necessary for total planning to replace all markets?

But Callinicos would probably be hostile to an appeal for a Labour Party whatever the wording. Not only in Britain today, but in all countries in all circumstances — even in times of revolutionary turmoil, as in South Africa in the '80s and the USSR today — *Socialist Worker's* answer is always to organise a small "militant minority" instead of (rather than as well as) organising a broad workers' party.

Oddly, Callinicos criticises Kagarlitsky and the Socialist Party for "leaving the initiative to the liberals". That is precisely what *Socialist Worker's* policy does — in Britain where they abstain from the struggle inside the Labour Party and thus leave mass working class politics (at election time, for example) to the "Liberal-Labour" Kinnockites, or in the USSR, if the socialists were to make no effort to organise a broader workers' movement.

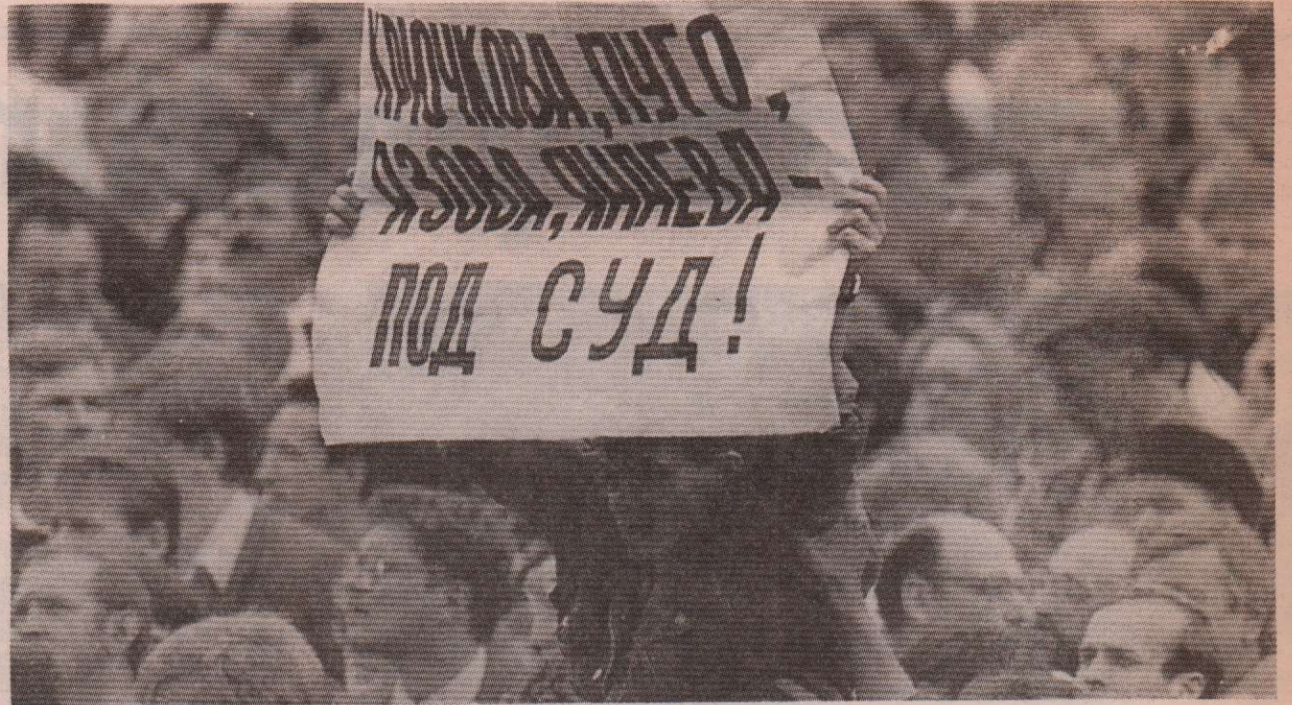
Callinicos links his criticism of the Labour Party appeal with a criticism of Boris Kagarlitsky's analysis of the August coup. (That analysis first appeared in English in *Socialist Organiser*, but Callinicos, of course, refers only to another article by Kagarlitsky in the *New Statesman*).

Kagarlitsky argues that Yanayev, Kryuchkov, Pugo, and the other coup-makers were in fact manipulated by Yeltsin, and the real coup was Yeltsin's. Callinicos, I think, is right to disagree; whatever the complications, between 19 and 21 August, Yeltsin stood for the democratic freedoms that the Soviet people had gained since 1985, and socialists should have been emphatically on his side. (In practice, it seems, despite Kagarlitsky's analysis, the Socialist Party — through its members in the Moscow City Council, for example — did take that side).

The most important deficiencies of the Labour Party appeal, in my view — whether they were avoidable or not, I don't know — are its lack of clear directions for taking a lead in the fight for democratic rights and for the dismantling of the old Stalinist state machine, and its failure to mention the national question. Callinicos says nothing on these points.

Last year *Socialist Worker* tried to make funding for Kagarlitsky's group the only form of practical solidarity from Britain for socialists in the Eastern Bloc; they refused to cooperate with the "Support the Socialists" appeal, launched by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc, which raised money not only for Kagarlitsky's group but also for socialists in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Now they have fallen out with Kagarlitsky, what will *Socialist Worker* do? Drop all solidarity activity, or reconsider their refusal to join a broader campaign?



'The people have shown their refusal to go on as before'

USSR socialists speak out:

For a mass labour party!

Two weeks ago we published a report of a call by the Socialist Party and others in the Soviet Union for the formation of a labour party. Here, we publish the statement, translated by Anatoly Voronov

A new political situation has been created in the country. In the events of 19-21 August 1991, the people have shown their refusal to go on as before and their determination to defend the elected organs of power. For all that, the crisis in the country has not been resolved. It is vital to bring the economy rapidly out of chaos, to re-establish normal economic relations between regions and enterprises, and to get consumer goods to the market in sufficient quantities.

The dominant forces in the country today, whatever their nuances, are united in the idea that these problems can only be solved by very large-scale privatisation, a massive appeal to foreign capital, and the systematic defence of private entrepreneurs and of the possessing classes which have come out of the nomenklatura. This aspiration to create a "radical capitalist future" expresses rejection of everything which could in any way be associated with socialism, including basic social guarantees like the right to work, free education and free health care.

We consider that the unanimity of the victors is dangerous, above all because without opposition and without alternative positions being represented within the organs of power, democracy will not be democracy. The parties of the majority currently in power, have as their objective to defend business people; as for us, we declare that our object is above all the defence of the wage workers.

Decades of the communist

totalitarian regime have discredited socialist values, and the very idea of the emancipation of labour. But these values do not come from armchair meditations; they are linked to the necessity of a political defence of the workers' interests. The collapse of the CPSU opens up, at long last, the possibility of creating an authentic left movement which will be the expression of that necessity.

Society needs a new mass party defending:

- the right to work;
- the reform of the system of social guarantees;
- economic democracy; workers' participation in the workplaces in decisions affecting their living standards and work conditions;
- the independence of the trade unions and a guarantee of trade union rights in all workplaces, whatever the form of property; and the ratification of our country of the ILO convention;
- the development of collective and municipal forms of property, and the transformation of the state sector of the economy into a modern and efficient, decentralised social sector which can get the country out of the crisis;

"We declare our intention to create a mass labour party, based on rank-and-file initiative"

- a halt to the uncontrolled "wildcat" bureaucratic privatisation of the old "people's property" sector; and opposition to the transformation of state monopolies into private monopolies;
- rights for consumers and independent entrepreneurs;
- the democratic regulation of the economy, as the indispensable condition for the installation of civilised forms of the market;
- integration into the world market on conditions guaranteeing the interests of the national economy, and not the interests of the multinational corporations;
- self-management and a strong authority of people's representatives to the cen-

tralisation of executive power;

- honest government, guaranteeing the separation of state activity and a clear demarcation of the social sector and the private sector in the framework of a mixed economy;
- real equality for women and the possibility for them to participate fully in social life without disadvantage to their rights and obligations as mothers;
- national, cultural and religious rights for minorities.

We declare our intention to create a mass labour party, based on rank-and-file initiative. We reject the idea of a vanguard party. The labour party should be the party of political support for the trade unions and the workers' movement. Only such a party can become an integral part of the movement of left forces on an international scale. We call on all social

forces, all trade union organisations conscious of the necessity of a political defence of the interests of the wage-workers, and all citizens who are aware of the danger of a one-party system and share the ideas expressed here, to join this initiative.

Nikolai Nikolaevich Isachar (President of Moscow City Council), Andrei Konstantinovich Isaev (Chief editor of the Trade Union and Workers' Movement Information Centre, KASKOR), Boris Julievich Kagarlitsky (Socialist Party), Vladimir Alexandrovich Kondratov (Socialist Party), Mikhail Dmitrievich Nagaitsev (Vice-President of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions), Tatiana Leonidovna Frolova (official of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions for relations with social organisations) Moscow, 28th August 1991



Yeltsin: represents aspirations to create a 'radical capitalist future' — a total 'rejection of basic social guarantees'

A little out of control

Cinema

Cathy Nugent reviews 'Trust'

'Trust' is a brilliant dead-pan comedy and as such it is, like a line from the film, either dangerously sincere or sincerely dangerous.

The story is simple enough, an average tale of twisted up family relations. But, if there is a supplementary point to this particular version, it is "I blame the parents".

Marie (Adrienne Shelly) is 16 and pregnant. Her father takes the news badly, has a heart attack and falls down dead. Marie blames herself and turns herself into Mommy's Cinderella to do penance.

Marie meets Mathew (Martin Donovan) along the way. A genius fixer of things, former juvenile delinquent, Mathew has irresistible urges to punch people around the head. "He's nice, but a little out of

control", says Marie. Marie and Mathew fall in love and decide to get married and bring up baby and settle down to the suburban life from which they came. But their plans will be thwarted, if Mommy has anything to do with it...

As for the dangerously sincere, there is plenty of that. I mean "moving bits". At one point Marie writes in her notebook, "I am ashamed of being young, I am ashamed of being stupid". Well, isn't that sad? But it's true, it's crap being young. Why are parents/adults always so surprised that young people make mistakes? After all, they're always saying that you're too young to make your own choices/sleep with someone/buy beer, etc. etc.

I have never seen anything else by Hal Hartley who directed this film, but he obviously deserves the respect he is getting in reviews. They call him a "cult director", whatever that means. Presumably if you make good films in a world full of crap films, you become a cult figure!

Go and see this very good film.



It's a weird world...

Sex and society

By Vicki Morris

What a bloody weird world we live in. For many people the weirdness manifests itself — if in nothing else — in those most natural of human relations, the sex-

ual.

Many people reading the story about Jennifer Saunders, the teenager who made love to two seventeen year olds using a strap-on penis, will have either laughed their heads off or choked with rage.

It's an almost unbelievable story but, to quote one of the victim's fathers, "it could have happened to anyone".

I suppose it could. All sorts of weird things happen to

people in the bedroom (and out of it).

I think the women who were deceived were wronged, and people shouldn't dismiss the trauma that the revelations will have caused them. But that Jennifer Saunders should be sent down for six years is one example of the weirdness I talk about.

How many rapists, convicted of brutally attacking women and forcing their real penises into them, would face such punishment? Altogether

now: "Not many".

I don't think that it's woolly liberal to say that Jennifer Saunders needs counselling, not to bear the brunt of society's outrage. (As do the rapists for whom prison, very evidently, is no "cure").

Jennifer Saunders might be a lesbian, too afraid to come out, or she might be "a woman trapped in a man's body".

Now that we have the technology, and people in the medical profession who can

put aside their puzzlement at some people's desire to change their gender, society as a whole needs to catch up in its attitudes.

It shouldn't be hard for transsexuals to find acceptance amongst the population at large when they can find it in themselves and amongst friends and small sections of the medical profession.

Democracy needn't just be about reflecting the views of the majority — today we have the resources to provide

for, and the sense to commit them where there is the will, to people who constitute a minority, if only in this small area of human life. That should be the argument for socialists which comes out of this story.

Almost daily, the tabloids relate stories of people's 'weird' sex-lives. They often hound people whom they suspect of being lesbian or gay, make a misery of their lives for a while.

What the tabloids never say, what is staring them in the face, is that it's obviously 'normal' that a substantial proportion of the population in any society will do things that most others don't want to — or daren't admit to wanting to from time to time.

The biggest part of a socialist's job is exposing the absurdities in the 'common sense' which suits the needs of the powers that be.

A man who valued political honesty

Memoirs

Liz Millward reviews Eric Heffer's memoirs, *Never a Yes Man* (Verso)

Labour Party — of being associated with poverty and with the poor. Eric Heffer was proud of these connections.

He sets out his origins, his early working life and political activities as only a man who knows he has a great deal to be proud of can do.

Throughout his political life, Eric Heffer saw through all the lies of the capitalist propaganda machine: unlike the wimps of the current Labour leadership, he did not pander to those lies even when they seemed to have become all powerful and all conquering. He never lost his belief that the labour movement will one day tear down the capitalist city of lies and exploitation.

He never lost his belief that it is the duty of people who have seen through the lies to go on fighting capitalism — in good times and bad — until we bring it down. He agreed with the words of the Red Flag — words which should choke Neil Kinnock when, on ceremonial occasions, he sings them:

"It suits today the weak and base
Whose minds are fixed on pelf and place

To cringe before the rich man's frown
And haul our sacred emblem down.

But with heads uncovered swear we all

To bear it onwards 'til we fall.

That is unfashionably "emotional", of course. But so was Eric Heffer.

Eric was not prepared to pretend that it is possible to work with capitalism, or that it is better to dump your principles than be seen to have a row in public. As a result he was a constant thorn in the side of the current Labour leadership, saying the party has become an SDP Mark II, walking off the platform during Neil Kinnock's conference speech attacking the Liverpool councillors, and making his final speech in parliament against the Gulf War which Kinnock and company cravenly supported.

Nor did Eric fall for the myths that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc states were some form of socialism. His perspective was always that of the working class, and as he says "Working people, over the centuries have had enough of being collectivised, organised,



disciplined..."

His vision of socialism was essentially a vision of freedom: "It can only occur when genuine equality of opportunity exists, when the extremes of poverty and wealth are removed, when there is a genuine redistribution of wealth, when people work for each other, and when individual greed is not considered a virtue."

But this is not a utopian vision, or the Fabian ideal of an altruistic society controlled by benevolent but autocratic government.

Eric Heffer was a democrat, a genuine democrat amongst all the hypocrisy of the so-called democrats in both Labour and Tory parties. Eric's idea of democracy was of democracy from below — in the workplace,

on the streets and throughout the political parties.

That he points out that capitalism only loves democracy when it suits them and their profits is not unexpected. But he is also not afraid to say that democracy can be manipulated by "devious people". There are no prizes for guessing who he means:

"He has got away with it because the party elected him in the belief that he was a left wing leader who would carry out socialist policies. What an illusion that turned out to be."

Neil Kinnock ought to read this book. It would show him an alternative approach to politics. Probably he will not read it: it can not be pleasant for him to be reminded of what he once aspired to be.

It was written by a man who did not bend to every pressure, who never cared about personal prestige, who valued political honesty above all and who lived by his principles.

The tragedy is that Eric Heffer is dead and the ghost of the socialist renegade, Neil Kinnock, is — for now — cock-of-the-walk in the Labour Party!

The biggest part of a socialist's job is exposing the absurdities in the 'common sense'

I mean the sort of ideas that kept the working class divided or distracted by questions which don't bear on the real power struggle in our society — that between the bosses and their wage-slaves.

Jennifer Saunders' strap-on penis is small beer compared to the arrant hypocrisy and stupidity of what passes for 'common sense' in the field of sexual relations.

Controversy over 'Guardian' article, 'Gay Abandon'

A defeatist view

LETTERS

I was really pissed off when I read Jim Denham's latest 'Press Gang' entitled 'Hitlerian Guardian?' In it, he appears to rise to the defence of the 'liberal' Guardian against criticisms made by lesbians and gays about a recent, homophobic ar-

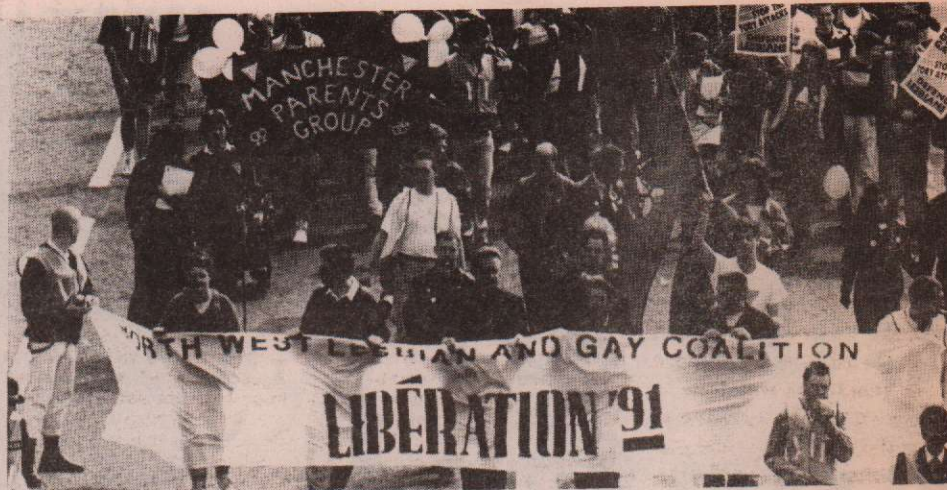
ticles published in 'Weekend Guardian'.

First, we were not, as he puts it, 'baying'. We were making a cogent, angry protest. That protest was about a grossly distorted, one-sided, defeatist view of gay men which consigned them to a life of self-seeking, self-destructive individualism. It said nothing about the incredible altruism, sense of community and responsibility

with which we have responded to HIV for instance.

Secondly, the protest over the Guardian needs to be seen in the context of the failure of the paper to print articles on the positive aspects of the lesbian and gay experience, despite the fact that many excellent lesbian and gay journalists have offered them. Frankly, we do expect better treatment from a 'liberal' paper.

Thirdly, this comes in the



We need to see more of the positive aspects of the lesbian and gay experience

wake of a renewed upsurge of homophobia in the press following the recent con-

troversy over 'outing' and the bluff pulled off by FROCS. Finally, yes we're quite

aware of the homophobia of the Sun!!

David Welch

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 3 October

"Is socialism dead?", Brighton SO meeting. 7.30, Eastern pub. Speaker: Cate Murphy
"Stand up for real socialism", Manchester University SO meeting. 5.00. Speaker: Dave Barter
"After Stalinism — standing up for real socialism", Sheffield SO meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street

Saturday 5 October

March for the Tottenham 3. Assemble 12.00, Civic Centre, Wood Green, London N22. Rally 2.00, Finsbury Park

Monday 7 October

"The politics of identity", Socialist Organiser London Forum. 7.30, Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Road, Kings Cross. Speaker: Allison Roche

Tuesday 8 October

"Is socialism dead?", Sheffield University SO meeting. 1.00. Speaker: Ruth Cockroft

Wednesday 9 October

"Is socialism dead?", Essex University SO meeting. 6.00
"Party and class", Southampton SO meeting. 7.30, Portswood

Housing Advice Centre. Speaker: Tony Twine

"Students and socialism", Newcastle Poly SO meeting. 2.00. Speaker: Nick Brereton

"1992: the fascist threat", East London SO meeting. 7.30, Details 071 639 7965.

Thursday 10 October

"Is socialism dead?", Kent University SO meeting. 1.00, Keynes College
"Crisis in South Africa", Merseyside SO meeting. 7.30, Hardiman Street Trade Union Centre. Speaker: Bob Fine
"Stand up for real socialism", Leeds SO meeting. 7.30, Coburg pub
"Can Kinnock win?", Northampton SO meeting. 5.00, Park Campus, Nene College
"Where we stand", Manchester SO meeting. 8.00, Town Hall

Monday 14 October

"Socialists after Labour Party conference", SE London SO meeting. 7.30, Two Eagles Pub, Elephant and Castle. Speaker: Cate Murphy

Wednesday 16 October

"Labour and socialism", SW London SO meeting. 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall

Thursday 17 October

"The case for socialist feminism", Glasgow SO meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Hall

Yes they were Christians!

The correspondence between Al Richardson and Laurens Otter is in danger of becoming of interest only to archaeologists. However, just to put the record straight on the religious beliefs of early Trotskyists, can I make two points.

1. I knew Reg Groves very well since the 1960s. He addressed a conference of the Jubilee Group, a Christian socialist network, in 1977. I was with him just before he died and worked with him on his last publication, a pamphlet on the Christian socialist Charles Marson. His wife, Daisy, rang me about his funeral, and asked for the phone number of Father Gresham Kirkby of Bow,

former chair of the Socialist Christian League, who took the funeral. She also expressed the fear that some of Reg's friends might want to ignore his Christian beliefs if a memorial meeting took place. It was quite clear to me that Reg was a Catholic Christian until his death.

2. I also knew Stuart Purkis in the 1960s when I was a priest at St Anne's,

Soho. He came to Mass almost daily at St Anne's on weekdays during the years from 1967 until about 1971. I don't recall when he died but it was soon after that.

I am sure it is inconvenient for people with a stereotyped view of reality that some revolutionary socialists were also Christians, but there it is.

The Revd Kenneth Leech, London

No proof on lack of belief

The misuse of religion by pro-capitalist propagandists, and the unsound theology on which it is based, has been a constant theme of christian socialist writings since the early 19th century.

I haven't to hand copies of Dennison Maurice's writings but the passage from Reg Groves that Al Richardson quotes, (saying that it proves that at the time of writing Reg had abandoned his earlier beliefs,) strikes me as an almost exact quote from Fr. F. D. Maurice.

Mind you it could just as easily have come from Reg's contemporaries, Bishops Gore or Bell or even from Archbishop Temple. In more recent times, Archbishops

Kamsay and Huddleston have both used similar terms, when writing on the same subject.

The "second proposition"

which Richardson attributes to me does not appear in anything I said. I was describing a period before Reg and Stu started to recruit others

to Trotskyism. I do not therefore feel there is any need to comment on it or its "refutation".

Laurens Otter, Salop

Middle-class outrage

Perhaps Liz Millward's "Women's Eye" column could be renamed "The Outraged Middle Class Moralise".

Liz's latest effort (SO 498) berates women who choose to live on the earnings of their partners.

The penultimate paragraph states that "the fight (for a decent job, decent wages) is held back by women who won't take responsibility for themselves."

Who does Liz mean? Middle class women? If so, Liz seriously ought to think about helping to write the Tory manifesto.

The problem for working class women is unemployment. And fighting for decent wages and rights against a ruling class which doesn't want to give them and in the face of a trade union bureaucracy and leadership which have for a long time refused to take up our cause except in the most tokenistic

way. Perhaps Liz Millward is implying that working class women are scroungers? For every one woman who chooses not to work, there are thousands (with or without partners) looking for work.

I am bemused at Liz's illogical 'arguments' and astounded at her irrelevant and anti-working class sentiments. Perhaps it's time she retired.

Trudy Saunders, London

Why we should support the banning of the CPSU

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna



Immediately after the August coup in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin and his friends turned the Russian parliament into a veritable revolutionary committee which, backed by the people, took measures it had no legal power to take, to break up the old order.

They struck heavy blows at the so-called "Communist Party", which had backed the coup. This 17 million-strong cartel of the old bureaucratic ruling class was banned. It was forbidden to organise in the factories and in the army, and all its property was confiscated. In short, the Yeltsinites used the coup to make a political revolution which has cleared the way for capitalism.

What attitude should socialists take to these moves to root out and destroy the so-called Communist Party of the Soviet Union? One of two things: either we support the essential work of this bourgeois democratic revolution — and that is what it is — in destroying Stalinism, or we oppose it.

In the name of what might we oppose it? Of socialism? The workers themselves must

want socialism first: right now they seem to want what Yeltsin wants. In the name of the Stalinist old order? But under that system the workers did not even have the right to organise trade unions. One of the first decrees issued by the organisers of the abortive coup banned trade unions.

Socialists least of all have reason to support the old order. To preserve liberty — fighting side by side even with Yeltsin — against the partisans of the old order is to preserve freedom for the working class to develop towards socialist consciousness.

There is no reason, no reason at all, to have confidence that the present bourgeois democrats will remain committed to democracy. But in the coup Yeltsin — who has often been justly described as a Mussolini in the making, and probably still is a Mussolini in the making — stood for the continued development of freedoms from state tyranny against those who tried with guns and tanks to reimpose it.

Yeltsin, along with the army and the police, may threaten democracy in the future. But that remains a danger because the destruction of the old order, of which the so-called Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the head and heart for so long, has been limited to the CPSU. The measures against the CP are freeing the army and police from its grip, leaving the old state purged but intact for future use. It needs to be broken up.

Even so, breaking the power of the CP is a necessary part of any democratic revolu-

tion in the USSR. This was not a party, but the political machine of a vastly privileged and highly organised multi-tentacled ruling class. The revolution that dares not strike at the power and wealth of the old ruling class is no revolution.

Socialists in the USSR should be the most vigorous advocates of revolutionary measures against the old order, competing with the Yeltsinites for the leadership of the democratic revolution, while countering their pro-capitalist ideas and trying to organise the working class as an independent force. Their model should be the Bolsheviks, who before 1917 competed with the "Cadet" bourgeoisie for the leadership of the masses in the fight against Tsarism. To oppose revolutionary measures against the old cartel of the tyrants is to be a political satellite of the old rulers: or to show a caricatured "feeble liberal" attitude to the harsh reality of revolution.

The editorial in *Socialist Outlook* after the coup displayed all these characteristics. *Militant* took the same position. Trotsky, who said in the 1930s that a workers' revolution should deprive the bureaucrats even of civil rights, had a more serious idea of what the anti-Stalinist revolution involved. Yet *Militant* and *Socialist Outlook* say they are for a "political revolution". How can there be a "political" revolution without the destruction of the CPSU, the state within a state of the Stalinist bureaucracy?

Socialists can have no confidence in the

Yeltsinites, especially on the question of democracy. They represent not our class but the nascent bourgeoisie in the USSR. Yeltsin's ban on the CPSU in the factories in Russia takes the form of a general ban on all political party activity (and on trade union activity unless the factory boss agrees). The general ban should be opposed — not the blows at the CP. For decades that bureaucratic cartel has run a regime of political tyranny and political spying in the factories through its police state trade unions. If the drive against the CP is used to beat down working class interests — used, for example, against a splinter of the old Stalinist "trade unions" which is defending working class interests in a factory — then socialists will of course oppose such measures. Such splinters have done this in Eastern Europe.

Opposing the blows against the CP is a different matter altogether. The question of general impartial democratic rights, free from the threat of a bureaucratic coup like that of August, can only arise after the power of the old order is broken. For these reasons, while expressing no confidence in the Yeltsinites and, indeed, while urging USSR workers not to trust them an inch, but instead to rely only on themselves, we must, it seems to me, support and cheer on the destruction of the CPSU, even by the Yeltsinites. With the latter we have — or had in August — a common opposition to the would-be autocrats. With the Stalinist "party" we have nothing in common.

INDUSTRIAL

Civil servants must unite to defend national pay bargaining

By a civil servant

The Treasury has told the civil service unions that it will withdraw from six long-term national pay deals covering over half a million civil servants unless the unions sign up to far-reaching amendments to those agreements.

The NUCPS, covering Support, Specialist, and

Executive grade workers, has denounced the Treasury's tactic as a "gun at its head". Unfortunately, civil service union leaders have recently signalled that such tactics work, by negotiating fundamental revisions to the national redundancy agreement under similar threats and without any reference to their members.

The Treasury is seeking three principal amendments before next year's pay negotiations.

- Increasing performance pay

as a proportion of the total pay bill;

- Delegating pay bargaining to Departments and "Executive Agencies" which wish to break away from the national deals;
- Strengthening the ability of Departments and Agencies which remain in the national deals to vary them as they wish.

The Treasury is clearly aiming to undermine civil service trade unionism by breaking up national bargaining and dividing members by Department, Agency, region, or

grade. Worse still, as the NUCPS has pointed out, central bargaining with the Treasury "would risk becoming... a ceiling on the increases possible in Departments and Agencies rather than a floor on which local negotiations could build". The weakest members would be hammered.

In August, Norman Lamont explicitly linked these changes to the Tories' "Citizens' Charter" charade — an attempt to blame civil service workers for the increasingly poor state of public services in the run-up to the General Election.

It is essential that the union leaders and branch activists respond firmly to the Treasury's challenge. Regular and frequent membership meetings must be held; agitational material must be issued; the Tories' run-down of the public services must be highlighted; inter-union unity must be built; a clear line of action must be mapped out.

Rank and file civil servants will have to campaign to force their NECs to lead action and to win the arguments amongst the membership for the need to fight. The broad-based rank and file group, Left Unity (set up at 1991 CPSA Conference) has already agreed to launch such a campaign, as has the CPSA Socialist Caucus. The CPSA Broad Left and NUCPS Open Left must also put their energies into a united front to ensure civil service national pay negotiations are protected.

Don't put the union in Kinnock's pocket

TGWU: Vote Adams!

By Jim Denham

The ballot for Deputy General Secretary of the TGWU is now taking place.

The two main candidates are Jack Adams, backed by the union's Broad Left, and Jack Dromey, who has the enthusiastic support of the Labour Party leadership.

In fact, there is very little to separate Adams and Dromey in terms of formal politics. At one point, Dromey even announced that he was standing down in favour of his "friend" Adams, who stood for the "same policies and principles".

The reason for Dromey's change of mind is also one of the main reasons that left-wingers have for backing Adams: Dromey has very close links with the Labour front bench and was persuaded by them that a victory



Dromey had also antagonised both the left and right groupings within the union by attempting to use his influence with the Labour front bench and the media to win their support at various times.

In short, he is not trusted. Jack Adams is a "Communist" only in the sense that he is a long-standing member of the semi-moribund Communist Party of Great Britain — the folks who brought you "Post-Fordism", the "Death of the Working Class", and "Why Won't Labour do a Deal with the Alliance?"

While the Convenor of BL Longbridge, Adams was responsible for some rotten sell-outs and his record as the union's National Automotive Secretary is far from inspiring. Nevertheless, the TGWU left is correct to campaign for Adams: a Dromey victory would open the door to an Incomes Policy-type deal with a Kinnock government.

for the "Communist" Adams would be unhelpful in terms of future co-operation between the TGWU and a Kinnock government.

The TGWU Broad Left decided that they would prefer to back a candidate whose loyalties were not divided between the union and the Labour leadership.

How many blacklists are you on?

By Steve Battlemuch, CPSA DHSS Section Executive Committee, Chair Nottingham East CLP [suspended]

Today I discovered that I am on the Economic League blacklist — which was recently exposed on the front page of the Daily Mirror.

At Labour Party conference, the Daily Mirror is running a

stall where, for £1, you can find out if you are considered a "threat".

The address held for me is six years out of date! I can only assume that I appeared on the list after activities during the miners' strike when I was fortunate enough to represent the Nottingham Trades Union Council on the NUM Rank and File Strike Committee.

When I was told I was on the blacklist, the Daily Mirror reporter asked me my reaction and whether I was surprised?

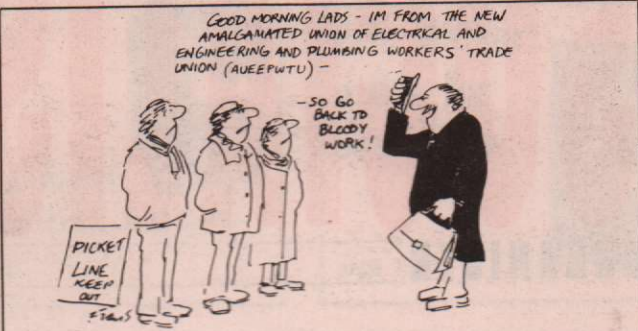
I said "No — I would have been more surprised if I hadn't been on it!"

That said, it remains a scandal that a shadowy, con-

spiratorial body like the Economic League can get away with compiling lists of "undesirables". In many cases, being on the list ensures that some comrades are denied employment for many years, causing massive hardship for them and their families.

The other scandal is that the League is sponsored by the same big business bosses who fund the Tory Party.

Will 'nice, open' John Major move against the League? I doubt it, but then again, I doubt whether Neil Kinnock would either, because the Labour Party has its own list of undesirables — and I'm on that one as well!



AEU/EETPU: stop the merger

By Pat Markey, victimised AEU shop steward

Does it really matter if the AEU finally succeed in a merger with the EETPU?

After all, socialists are generally in favour of one union in the industry, and Jordan and Hammond are remarkably well-matched bedfellows!

Well, yes it does matter. It matters to AEU members and it should matter to all trade unionists. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, the AEU has a relatively democratic rule-book and structures, originally designed to promote rank and file participation and control at every level of the union. The merger would be on the basis of the EETPU's rule-book, a different kettle of fish altogether.

The fact that the AEU rule-book is currently in the hands of the right wing doesn't mean that it is not worth defending. I look forward to the day when there's

more than the old blokes and a dog at my branch meeting, more than the usual half a dozen familiar faces at my district committee, and Bill Jordan and company assigned to the proverbial dustbin. A democratic rule-book would help rather than hinder these developments.

The other reason is what the merged union would represent. The whole would be greater than the sum total of the two parts in terms of the strengthening of the business-unionism right wing in the trade union movement. It's rather ironic that the merger be partly sold with the carrot of bigger benefits. What is more strike pay worth if official strikes are written out of all agreements, or the new rule-book?

The history of the Engineering Union is a history of "keep democracy in the rule book" while amalgamating left, right and centre, hence the name "Amalgamated Engineering Union". That seems O.K. to me. After thwarting previous attempts at such a merger, maybe this time we can finally convince Jordan and Laird that they're definitely not on.

NUPE/COHSE/NALGO merger

What kind of new union?

By Sarah Cotterill, Manchester NALGO

The latest proposals from the leaders of NUPE, COHSE and NALGO on the merged new union are a step away from the democratic proposals adopted by this year's NALGO conference.

Merger between NUPE, COHSE and NALGO has been agreed in principle by each of the unions. Discussion is now taking place on the organisation of the new union. It is important that members and branches are involved in this discussion to make sure that the new structures are democratic.

It has been suggested that the new union will only have bi-annual conferences, with Service Group conferences (for local

government, health, electricity etc.) being held in alternate years. Bi-annual conferences would loosen the control that branches have over the national union. It probably makes sense for more time at annual conference to be spent in Service Groups, but the annual cycle must be maintained.

Every branch should have the right to send a delegate to annual conference. Voting by bigger branches should not rest with small delegations with hefty card votes. The more delegates, the more democracy.

Activity in the new union must be maintained on a service basis. Each service, whether health, local government, gas, universities etc., will have its own pay claims, conditions and disputes. The Service Group national committees should be given a powerful and influential role.

While regional organisation is useful to co-ordinate regional activities, the strong component base for the union should be the Service Groups.

To be representative and democratic, the National Ex-

ecutive will need to be large, and elected annually. The Executive's composition should reflect all the Service Groups including the smallest.

Women and black members are currently under-represented at all levels in NUPE, COHSE and NALGO. The new union should redress this imbalance by introducing proportionality to all committees.

The self-organised groups must have a strong place in the new structure. Self-organised groups represent annual conferences where representatives to the National Executive should be elected. Each self-organised group should be able to send a number of resolutions passed at their conference to the Annual Conference for consideration. Local groups must be encouraged and made part of the official structures.

Alongside the justly heated debates on structures, the key point not to be forgotten is that the emergence of one big public service union is one big step forward for workers in local councils and the NHS.

Getting the message across

THROUGH THE MAZE

An introduction to the unions



By Rob Dawber

So you want to move a resolution? Among people who regard themselves as trade unionists, the biggest

obstacle to getting your resolution passed is the attitude 'So what's it got to do with us?'

Your first job then is to explain what it has to do with them. If your resolution is about pay, hours, working conditions etc. then of course you have no problem. But when you get onto the Labour Party, other issues and other countries you have got some explaining to do.

This is not because your audience is stupid and just can't see how things fit together. Working class people are among the most educated in the world. Not just at school, but every day in the media we receive a barrage of news, ideas, facts, opinions telling us that we are each a power of little consequence, powerless, and shouldn't expect too much from life. Indeed there are some among

our members who are known to be uppity about our lot but these, we are told, are generally not very nice people and certainly not to be trusted.

All in all we are educated into the understanding that we can't expect to change very much and that anything that might be wrong is best left to professional people.

Now you want to get them to agree with you that Britain should get rid of its nuclear weapons, that Apartheid in South Africa must be ended, that the New World Order is not for us, or that a future Labour government must be put under pressure to deliver. As I said, you've got some explaining to do.

The easiest way of doing this is not to offer middle-class indignation at how the world is not the fair and decent place it should be, evoking sympathy. Sadly this is too often the approach of many left-wingers. Instead, you should approach it

from the angle of what workers can do about it. This is easier with some workers than others. But usually your resolution is occasioned by a demonstration that needs support or a campaign that can be affiliated to.

But more than this. Take South Africa. Can you adopt a prisoner, sending and receiving letters; does your company have links with South Africa which you can highlight; do any products come from or go there; what are the working conditions and wages of workers in similar industries there — are they used to undercut your wages and conditions? What can you do about these things?

But as I've said before, don't only come to your branch concerned about other than immediate trade union issues. If you show that you have something useful to offer on these matters, then maybe what you have to say about other subjects won't seem so far-fetched.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER



Hands off Socialist Organiser!

Defend the Sheffield 15

By Ruth Cockroft

The witch-hunters in Sheffield have finally revealed their intentions in purging the local Labour Party of dissident opinion.

Last week delegates at Sheffield Central CLP voted to refer 15 names to the National Constitutional Committee. None of the named people have had any right to defend themselves or to put their case to the investigation panel.

In an attempt to white wash the procedure, the right wing claimed that no-one was being judged or found guilty but that the NCC would hear a "fair" case and natural justice would prevail.

Some Sheffield Central delegates believe that the NCC is a neutral body that is capable of judging without prejudice. The history of the NCC, however, says different. Water-tight cases referred to it by the left, such as the one against Robert Maxwell are simply not discussed, let alone acted upon.

It must also be said that the Labour Party rule book does afford some rights to those proposed for investigation. In Sheffield those rights have been violated.

Labour Party rules clearly state that "the receipt of written evidence from the persons being investigated" is a positive right for those named in any allegations. However, in Sheffield Central, people were not named until after the investigation and evidence had been collected.

Clearly, hunting for witches is a simple matter — if they drown they are innocent, but if they swim they are guilty and burned at the stake.

The Stop the Witch-hunt Campaign in Sheffield won a majority of wards in Central to the campaign against expulsions, and also the majority of CLPs across Sheffield. This has made no impact on right wingers delegated from trade unions to Central who clearly are accountable only to themselves, and consider themselves above the strong opinions of the majority of members in the CLP.

The campaign is not over. We will fight to defend the rights of Socialist Organiser supporters to be active in the party.

On the streets October 5th Justice for the Tottenham 3!



Assemble 12.00, Saturday 5 October, Wood Green Civic Centre

The campaign continues to quash the convictions of Winston Silcott and the other black men found guilty of the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater

Farm riot. Following the release of the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six — working class Irish people framed by the police for IRA bombings — the cam-

paigners are strengthened in their determination to argue that these men have been framed by the police. Public opinion, at least among the more politically conscious members of the

labour movement, must surely now have no confidence that the British legal system embodies even vague bourgeois concepts of decency and fairness.

Romania:

Miners rebel against pro-market Stalinists

By Steven Holt

During the past week, striking miners in Romania almost managed to topple the government and have forced the government to hold new elections. On 25th September striking miners from the Jiu valley coalfields seized control of the railways, using the trains to send 8,000 demonstrators to the capital, Bucharest. They demanded the resigna-

tion of President Ion Iliescu, Prime Minister Petre Roman and the National Salvation Front government. Clashes with troops started on the night of the 25th and continued until 28th September, leaving at least four people dead and 100 injured. Since the December 1989 revolution toppling Ceausescu, living conditions have not improved, and the National Salvation Front has not kept its promise to disband the hated Securitate. Immediately after the 1989 revolution, the National Salvation Front managed to

win 90% of the votes in the election, despite most of its members being ex-members of the Romanian CP. In June 1990 the government was able to mobilise the miners against demonstrating students; it is surely a good sign that the miners, probably the strongest section of the Romanian working class, no longer look to the government for their orders. The 50,000 striking miners in the Jiu valley in the West of Romania were joined by 25,000 miners in the Maramures coalfield to the

south, and if the demonstrations had continued rather than eventually being dispersed by the police, it seems that Romania's dockers would have come out in solidarity, leading to the possibility of a general strike. The independent trade union federation Fratia, supported the miners' demands but urged the striking miners not to use violence, while the miners' union leader Miron Cosma called on the miners to leave Bucharest once wage rises had been conceded by the government, rather than trying to topple the regime.



"You need a strong and effective voice for workers' rights speaking out within the Labour Party. For that reason Socialist Organiser has got to be defended." Ronnie MacDonald Chair, Offshore Industry Liaison Committee

Defending trade union rights

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