

Yeltsin goes for the market
Boris Kagarlitsky reports



Socialists versus the New Right



For socialist renewal!



The battle of the Somme
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Why Militant is wrong,
by Ted Grant
page 12



SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Ten thousand say "End student debt"

Ten thousand students marched through Manchester last Wednesday (30 October) in protest at the worsening hardship facing students.

The demonstration — called by Manchester Area NUS — was loud and lively, and was attended by students from as far away as Brighton, Colchester and Scotland.

The march assembled in All Saints Park, outside what was once Manchester College of Adult Education. It is now an empty building, a silent monument to the Tories' destruction of education. A women's section led the procession along Oxford Road and into the city centre.

Much attention was gained when the front of the demonstration staged a five-minute sit-down in the main shopping area of the city.

A rally in Albert Square was addressed by Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer), Andy Dixon (NUT), and Jeremy Corbyn MP.

Paul Ramsamooj, President of Essex University Students Union, told marchers about the student occupation in his college and criticised the Kinnockite "leadership" of NUS for failing to run a decent campaign against student hardship.

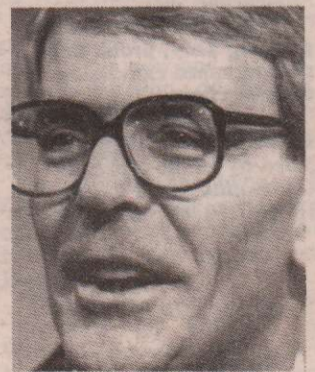
Marchers were also told about the wave of student

Turn to page 4



Photo: Dan Judelson

Tories stir up race hate



By Gail Cameron

"Naked, blatant incitement against black people in this country." That is how many black people are describing the Tory

Queen's speech targets refugees

proposals in the Queen's speech to tighten up on what the

tabloids call "bogus refugees". The Tories are playing the race

card for the general election. Every time there is an official outcry against "illegal immigrants"

or "bogus refugees" the climate turns colder and nastier for black people already in Britain.

Not only for "immigrants", but for tens of thousands of people born in this country, too.

At the core of all such official

Turn to page 2

Son of poll tax

By Cate Murphy

The council tax will cause more chaos than the poll tax. The Tories' replacement for their hated poll tax combines a tax on individuals with a tax on property, with a complicated series of rebates for single person households and those on benefits.

Despite Tory promises, it would involve keeping some sort of register, similar to the poll tax register, if rebates are to be allocated. Since the poll

tax was introduced, some 140,000 people have dropped off the electoral register, undoubtedly to avoid having to pay the poll tax.

Many of those disenfranchised are the poorest of society; and traditional Labour voters. Thus the Tories hope to swing marginal seats their way. The council tax, with its accompanying register, can only compound this.

Likewise, the proposals to "band" properties will benefit those in the biggest mansions, whose bills will be proportionately smaller than those of a working class household in a two-up-two-down semi- in London. Hardly a more equitable

system! Michael Heseltine, who owns five houses, and has a fortune of £40 million, will pay less than £240 on his Westminster house, in the top band.

A couple in run-down Barrow-in-Furness will pay £550.

After rebates, the poorest 20% of the population will pay 4% of their income in council tax; the top 10% will pay just 2%.

Furthermore, those with a second house will receive up to 50% discounts. So it's the Tories lining the pockets of their friends at the expense of the working class.

Hoping to rush the new legislation required through by March — and thus limit

damage from poll tax opponents in the general election — the Tories are planning to guillotine debate in the House of Commons. Their desperation also meant that many of the finer details are ill-thought out: just like the poll tax before it.

It will bring just as much chaos for local councils trying to implement it. And much higher bills than anticipated — over £350 average.

More worrying is the possibility that, if the Tories do get the legislation in place before the election, even if Labour win, it will remain — modified, but not completely scrapped.

Worrying too, is the proposal to ban non-paying

councillors from voting on financial matters: thus penalising the left-wing councillors who have stood by the working class they were elected to represent.

It all adds up to the poll tax by another name, and we must oppose it as vehemently as we fought the poll tax.

We should battle to commit Labour to scrapping the council tax, and introducing a fairer system of funding local government — including restoring central government funding axed by the Tories over the past 12 years.

Nor should we abandon the campaign for an amnesty for all non-payers and poll tax prisoners.

The lie machine



Alright, you do not like the Sun. I take that for granted. But can you feel sympathy for Bill Roache?

Roache is the venturesome thespian who has been 31 years in Coronation Street. Roache is a druid (long white robes for the summer solstice at Stonehenge, etc).

Roache is an active campaigning Tory, proud to be photographed canvassing at by-elections.

Roache sued the Sun for saying he was boring and hated by all the others in Coronation Street's cast. He got £50,000 and costs.



The more frivolous tabloids led with Roache. The true blue Mail knows what is important. It leads with the heroic Tory stand against the floods of threatening immigrants, the fear of whom the Tories are hoping will win them the general election.

Robert Maxwell

As we go to press, we learn of the mysterious death of Robert Maxwell. Socialists will not mourn the death of this union-buster and long-time friend of the Eastern European Stalinist tyrants.

Yet, Labour supporters may have cause to regret that he died now.

His death could mean a shift in the Daily Mirror away from the Labour Party. It is the only daily which supports Labour.

It is one measure of the craziness of the political system we have in Britain, that the death of a corrupt maverick bourgeois like Maxwell may seriously damage the Labour Party in the upcoming General Election!



South Africa's general strike

By Anne Mack

The one-day strike on Monday 4 November was probably the biggest strike ever in South Africa.

Jay Naidoo, Secretary General of the Congress of

South African Trade Unions (COSATU), has described the strike as a referendum in which people have made clear their opposition to de Klerk's economic restructuring.

The immediate cause of the strike was the introduction of VAT, which increases basic food prices, further oppressing the poor black majority.

The main significance of the strike lies in it being a show of

strength for COSATU and the ANC during the period of negotiation of the constitutional settlement.

De Klerk wants the ANC to accept a form of power-sharing, in an attempt to co-opt and neutralise the ANC. The ANC and COSATU want elections under universal suffrage, and their negotiating position will have been strengthened by the good turnout for the strike.

Tories stir up race hate

From front page

raging against the "illegal" and the "bogus" immigrants, there is one stark, crude, obscene racist idea: some people are less desirable here than others, some people are not desirable at all.

They should be kept out. If they have managed to get through the net, they shall be unceremoniously kicked out now — "and no nonsense either".

That message is essentially a message about black people. It has an alarming meaning for all British blacks.

The Tories at Westminster say these things in posh

voices and moderate, reasonable tones. They are hypocrites as well as racists.

On the ground, in Britain's cities where black people live and the Tories are neither reasonable nor moderate, in direct response to the Tory signals the everyday experience of black people is intensified and made more unbearable.

The Tories know this. The tabloids which agitate on their front pages against threatening "bogus refugees" know it.

They want it to happen. The Tories, aided by their press, are presenting themselves as the natural party of the back street racist and the envious bigot. They

are deliberately stirring up feeling against "immigrants" — not those who may want to come in to Britain now, but those who have been here for decades, and their offspring — in the hope that it will boost their vote, and help them win the 1992 general election.

The face of John Major's revamped "Toryism-with-a-human-face" has a filthy racist look on it.

It is one proof that the Tories are desperate. They know that they stand a good chance of losing the general election.

It is one more proof that the sooner we drive this evil Tory government from office the better!

Kulwinder must stay!

Kulwinder Kaur (24) took sanctuary in a Sikh temple in Small Heath for six weeks this summer to avoid deportation and is now threatened with deportation once again.

On the 7th August, Kulwinder came out of the sanctuary after the Home Office assured her that the Secretary of State would "reconsider her case sympathetically".

On the 17th October, after media attention about her case had receded, the Home Office wrote to Kulwinder and refused her the right to stay!

For further information, contact WMADC Bhopinder Basi, 021-236 8620.



Nottingham anti-fascists Meeting Tuesday 12 November, 7.30 International community centre, Mansfield Road

The aims of this meeting are: * to create an organised and effective network of anti-fascists capable of instant response to public fascist activity * to discuss priorities and im-

mediate concrete action for the campaign to take up * to begin production and distribution of anti-racist and anti-fascist propaganda * to start monitoring the extent of fascist activity in the area Now, more than ever, it is vital that this network is established in Nottingham; please come or send representatives to this meeting United against fascism and racism!

BEATING THE FASCISTS

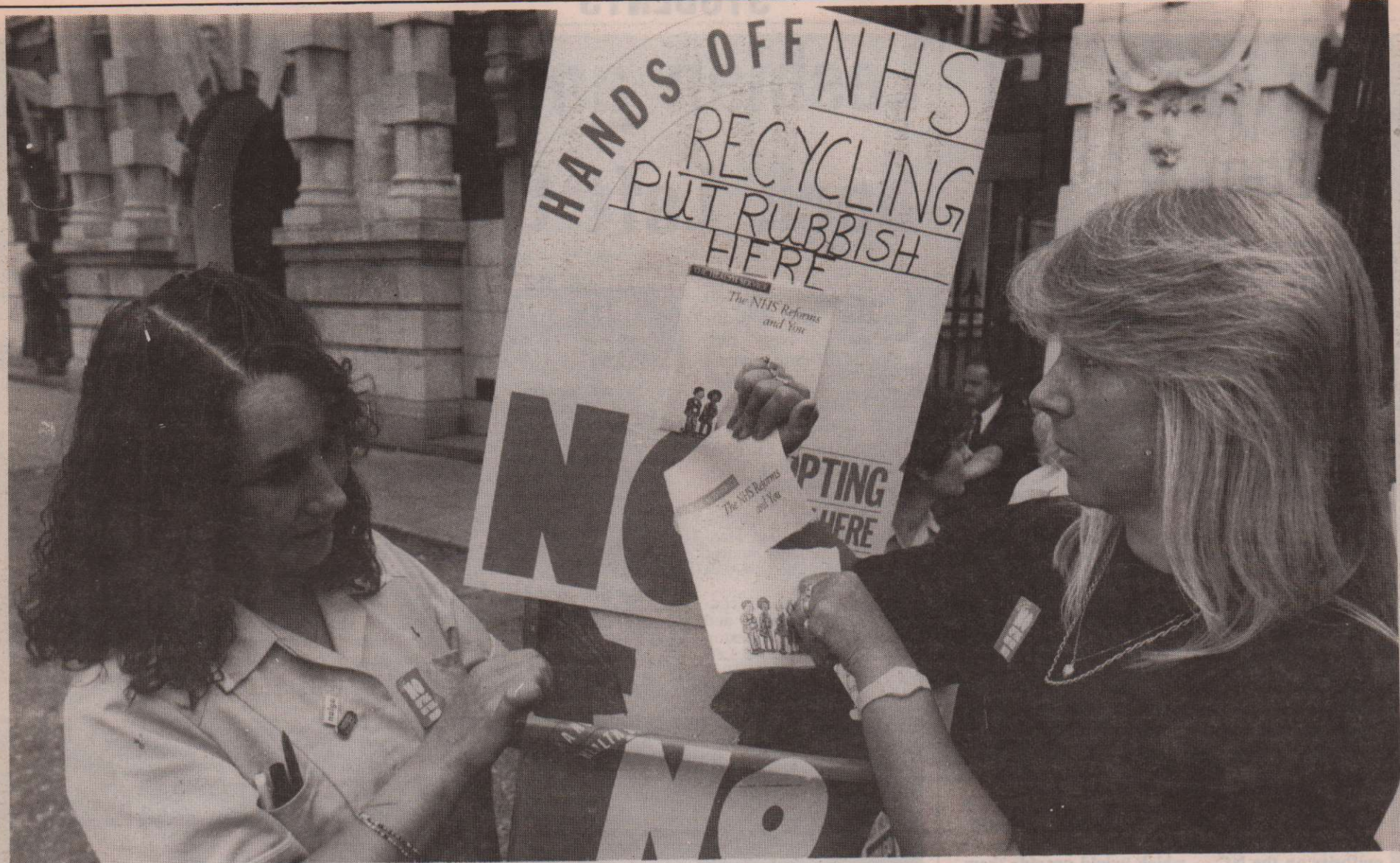


An old East End tradition

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS

Assemble 1:00 p.m., Sunday 10th November Aldgate East tube, Whitechapel High Street, London E1

anti-fascist action



Market madness is destroying the NHS

Lies, damned lies and Tory promises

A hospital in Oxford specialising in hip and other bone joint replacements, is the latest and best example of the lunacy at the heart of the Tory "reorganisation" of the NHS.

The Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre Trust is one of 57 Trusts set up in April for hospitals opting out of the National Health Service.

Nuffield has 1,200 local people on its books who wait for treatment — many of them in dire pain. Nuffield has the capacity to treat them. Nuffield is short of patients. Nuffield desperately needs patients to make up the £300,000 by which its income from "Extra Contractual Referrals" fell short of target in the first six months as a Trust.

Nuffield is so desperate for patients — that is, for income — that it is touting for them in places as far away as Bath, Bristol and Plymouth.

And the 1,200 local people in its natural 'catchment area'?

Nuffield cannot afford to treat them. There is no local money available! The local health authority's purse is empty, so the Nuffield is looking for patients from luckier authorities.

But the 1,200 arthritics can cheer up, as they take some more painkillers: the Tories' new Citizens' Charter lays it down that they will not have to wait more than two years!

It is things like this which tell you how brutally cynical are those who have concocted this flimsy Tory electioneering gimmick.

The idea that anyone should have to suffer for two years waiting for an operation is itself an outrage. After years of starving, sabotaging and undermining the NHS, the Tories now come forward with their benign promise, and the fact that they have not been drowned out in

a chorus of outraged jeers is itself the measure of how low people's expectations of the Tory-run NHS have dropped!

But in fact, even the miserable promise of no more than a two-year wait is a piece of conmanship. This is an unenforceable "right". This "right" will not mean anything to anybody (except, they hope, extra Tory votes) unless the Health Ser-

"After years of starving, sabotaging and undermining the NHS, the Tories now come forward with their benign promise, and the fact they have not been drowned out in jeers is itself the measure of how low peoples' expectations of the Tory-run NHS have dropped"

vice is much better funded and unless the disorganisation of the NHS is stopped and reversed. The Tories know all this. They are engaged in cynical conmanship.

If they win the 1992 General Election, then they will soon forget about the "right" to no more than a two-year wait for proper NHS

treatment.

Health Secretary William Waldegrave is the man now in charge of convincing the electorate to take all this nonsense seriously. He knows his job is to make a lot of noise in the hope that people will think something substantial is being done to restore the NHS.

Some health regions have warned him that they cannot guarantee to meet the Government's promise on schedule (that is, before the General Election). Waldegrave responded: "I made it clear that this is a managerial objective for them which they will meet!"

Abracadabra! The Tories will work miracles! Miracles of deceptive propaganda between now and the General Election.

Every home in Britain is to have a summary of the Charter — in which all the promises about the NHS are to be prominently displayed — delivered before Xmas. The cost? £2 million from the State, for Tory election propaganda.

Not so long ago, the Tories were scoffing at the local government left for talking about "rights" that had no basis in reality and no possibility of enforcement. They expressed outrage that local government bodies like the GLC were spending ratepayers' money on what the Tories said was political propaganda. Now the Tories are spending taxpayers' money on political propaganda to convince people to believe in empty promises about a

fantasy, unenforceable, right to better NHS treatment!

It is dirty Tory electioneering politics. They will say anything they need to say now and then, if they win the Election, do nothing. By the time the next General Election comes round, the Health Service will have been destroyed.

The Tories must not win the Election. Every socialist must put their mind to the work of helping Labour beat the Tories in the next General Election.

This is the purpose for which "Socialists for Labour" exists. Write, if you want to help, to Cate Murphy c/o Socialist Organiser.

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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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STUDENTS

Not yet a fait accompli

The leaders of the AEU and the EETPU have finalised their plans for amalgamation. Their previous attempt at merger (in 1988/90) was thwarted by the AEU's semi-rank and file National Committee, but Jordan and Laird are determined that this time *nothing* is going to stop them.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

The top jobs in the new super-union have already been ear-marked: Jordan will be the president and, for the first two years, Gavin Laird will be general secretary. After two years, Laird will hand over to EETPU general secretary-elect Paul Gallacher.

The timetable for amalgamation has been set out: a ballot in January on the "principles of amalgamation"; a ballot on TUC affiliation within one year and a ballot on the new rule-book within four years. Oh yes, there is also supposed to be something called a "period of consultation" but so far Jordan, Laird, Hammond and Gallacher haven't consulted anyone except themselves.

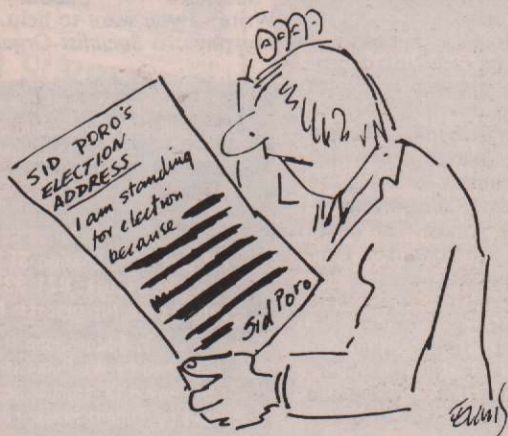
A National Committee meeting of the AEU will probably be held in December: Jordan and Laird seem to be confident that, this time, they'll have a majority on the NC — which would provide them with the perfect springboard for a membership ballot (no doubt accompanied by a huge, one-sided pro-merger propaganda campaign) in January.

A perennial problem for the AEU leadership has been the drastic differences between the two unions' rulebooks and structures. All AEU officials are elected, whereas the EETPU appoint theirs (apart from the general secretary and executive); the AEU National Committee and Rules Revision Committee are elected from the union's Districts and have sovereignty over the executive, whereas in the EETPU the executive is all-powerful.

To get round these problems, the respective leaderships have agreed that for four years after amalgamation the two structures will stay effectively separate until an agreed joint rule book is drawn up and put to a ballot. But no-one is in any doubt as to which structure Jordan and Laird would prefer.

Then there is the vexed question of TUC membership: the EETPU leadership would like to get back into the fold via the merger. But they are not that concerned: Paul Gallacher recently told journalists that he didn't "give a toss" about the TUC. On the other hand, the AEU leaders may be willing to jeopardise their own continued membership of the TUC, if that proves to be the price of amalgamation.

Inside or outside of the TUC, the new union would be a powerful right-wing bloc and a boon to employers looking for no-strike deals, "quality circles" and a chummy relationship with co-operative officials. But the amalgamation is not yet a fait accompli: left wingers in the AEU should make a start in the campaign to stop the merger by lobbying the December National Committee.



THE GENERAL SECRETARY CAN DELETE ANYTHING HE BELIEVES IS FACTUALLY INCORRECT...

Future democracy in the merged union

Lesbian and gay students back Left Unity stand

Last weekend over 180 lesbian, gay and bisexual students met in Cardiff for their National Union of Students Campaign Conference.

The conference discussed anti-fascism, Europe, disabilities, parenting, bisexuality, and much more.

A central issue was the banning of the Manchester Pink Guide by the Manchester Polytechnic Student Union president because of a "safe sex" page.

Delegates voted to condemn the Polytechnic, and congratulate Kevin Sexton and Janine Booth, two Left Unity members of the NUS National Executive who had

OUT AND PROUD



By Kev Sexton

opposed the ban. A statement was read out, attacking NUS president Stephen Twigg for not siding with the Polytechnic lesbian and gay

group against the ban.

The conference was far more political than it has been for many years. Delegates discussed the importance of linking up with the trade union movement, and fighting inside the Labour Party for Labour to carry out its party policy for lesbian and gay rights.

A debate was held between Peter Tatchell, Stephen Twigg, and Janine Booth on "Is Queer Politics The Way Forward?"

Tatchell supported "Queer Politics"; Twigg gave the usual Kinnockite line about achieving liberation by parliamentary lobbying; and Booth gave a radical alternative, explaining that to achieve liberation we have to

change the society we live in. Liberation is not possible under capitalism.

30 delegates attended the Left Unity meeting on "Why Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students Should Fight For A Labour Victory".

Steph Ward explained why lesbians and gays must vote and campaign for Labour, but not trust Kinnock and Hattersley to deliver. They must fight alongside the labour movement to force change.

The NUS Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Campaign can go forward from this conference united and stronger from the political leadership given to it by Left Unity members of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual committee.



Above, 10,000-strong demo in Manchester against student debt. Below, Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer, Jeremy Corbyn MP and Richard Love, MANUS Convenor lead the march



Support Lancaster's rent strike!

By Mark Sandell

Five hundred and fifty students are on rent strike at Lancaster University.

They are protesting against a rent increase of 12.75%, the

third big increase in a row.

The strike organised by the students' union has accumulated £125,000 into the student rent account. Further action is planned if the administration fails to back down.

Student unions, Labour Clubs etc, should rush messages of support to the students' union, Bowland Annexe, Bailrigg, Lancaster LA1 4YT, (phone: 0524-65201 x2192; or fax: 0524-846732)

End student debt

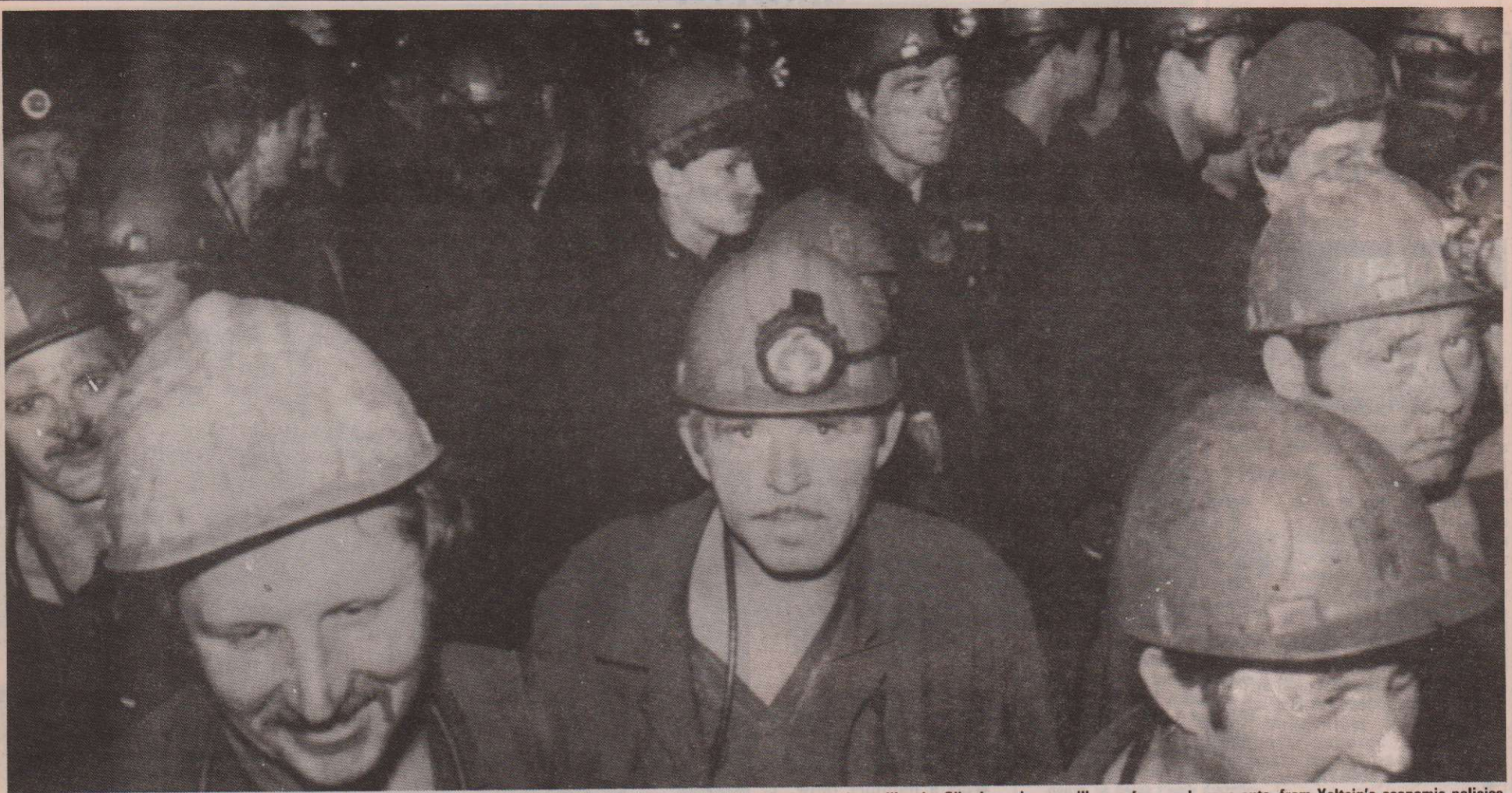
From front page

protests in colleges throughout the country, including Glasgow Poly, Ilkley College, Anglia Poly, Lancaster University, Thames Poly, Paisley College and Middlesex Poly.

Building this sort of action — and spreading it to other colleges — is the best way to follow up the successful Manchester demonstration. It will also put pressure on the NUS leaders to pull their fingers out and lead a fightback, which is the last thing they want to do if it puts their careers in danger.

After the rally, a Left Unity meeting attracted 100 people. Richard Love, Janine Booth and Jeremy Corbyn MP outlined the need for more united work on the left and for fighting for Labour but being ready to push home student demands for better grants and increased funding for education.

Ninety copies of *Socialist Organiser* were sold.



Militant workers, like the Siberian miners, will now face real wage cuts from Yeltsin's economic policies

46,000 rally against wage controls

Organising workers to fight Yeltsin's economics

Boris Kagarlitsky, a leading figure in Russia's new Party of Labour, spoke to Socialist Organiser

There are two sides to Yeltsin's economic programme. Firstly, he has called for a liberalisation of prices. Initially he wanted to liberalise prices while keeping wages more or less under control.

There was opposition to this wage control, the most important manifestation being the 46,000 strong rally in Moscow organised by the Party of Labour and the Moscow trade unions. Now Yeltsin has backed down somewhat. There will be some type of indexation of wages to inflation.

But real wages will suffer. This is very clear. The struggle against real cuts in living standards is very important. The Moscow union leaders were surprised at the size of our rally on 23 October.

I think a crucial role in this struggle is being played by the independent left. The strength of the Party of Labour, currently in the process of formation, is its ability to unite the traditionally informal left-wing movements. Certain parts of the unions, including parts of the union bureaucracy, are influenced by the Party of Labour.

Although the Moscow unions are very good and are learning the lessons of the past years very quickly, that is not the uniform picture. In other regions, the situation in the unions is not changing so quickly.

The current inflation rate in Moscow is 15 to 20 per cent per month. It is expected to rise to over 100 per cent per month next year.

The second side of Yeltsin's policy is privatisation. There have been many

speeches here about redistributing property to the population. However, the aim of the actual policy as it is being carried out is to make the non-direct owners of the means of production utterly dependent on the actual owners.

In fact this is also an onslaught against the middle strata in society, and the skilled workers. All the layers who have no access to the means of production, real estate, or real material prosperity, but who perhaps had some savings, will be hit. That is one effect of inflation — to hit these people. They will not be able to buy privatised property.

We are seeing the development here of an authoritarian capitalism — authoritarian not only in political spheres, but also in the economic. We are not seeing Western-style wildcat capitalist development, but a different brand of wildcat capitalism — bureaucratically centralised wildcat capitalism!

The actual scale of privatisation is small. And enterprises are not being privatised; the governing bodies are being privatised. For example, the Moscow customs has been partly privatised. Privatising state institutions is easier than privatising industries.

An example is the privatising of Moscow's flats. Instead of privatising the flats themselves, the authorities have produced a big list of documents which must be prepared for a flat to be privatised. Then the state bureaucracy established a private company which has a monopoly on the preparation of these documents. It costs 700 roubles to get the necessary papers.

I think that separate Ukrainian and Russian currencies could come into being in the middle of 1992. The central foreign ministry is being liquidated. Next will be the army, and then the central bank.

When the army is broken up, the republics will all have their own armies. They will fight each other.

One of the ideas being floated here by a number of deputies is to put the USSR's nuclear weapons under American control. I do not

"We are seeing the development here of an authoritarian capitalism — authoritarian not only in political spheres, but also in the economic. We are not seeing Western-style wildcat capitalist development, but a different brand of wildcat capitalism — bureaucratically centralised wildcat capitalism!"

think the military will be very happy about that!

But the military themselves have a lot of problems. If the Ukraine carries out its anti-nuclear policy — which, in fact, looks less and less likely — then Russia and Kazakhstan will be the only nuclear powers in the ex-USSR. This could

be dangerous. Both Russia and Kazakhstan have authoritarian governments.

The USSR is approaching the state of Germany during the Thirty Years' War. Russia and Kazakhstan, for example, have territorial claims against each other. Moldova has plenty of problems with its Russian populations. In the Ukraine there is a real possibility of civil war between the Russian-speaking east and the Ukrainian-speaking west.

Yugoslavia is rather nice compared to what we can expect. In Yugoslavia the current struggle is limited to two republics. We have already seen that in the Transcaucasus. Worse is ahead of us.

The internationalist left must now concentrate on operating on a republican basis. We are mostly working in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Kazakhstan, where the left is stronger and best able to organise.

We must support the right of self-determination and the rights of minorities. Self-determination is for nations, not bureaucracies. I remain sceptical about, for instance, the claims of the Russian government that all the Russians in Kazakhstan and the Ukraine want to be part of Russia.

The Party of Labour is being formed as a set of republic-based parties. These parties are to be formally independent of each other, but with the same platform. In the future there could be a confederation.

The Socialist Party in Kazakhstan — the ex-Communists — have proposed to form a federation with us in Russia. We do not yet know whether a Party of Labour will be formed in Kazakhstan or if we will deal with the Socialist Party. There is a problem about the extent to which the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan has distanced itself from the old regime.

The Party of Labour is an attempt to build a genuine socialist alternative. We are not attracting many recent ex-Communists. In fact, this is something to be slightly concerned about: there are plenty of good people from that background. In the Party of Labour there seems to be some trend towards discrimination against these ex-Communists.

The general trend is that the most active supporters of the Party of Labour are low and middle level trade union leaders and activists. These people may possibly have been in the Communist Party, but not really active in the Communist Party, or Party functionaries. There is a very strong group coming out of the Marxist Platform.

Now, in Russia, there are only three forces that could be recognised to be genuine political parties. There is the Movement for Democratic Reforms, organised by the bureaucracy. This party does not have a rank and file, just money and resources.

Then there is Rutskoi's party, the party of the right organised by ex-Communists, called the People's Party of Free Russia.

And the Party of Labour is emerging as the third biggest organisation. The press presents us as the only opposition force in the country.

But we still face enormous problems. Getting support from workers is one thing, pulling the party together is another. Even people who have been politically active during the whole of the 1980s have no experience of organising a mass working-class party.

The party is emerging out of struggle. For instance, we have found support in factories threatening strikes.

The Moscow taxi drivers have been on strike. Now they, or at least some of their leaders, have announced their support for the Party of Labour.

GRAFFITI

The Labour Party goes to market

GRAFFITI

So you are a Labour Party activist? You had better get hold of the latest issue of the Labour merchandise catalogue for all your campaigning needs.

For all those dinner parties, there are the serviette rings, a snip at £24; then there's a pill box, to keep your tranquilisers at hand should any of the front bench get a little too close to making a positive policy statement, a steal at £24; and, of course, the engraved glass rose-bowl to put your staunchly loyal red roses in, an unbeatable £40; and you'll want a Labour Party diary for all those meetings... oops! sorry, it seems to have gone out of fashion — line discontinued!

The left press, unlike the capitalist, can be relied upon to tell the truth and deliver the important news.

Two and a half weeks ago, Militant held their conference in Bridlington and by 455 votes to 51 decided to leave the Labour Party and "boldly unfurl the banner of Marxism". Was the banner "boldly unfurled" in the next week's *Militant*? Well, no. Was there a semi-coded article about the Labour Party not being what it used to be? No, not even a hint of an innuendo of the decision.

In fact, if you wanted to find out about the news, the first paper to cover the story was *Tribune* who, having rung up Militant and got a "no comment", rang up Tommy Sheridan, prospective Militant Labour MP for Pollock. Sheridan was so pleased about his side winning that he proceeded to blab all the details to *Tribune*. Now the full story has been carried by the *Guardian* and *Samizdat* copies of the resolution passed are in circulation. Will *Militant* tell the waiting world what's happened? Or will they rely on the bourgeois press to carry the news?

This Monday, a Granada documentary cast some light on the murky corners of the British police.

One PC Salt was on undercover duty surveying a West Indian blues party in 1989. At the end of the night, PC Salt was dead and the police subsequently arrested three men and charged them with stealing Salt's wallet and a martial arts weapon as well as murder. The three admitted theft but denied murder.

Three crooks bang to rights? Another victory for British justice? Surprise, surprise... no.

It turned out that:
• PC Salt's widow found the weapon; the three men had "admitted" stealing something which

hadn't even been stolen... but the police suppressed this information.
• PC Salt liked a drink — he'd not been doing his job but sitting in a pub downing 7 or 8 pints and a short.
• PC Salt's injuries probably resulted from him falling over and hitting his head on a JCB. He probably didn't need any help in falling over.

The perfume market has been hit by a price war. Littlewoods has been selling the stuff stacked on the shelves like so much shampoo... so-o-o tacky!

And worse — at a 25% discount! This is a problem for the perfume manufacturers: the whole point of perfume is that it is expensive. It might smell horrible, but it *does* smell of money.

If Littlewoods start selling it cheap, the real high-class punters won't smell as expensive. They might even smell like someone who shops in Littlewoods.

Norman Lamont unleashed a new concept on an unsuspecting world last week: "Business optimism is at its highest level since 1988, after the biggest quarterly rise — adjusted for several factors — for 17 years".

The idea of seasonally-adjusted optimism can be extended to John Major, whose name, after being adjusted for seasonal factors, is Margaret Thatcher.

You would expect the main resolution to the Socialist Workers' Party Conference to be a well-argued and competent affair... well, p'raps just maybe...

On "Voting Labour": the document says that the SWP should "go along with" advanced workers in voting Labour. Why? "It would be very difficult to intervene in the arguments amongst the best Labour voters as to what went wrong if we were seen to abstain in the fight against the Tories". So, it's a question of "being seen" to be Labour supporters, is it?

And how do the SWP intervene into an election? "Selling to every home with a Labour Party poster in the window".

And what does the SWP think about the collapse of the Labour left? You will look in vain for an explanation, but the SWP are certainly glad it's happened...

"The decline of the party cadre means it represents much less of a barrier to revolutionary socialists building in the class..."

So, whilst knocking on doors with Labour Party posters, the SWP hopes that there will be less of them... Very strange.



Tommy "the mouth" Sheridan

Good riddance to bad rubbish

No Marxism Today, thank you

PRESS GANG



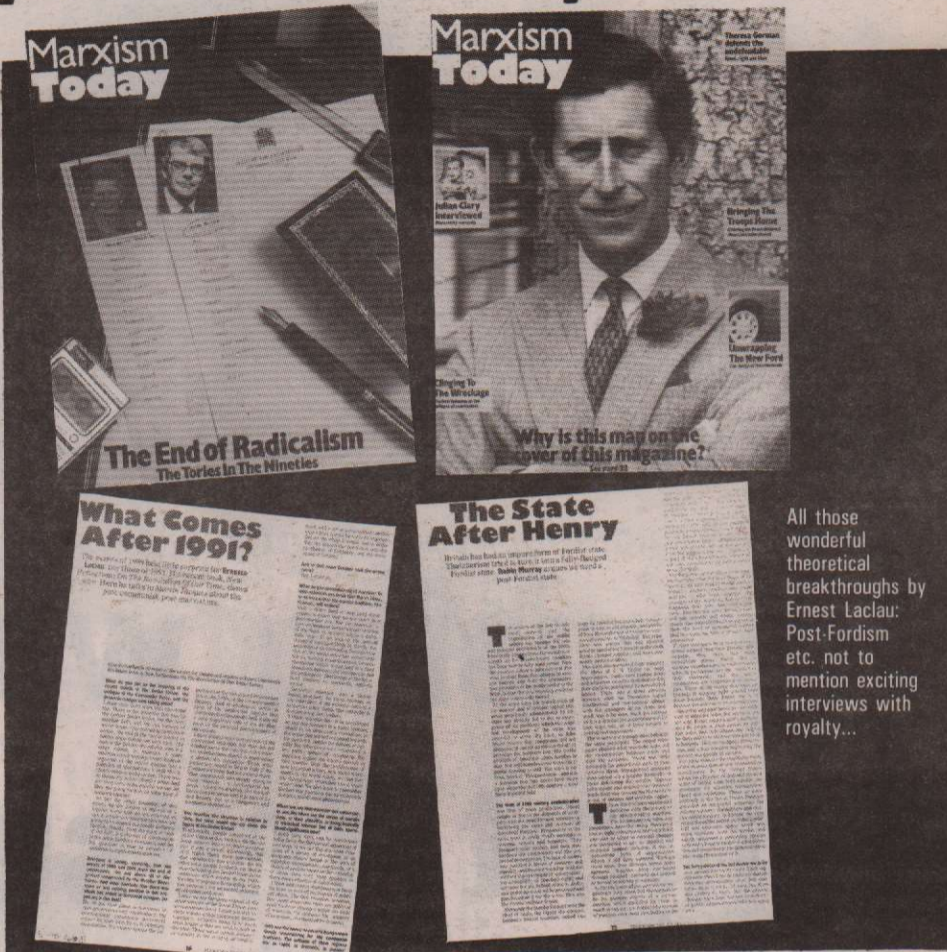
By Jim Denham

The news that *Marxism Today* is to close came as a hammer blow, I don't mind telling you.

And I do think that Martin Jacques might have at least discussed matters with me before taking such a drastic step. After all, it was yours truly who first suggested such daring innovations as the wine column and the in-depth coverage of post-modern mountain bikes.

Under my pseudonym of Ernesto Laclau, I came up with some of the mag's brightest theoretical breakthroughs, like the End of the Working Class and the arrival of Post-Fordism. I think that I can also claim, in all modesty, to have played some part in convincing Bea Campbell that working-class men are a bunch of drunken, sexist brutes, not to be trusted with the important business of transforming society.

Mind you, I warned Jacques all along that the name was a liability. My contacts at W H Smith tipped me off years ago that *Marxism Today* was almost as big a turn-off as *The Economist* as the name for a mag. For a while we toyed with *New Times* as an alternative, until I hit upon a sure-fire winner:



All those wonderful theoretical breakthroughs by Ernesto Laclau: Post-Fordism etc. not to mention exciting interviews with royalty...

Agenda. Punchy, fresh, and (above all) *challenging*, as I'm sure you'd agree.

That's where matters lay as far as I was concerned. We'd relaunch with the exciting new name in January. I'd fixed up an in-depth interview with Princess Di ("Chas, Me, and Non-Patriarchal Monarchy") that was already attracting interest from the *Guardian* and *Hello*.

My protegee Stuart Hall was raring to go on a major new series of articles unpackaging such outmoded concepts as "trade unionism" and

"solidarity". Jean-Paul Gaultier was in the bag for some really bold, thrusting stuff on the sado-masochist paradox in contemporary fashion.

Then little Jacques drops his bomb-shell. No re-launch. No new name. That's it: clear your desks and collect your black bin bags at the door.

The party's over, style mags are passé eighties stuff, and, anyway, Mrs Thatcher's gone. So we've lost our raison d'etre, he says.

Charles Leadbetter can go back to the *Financial Times*.

Bea Campbell knows all those *Late Show* type people at BBC2. Jacques, apparently, is off to Channel Four to front a new current affairs show to be called *The Knowledge*. "It will be different", he says, "a whole new genre of analytical discussion".

Perhaps he'll offer me a spot, just for old time's sake: something bold and challenging, like "How do so many clapped-out middle-class ex-Stalinists end up with well-paid jobs spouting pretentious crap on television?"

Working women's survival guide

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

Whatever the workplace, whatever the job, working women have to fight for survival.

Sometimes women's lives and health are threatened by

the work they do, often our self-esteem and peace of mind is sapped. As the women's liberation slogan put it — the personal is political.

We might think "it's only me", but the chances are our bad experience is shared by thousands of other women.

Part of our struggle for better conditions is the collective struggle as part of campaigns and unions. But we also have to get through each day at work, so what follows is my idea of the socialist equivalent of a "self help guide".

Women readers are invited to contribute their own additions.

1. Join the union. If there isn't a workplace branch, start one. See Rob Dawber's column for advice. Try to persuade women colleagues to join.

2. If they are "equal opportunity" employers they

are probably a bunch of hypocrites as well. Make sure the union is pushing for real equality, not tokenism.

Where I work equal opportunities means that women whose partners have babies get two weeks paid leave, while women employees' maternity leave is all at fractions of full pay.

The assumption behind this is that women's income is not essential to keep the family going, but the man's is. This is a bunch of "new men" using the equal opportunities policy for their own benefit but giving women nothing.

3. Don't be grateful. Workers make the world go round, not bosses. Don't let fear of unemployment make you give up the fight for decent pay and conditions.

4. Don't put up with poor health and safety. Insist collectively on proper breaks and proper safety equipment.

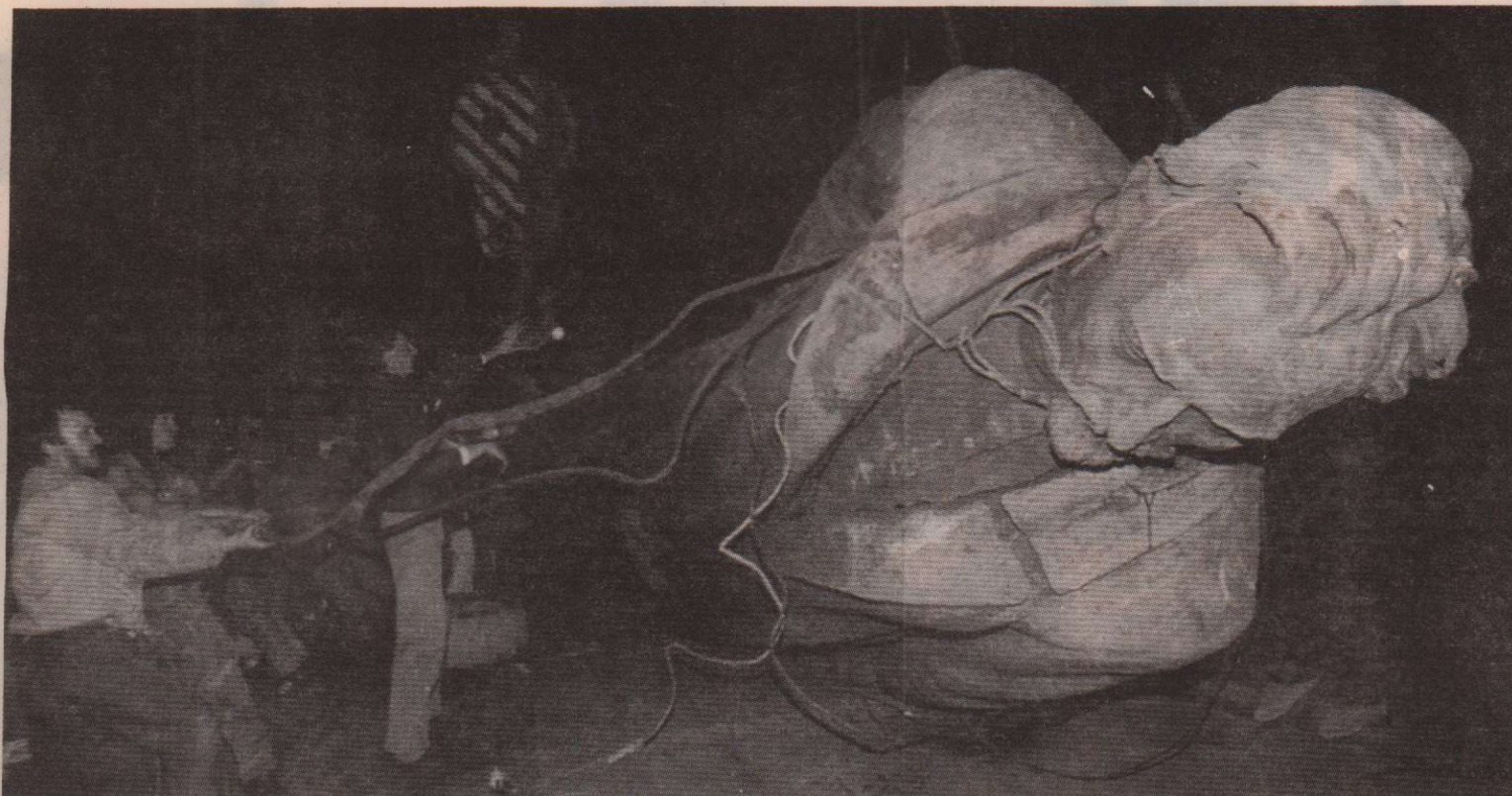
Make sure health and safety is an issue in your union.

5. Compliments don't pay the rent. If the boss compliments you on your work point out that women are paid 70% of men's wages and ask for a rise.

And on a lighter note...
6. If you are paid to type, type. Otherwise offer to (a) write it out for him in your best handwriting while he does your work; (b) offer to go on a typing course in return for an additional increment or three.

7. If you are paid to make tea, make tea. Otherwise make it for your women colleagues only. In my experience those men who do make tea at work expect a round of applause after every cup. Who needs the hassle?

8. Dress to suit yourself and your work. If they want you to dress to fit their "image" ask for a clothes allowance.



Dzerzhinsky's statue comes down

What does the collapse prove about Stalinism?

Chris Arthur, author of "The Dialectics of Labour" and editor of the English edition of Marx's and Engels' "German Ideology", queries *SO's* conclusions about the Stalinist bureaucracies being ruling classes, and Tom Rigby replies. The columns of *SO* are open to other contributors in this continuing discussion

I respond to your article on Stalinism partly because I was myself tempted with this position in the past.* But I find it weird that you adopt it at the very moment history refutes it! Let me explain.

The nomenklatura controls the surplus product and appropriates a

large slice of it to itself. In other words, they are exploiters. Why not then, you ask, say they are a ruling class? Is not this step a mere technicality? So it seems.

But in truth everything hangs on this "technicality". Trotsky wriggled every which way to avoid this conclusion, calling the bureaucracy a "state parasite", a "political caste", etc. Why was he so frighten-

ed of calling the Stalinists a ruling class? And he was frightened — he was terrified.

The reason is that, as he points out, once we admit that a previously unknown mode of production has sprung up with its associated class structure then our entire historical perspective is in ruins! We had argued that the choice was socialism or barbarism. Now it seems capitalism is succeeded not by socialism but by this new thing, whatever it is; call it "bureaucratic collectivism" with Shachtman.

If it is more progressive than capitalism then we face "centuries of deformed workers' states" — except of course they couldn't be that if they last centuries. If it is less progressive then history can regress. Either way socialism becomes a utopia.

Fortunately Shachtman turned out to be wrong and Trotsky has

been vindicated. That Stalinism could so rapidly vanish up its own arsehole proves that it was after all a sui generis self-aborting monstrosity and not a genuine new mode of production. (I take it you would not be so childish as to argue an entire epoch could be over in 70 years).

Predictably, every tendency claims to be vindicated by current events. As an impartial observer I award the palm to Hillel Ticktin and the *Critique* comrades. Their analysis was the only one remotely connected to the real world.

* See under pen name Biro, "Workers' states — problems of transition", in *Bulletin of Marxist Studies*; and improved version under my name: "The Soviet Revolution", in Krasso, N (ed), *Trotsky: the Great Debate Renewed*, St Louis, Mo: New Critics Press, 1972, pp 151-191.

Analyse reality, not formulas

Chris Arthur's letter raises one of the few intellectually serious objections you will find on the left to our analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy as an exploitative ruling class.

Nevertheless his argument is flawed. It is just not possible in 1991 to resurrect Trotsky's 1939 perspective that "Either the Stalinist regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society". Why?

Because the facts of historical development say otherwise. Decaying capitalism did not collapse. In the absence of a socialist revolution at the end of the Second World War capitalism first revived and then enjoyed the longest and most extensive expansion in its history. Stalinism didn't collapse either. But in the long run it lost out in historical competition with capitalism.

Stalin used terror to back-up forced collectivisation and crash industrialisation. When the terror slackened off, the system lost much of its dynamism. It stagnated and now the majority of the old bureaucrats want the full-scale restoration of capitalism. The defeat of the August coup and the banning of the CP has cleared the road for this.

From the vantage point of 1991, it seems to me perfectly clear that Stalinism was, and is, nothing but a

limited parallel to a certain stage of capitalist development.

This is the only way available to test Trotsky's perspective. As Engels said: "The proof of necessity lies in human activity." The facts show us that Trotsky's prognosis was too final and closed.

By bringing in Trotsky's 1939-40 perspective, Chris only obscures reality by attempting to fit it into a 50 year old scheme. This is the reverse of the usual rational scientific procedure. As Engels once put it, clearing up some bourgeois misinterpretation of Marxism: "The materialistic method is transformed into its opposite when it is employed not as a guide to the study of history, but as a finished stencil in accordance with which one accurately cuts the historical facts."

But what feature of reality does Chris obscure? I think it is the whole question of the significance of the extraction and control of the social surplus.

If you look at one of Trotsky's last works, his unfinished biography of Stalin, the analysis focuses clearly on the bureaucracy's control of the surplus:

"The bureaucracy took for itself that part of the national income which it could secure either by the exercise of force or of its authority or by direct intervention in economic relations. In the matter of the national surplus product the bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie quickly changed from alliance to enmity. The control of the

surplus product opened the bureaucracy's road to power."

The bureaucracy was no longer for Trotsky merely a "gendarme in the sphere of distribution". But had much deeper roots.

Chris makes the same point. "The nomenklatura controls the surplus product and appropriates a large slice of it to itself. In other words they are exploiters."

All this puts tremendous, in fact unbearable, strain on the "degenerated workers' state" formula: after all, what kind of workers' state has no independent class organisations, no political democracy and an exploitative state bureaucracy?

The case for calling the bureaucracy a class is amplified when you consider what Marx had to say in *Capital* Volume III about the extraction of the surplus as the "hidden secret" of "the entire social structure". That is, as constituting the most basic reality underpinning both classes and the state.

"The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the direct producers determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and in turn reacts upon it as a determinant. But on it is based the entire formation of the economic community growing out of the productive relations themselves, and therewith its specific political form likewise. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the condi-

tions of production to the direct producers — a relationship whose actual form always naturally corresponds to a definite stage of development in the ways and means of labour and hence its social productive power — which holds the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire social structure and hence also of the political form of the sovereignty-dependency relationship, in short, of the specific form of the state in each case."

It strikes me as very strange reasoning indeed for Chris to accept that the bureaucracy are exploiters but then run away from calling them a class for fear this would make the socialist perspective a utopia.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The term class merely helps explain the nomenklatura's exploitative relation to the working class and in turn underlines the necessity of an uncompromising working class hostility to Stalinism.

Finally, Chris argues, how can a mode of production exist for only 70 years? Well, I would say that Marxists measure historical development not by the hands on the clock but by the development of the productive forces. From this angle Stalinism achieved more in 60 (not 70) years than humanity managed in the entire feudal epoch.

Whether or not this means we should award Stalinism the title Mode of Production with a capital "M" and a capital "P" is, I think, a matter of zero importance.

General strike in New South Wales

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

Janet Burstall reports from Sydney

Wednesday 23 October saw the first general strike in New South Wales (Australia) since 1917. It was against the new Liberal government's Industrial Relations Bill.

The Bill seems set to become law in the next few weeks, and provides for large fines for striking; employer-imposed ballots of unions; restriction on union representatives entering workplaces; extended working hours; company-by-company contracts to replace industry-wide conditions; and reduced powers to the state Industrial Relations Commission, traditionally seen by unions as an "independent arbiter" or "umpire" in disputes.

The new Labor Council called the strike, because they could not ignore this threat to union organisation (on which they depend) and because unionists are fed up with the Liberal government.

The strike was remarkably well-supported despite the blunders of the leadership. Exemptions were granted to emergency workers, the staff of the New South Wales Parliament and the Labor Council-owned radio station.

The strike was postponed by a week when it was discovered that members of the International Olympic Committee would be in Sydney. Labor Council did not want to jeopardise Sydney's bid to host the Olympics.

There were no rallies or demonstrations organised in Sydney, on the grounds that the strike by transport workers would have made it too difficult for people to attend.

Labor Party leader, Bob Carr, attempted to sit on the fence, stating opposition to the Industrial Relations Bill, but also saying that "this strike should not have to happen — NSW can't afford it".

He didn't blame the government for the strike, or give the strike his support — except by declining to be interviewed by scab journalists on the day of the strike.

In Parliament, NSW premier, Nick Greiner taunted Labor as to whether they supported the strike. Two MPs raised their hands to show support, but not one spoke in Parliament.

The left has been nearly invisible throughout. There does not seem to be any united front left or rank-and-file campaign in the unions or ALP against Greiner's Bill.

The *Socialist* (ISO/SWP) and *Green Left Weekly* (paper of the Democratic Socialist Party, formerly SWP) have given poor coverage. *Socialist* did put the strike on their back page, and declared this showed the power of the unions. DSP thumbed its nose at Labor for failing to back a green independent candidate for Parliament, who (the DSP says) might have tipped the vote on the Bill.

The general strike shows how strong opposition is to Greiner and suggests that workers may well fight very vigorously if the Bill is used to penalise unions. The left should be taking advantage of this, instead of lying doggo.

Socialists answer

The New Right sees the collapse of Stalinism as a signal for spouting ever-more anti-socialist ideas. At the *Stand Up For Real Socialism* conference last weekend, we attempted to answer them. John O'Mahony debated Kenneth Minogue of the London School of Economics. John O'Mahony spoke first

We are discussing "Is Socialism Dead?" because of the collapse of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. The question should be: what, if anything, did the Soviet Union have to do with socialism?

But there is a more immediate reason why we are discussing this issue in Britain. For ten years the British working class has suffered a series of defeats. If we had not had those defeats we would not have the climate of ideas we now have, and we would not be discussing issues in this way. Quite likely, there would be euphoria in the labour movement about the collapse of Stalinism.

We are Trotskyists. We are in the Trotskyist tradition. Unfortunately, "Trotskyism" today means very little. You need more information other than the word itself.

To us it means that we are people who stood against the rise of Stalinism. We are the people who were in Siberia. We were in the death camps. We organised hunger strikes in Stalin's prisons. We tried to defend the Soviet working class. We defended working-class freedom in the USSR in the 1920s.

We are also the people who made the Russian Revolution. We are not attempting to ingratiate ourselves with the bourgeoisie. We are the people who shot the Tsar and who used the state against the capitalists. We stand for genuine Marxian socialism.

The idea that Stalinism has anything to do with socialism is bas-

ed on a series of misrepresentations. According to the Marxist notion of socialism, we have something in common with Minogue. We do not want state socialism. Marxists believe that ultimately society will be organised without coercion.

The real roots of bureaucratic tyranny in British capitalist society and in the USSR lie in the fact that both these types of society are ruled by a minority. This minority cannot tolerate *real* democracy, only — as here — shallow forms of democracy. These societies cannot allow self-rule by the people.

Because self-rule cannot be allowed, we get bureaucratic rule — although the levels of bureaucracy differ

Marxists believe that once the rule of the bourgeoisie is smashed and the self-rule of the people is a reality, we will not have a state in any of the old senses. We will not have the type of bureaucratism characteristic of Stalinism.

Marxist socialists believe that socialism can only come out of advanced capitalism. It could not come from anywhere else. So Trotsky and Lenin did not believe that you could take a backward part of the world, cordon it off and build a utopian socialist colony.

Marx laughed at people with basically similar ideas — people who wanted to build socialist colonies in America.

The Russian Stalinists tried to build a vast quasi-utopian system counterposed to capitalism. That collapsed because it was not possible to take a backward country and overtake the power and the might and the wealth of the bourgeoisie in the world.

The Bolsheviks led a workers' revolution in a country where socialism was not possible. They were right to take power. They wanted to see a European and a world movement where the workers took power. They wanted advanced, capitalist Germany to be taken by the workers. Germany was actually ripe for socialism.

In 1917 socialists understood that socialism was not state tyranny. Socialism was the elimination of the capitalist system, of wage slavery and the substitution of a system of a co-operatively organised society with real democracy.

One of the central criticisms



Left Oppositionists, Trotskyists fought against Stalin; they organised demonstrations such as the one pictured above, celebrating the October Revolution, to defend the Soviet working class

Marxists make of capitalism is that it develops ideas it cannot deliver. Capitalism suffers from a giant flaw. Capitalism means private ownership of the social means of production, so equality is impossible in capitalism.

We have formal equality — for example, equality before the law. But economic inequality disrupts and destroys equality.

If, ten or 15 years ago, someone made a socialist speech like this, the speaker might well be saying that it does not matter if the democracy in Britain is suppressed, and it would not be a bad thing to have a Stalinist system. I am not saying that.

I think the sort of liberty we have in capitalist Britain is worth defending against the stormtroopers of capitalism. In all probability, in the future, the stormtroopers will come — as they came to Germany under Hitler and in Chile under Pinochet

"I would concede that the capitalism we have in Britain is better than Stalinism. It is nearer to socialism. Yet capitalism is still a dog-eat-dog system"

Nevertheless, British democracy is a great deal short of real self-rule.

The Russian revolution was made by Marxists with the full knowledge that socialism could not be built amid backwardness. Those facts do not lessen the triumphalism of the bourgeoisie or lessen the pressure on fainthearted socialists. Nevertheless, the collapse of Russian

Stalinism is a *vindication* of Marxism.

Mr Minogue attacks the bureaucracy we find in Britain. Minogue attacks the waste of a welfare state, in fact superimposed on the capitalist system.

But, to a considerable extent, when Minogue attacks these things — calling them socialism — what he is actually attacking is the evolution of capitalism. The sort of statism which has been attacked by the so-called libertarian right is itself the product of capitalism.

Monopolies developed across the world, and the state and industry began to combine — for war and the plundering of colonies — a century ago.

Into this development have come the demands of the labour movement, for example, for welfare reforms. Desirable and good goals — like a welfare state — have been strangled with bureaucracy arising out of the conditions of a class society.

Much of what Minogue attacks is bureaucratic capitalism — which he then blames the *socialists* for. This is a species of ideological card-sharpening.

And there is more cheating about the legacy of Stalinism. Stalinism did not exist in the world on its own. During the long period of Stalinist rule in various countries, the bourgeoisie was the dominant world force. They are now realising their domination with the collapse of Stalinism.

Throughout this period many of the horrors of Stalinism can be traced to capitalism. For example, there are few things more terrible than the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. They treated a large part of their own people as Hitler treated the Jews.

Yet how were the Khmer Rouge produced? This psychotic social formation arose after the modern, democratic power of the US bombed Cambodia into the Stone Age. Stalinism cannot be taken in isolation from capitalism.

Even Stalinism in the Soviet Union did not happen in isolation from capitalism. Fourteen states, including Britain, invaded Soviet Russia between 1918 and 1921. That was one of the factors which led to the rise of Stalinism.

One argument we meet is this: despite all the imperfections of capitalism, nevertheless this system is the best we can get. "Anti-utopianism" is very fashionable now.

If we want to achieve a better society we are "utopians". And, comrades, "utopianism" is dangerous! Apparently it leads to Jacobin terror and Stalinism.

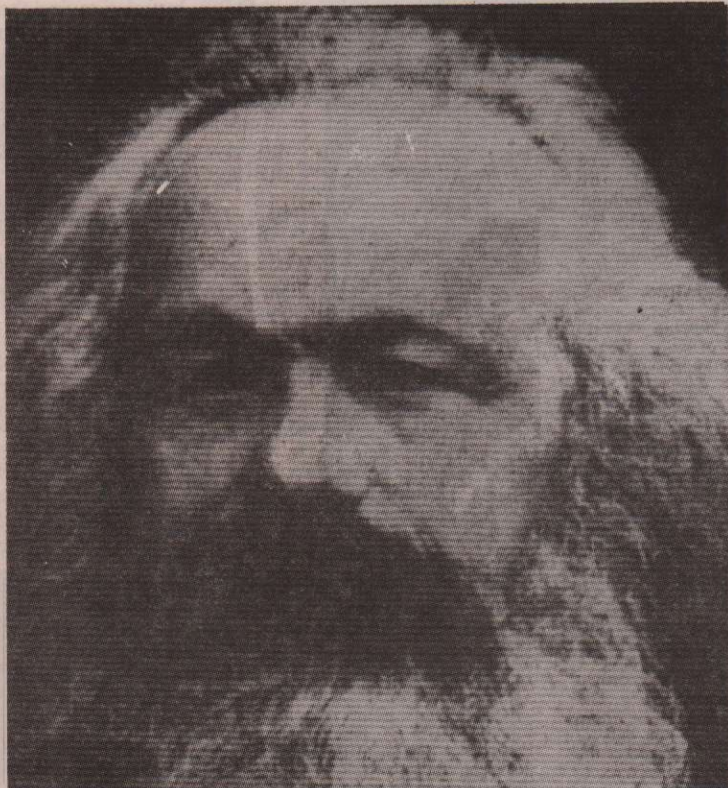
Marxists do not condemn capitalism totally. *The Communist Manifesto* contains a vast paean of praise, by Karl Marx, to the capitalist system. He says the capitalists have done wonderful things.

Capitalism is progressive in history. It creates the conditions whereby capitalist ideas of liberty and equality can actually be realised. From this point of view, capitalism has been progressive.

In previous epochs of history class society was necessary. In ancient Greece, when Aristotle argued in favour of slavery, he was truly arguing for a necessary condition of their civilisation.

I would concede that the capitalism we have in Britain is better than Stalinism. It is nearer to socialism. Yet capitalism is still a dog-eat-dog system.

Capitalism can work. It can continue for a long time. But only by destroying large parts of the means



Marx believed that socialism can only come out of advanced capitalism

r the New Right

"Socialism is a type of perpetual virgin"

Kenneth Minogue replied to John O'Mahony

A lot depends on definitions. There are a lot of packaged words: capitalism, socialism, workers' power, democracy. These have been shuffled like packs of cards.

When John O'Mahony says "Stalinism was never what socialists believed to be socialism" he is simply wrong.

This is a matter of historical fact. Great numbers of people fought for the defence of the Soviet Union as the homeland of socialism. It is only as the project has more obviously failed that they gave it up.

I was struck by a story from the Tiananmen Square episode. It was repeated in Moscow. In both cases some luckless person said: "Now I know what fascism really means".

Now why did these people choose the word "fascism"? These people were communists, not fascists.

I think this illustrates one of the ways in which socialism is a type of perpetual virgin, never touched by experience. In Islam, the reward of warriors going to paradise is to meet women for ever reconstituted as virgins. Socialism is like this.

John O'Mahony says that socialism is sometimes regarded as an ideal which is too good for us. It is a marvellous idea which we can not actually achieve. O'Mahony believes it can be achieved.

I believe revolutionary workers' socialism is pretty dead. All forms of socialism ought to be dead. I would like to see a stake through its heart. It has caused more death, unpleasantness and boredom than almost any other doctrine.

Socialism involves a curious conception of society: a society in which there are no rich or poor; no aristocratic or bourgeois; no people dying for love or dreaming of getting rich; no scandal, gossip, monarchy — all the things which keep us enthused. We have little comrades slotted into a society where their needs are perfectly satisfied.

This happens not to be the type of world I would like to live in.

If we ask: what is the opposite of socialism?, the obvious answer is

capitalism. Capitalism is one of those packages containing everything.

Capitalism contains the experiences in this hall, a type of socialism within capitalism. All over Britain you will find Hari Krishna people trying to worship at Stonehenge. You find a vast number of activities.

The point about capitalism is that a great number of people do a vast number of different things with a great number of conflicting beliefs. This plurality distinguishes capitalism from socialism.

"Individualism is almost unavoidably the type of life you live in a modern society. What people in modern society do is to distinguish themselves from others; select their clothes, wear jewellery which contrasts with others"

You have to believe in socialism in order to live in a socialist society. You do not have to believe in capitalism to live in a capitalist society. According to quite respectable opinion you better not have a religion in a socialist society. The Russians set up the League of the Godless to remove all the nonsense from people's minds.

The contrast is therefore between socialism as a single way of life, right through society, and capitalism as immensely plural.

So, how did the notion of capitalism as a single thing ever get going? The answer is that Marx, recommending a single way of life to a set of people who were already accustomed to a great plurality of ways of life, for rhetorical purposes had to present

capitalism as a unity.

Marx said: you may think you are as free as the birds, but in fact capital determines everything about you — it is a single system. This is a major mistake underlying Marxism.

If you ask: what is the opposite of socialism?, the answer is individualism.

Individualism is almost unavoidably the type of life you live in a modern society. What people in modern society do is to distinguish themselves from others; select their clothes, wear jewellery which contrasts with others. In thousands of ways individual endeavour is central to humans in a modern society.

We go through these vanities — then we die. Dying is important, people think a lot about it. What did Marx say about death? He writes a single sentence: death is a biological accident. This is an interesting comment which tells you a lot about Marx.

The way I would interpret it would be to connect it with other texts where Marx says there is no such thing as human nature; this is an ideological mystification, humans are essentially historical creatures without any essential nature.

What I take Marx to mean is that a human being is social input plus organic transferences. Man is simply matter on which society makes its imprint.

Marx's view is that a human being is the matter out of which societies are constructed. Now this is a significant part of Marx's doctrine. I think Marx imagined a communist society to be rather like a giant computer. Every individual, no longer alienated, would have the great power of society available.

By contrast to the present world, what he hated about capitalism is that we as individuals are alienated from each other, we have shames. It is the thing Christians mean by original sin.

Some types of socialist are people who have a vision of society and who think that the only valuable thing is a society which is lived in a certain sort of way. In order to do this there has to be "engineering". Just as in any fabricating you may well want to

Continued over on page 10



of production and creating mass unemployment, by going into world wars.

We hear about the horrors of Stalinism. I do not excuse them. But in this century we witnessed the near destruction of European civilisation — by forces arising from capitalism.

"It is arguable that we cannot completely do away with the market. Who needs to do such a thing? But what we can do is eliminate the private ownership of the means of production and wage slavery, and introduce real, democratic self-control"

If you walk from the London School of Economics, where Mr Minogue works, down Kingsway or the Strand, you find people asleep in doorways. In Lincoln's Inn Fields there are over 100 people camped. We live in a world where homelessness is normal.

We live in a world where culture is degraded by the profit motive. Where the mass of the population are not educated to have the possibility of realising self-rule.

All these horrible situations are

rooted in the fact that there is private, minority ownership of the means of production and everything is geared to justifying and maintaining the minority's rule.

Capitalism has its horrors, too. Right now, we can see the outlines of three great trade blocs emerging: America, Japan and Europe. If capitalism once again slows down, and there is no reason to presume it will not, there is the possibility of the collapse conditions of the 1930s. The nightmare scenarios is a 1984-world with three great warring powers.

Capitalism is not a stable system. Capitalism is progressive, historically, allowing the creation of a working class. But then the working class must actually seize its historic destiny and put itself in conscious control of society.

It is arguable that we can not completely do away with the market. Who needs to do such a thing? But what we can do is eliminate the private ownership of the means of production and wage slavery, and introduce real, democratic self-control.

Is socialism dead? No — and it will not be until capitalism is dead. Socialism is a product and an answer to capitalism.

The capitalists can win victories in the class struggle, but they cannot eliminate the working class. The class struggle will continue and the workers' movement will revive. Socialism will revive.

We are witnessing the purging of socialism of all the crustations of Fabian statism and Stalinism. This is the purification of socialism.

We are seeing the opportunity for real socialism to expand. This is not the end of history. This is a new phase of history where real socialism will have a far better chance than when our heroic comrades took power in Russia in 1917.



"We live in a world where homelessness is normal"

Socialists answer the New Right

From page 9

dispose of unsuitable material, what every socialist or communist ruler who has come to power has found is that large numbers of human beings are extremely unsuitable. That is why a lot of people die. In some cases tens of millions of people die when the project of constructing a Marxist society is embarked upon.

I am obviously not saying that Marx told people to kill. It is just a matter of combining this philosophy with absolute revolutionary power.

If the rulers of a country start taking an interest in political theory, god help you, they should not. But if they do, they should read Plato or Rousseau or St Augustine. If they read Marx, get out, trouble is coming.

The Marxists, supposedly on behalf of the proletariat, take the power to improve the condition of the poor. This is the promise made by all the Marxist rulers. This has also been betrayed by all the Marxists. Every revolution is betrayed.

An interest in the poor is an unhealthy taste. It may be that the people with an interest in the poor are philanthropic and care sympathetically for these people.

If you go through France you often see pictures of St Martin, the French saint who, coming across a poor man who was shivering, gave him half his coat. But it is difficult to imagine Ulyanov doing this. What they would say is that the pain and shivering of the poor is part of the machinery of changing the system.

If it is not a philanthropic and loving interest in the poor, we have to go back to the rather Platonic attitude of Marx. People are understood to be the matter of society. The point, for Marx, is that the proletariat are so far outside of society that they are less marked by the prejudices and illusions of bourgeois society and are therefore the matter out of which the new society will be constructed.

The interest in the poor is one of the most significant features of revolutionary parties. These parties are actually looking to exploit the poor.

I am trying to draw out the contradictions of socialism. For example, socialists purport to hate capitalism and to love socialism. In many places, socialist societies have arisen which, despite what John O'Mahony says, were plausibly socialist. People defended the socialist sixth of the world with enthusiasm.

No-one in a capitalist society ever wanted to live in these places. The numbers who want to leave socialist societies for capitalism are very great indeed.

The Vietnamese boat people are not trying to leave for China or Cuba. They go to Hong Kong, a great bastion of capitalism.

A Marxist in the West imagines him or herself to be an independent-minded struggler against all the bourgeois illusions which are thrust upon them. The others are lost in false consciousness. The Marxist has the true consciousness.

When, however, the revolution actually arrives, the Marxists settle very easily into being aparatchniks. The independence of Marxists, the illusion of courage, comes from the fact that you have the splendid destiny of actually living in a capitalist society.

Another contradiction is notionally the doctrine of the liberation of the proletariat from their working class condition. They will eventually become socialist. If the members of this working class decide they do not want socialism, they are simply abused as traitors to their class.

What appears to be liberation is in fact a prison. A proletarian, in Marx's terms, better think proletarian thoughts, supplied for them by the bourgeois Marx. There is an attitude of imprisonment inside the pretence of liberation.

A further contradiction: Marx's theory deplors the supposedly atomised condition of people living in capitalist society. The notion is that we are all so cut off from each other that we are all selfishly grabbing for our own benefits in a rat race. Now, it turns out that after what John O'Mahony calls the "Stalinist system" that these collectivist systems atomise far more

thoroughly than anything conceivable under capitalism.

There are so many informers and secret police that people are afraid to talk freely. All institutions of civil society — trade unions, churches and so on — have to be instruments of the one single system of socialism. Socialism is unity or solidarity.

Finally, revolutionary Marxist doctrine is for the moment dead, although I can see many forms of socialism and collectivism coming up on the horizon.

I am reminded of a story Arthur Koestler tells in his autobiography. It is from his communist days in 1942. He was working in Germany for a communist newspaper in danger of being closed down by the Nazis. He says they used to tell the story of a Chinese executioner whose duty it was to cut off people's heads. He was a perfectionist whose dream in life was to cut off a head so perfectly that the person would not realise it had happened.

Years passed. One day a prisoner said: when are you going to do it? The executioner smiled and said: just kindly nod.

Koestler said they used to say to each other: just kindly nod. That is my message to you socialists.

"The chap who suggested I misrepresented Marx said Marx was a terrific individualist. The question then becomes no longer what is socialism, but what is individualism?"

Kenneth Minogue's summing up:

There is a lot of trying to make water run up hill in your socialist arguments.

You say life is pretty dull and dreary in a capitalist factory. That may well be right. All I can say is that not many people flee from capitalist factories into socialism or socialist countries. A lot of people from other countries and other systems try to get in. The problem the capitalist system has is not people fleeing from the horrors of it, but trying to keep people out who want to get in.

One speaker talked about mass movements for struggle and liberation. The biggest mass movements are movements of immigration of individuals moving from situations they hate to situations they prefer. Often they have illusions, but by and large America, that hated dollar sign of capitalism, is an immense success story. Again, the problem is not that people want to get out, but that people are trying to get into it.

The lady who said "as long as we're oppressed we will fight and struggle" will find struggling doesn't really get you anywhere.

If you imagine you are in a class war then I suppose you engage in the things called fighting and struggling. But fighting and struggling is a metaphor. What you are actually doing is sitting around here, listening to me, or each other, or other people. You're not actually out there doing any real fighting.

You may occasionally go on a demo. But you largely live in a fantasy world, describing what you do in terms of military metaphors. It would be even worse if you actually did it, because it wouldn't produce anything.

Out there in the world, there is an economic system. I hate the word "system" because it is extremely misleading in many ways, but whatever happens, 55 million Britons are producing buildings, food, beer, vast numbers of things.

That is presumably helping somebody to do something. Whether fighting helps them to do anything is another question.

The chap who suggested I misrepresented Marx said Marx was a terrific individualist. The question then becomes no longer what is socialism, but what is individualism?

A lady said it would be nice if everybody could go to the opera and Covent Garden. Most people would be bored stiff by the opera. And to sit in the library at the LSE, I imagine, would not be a madly popular option

either, except for those poor cripples like myself who have a taste for that sort of thing.

The notion of individualism involved here is simply that people have a lot. You might call it consumer socialism — an idea that the future will be for everybody what an inhabitant of Mayfair with two houses in the country now lives.

That's not anybody's very serious conception of the future.

A socialist conception of human beings, as I understand it, is an organismic one. A man said that Marx believed that there was a human nature — people need food, they need shelter. Of course, Marx certainly agreed that human beings are organisms.

The contrary view which, in fact, derives from Christianity, however remote it may be from the theology, is that life is a challenge. It includes what some economists call positional goods. In other words, it includes quite a lot of things which logically cannot be universalised. The things called capitalist privileges cannot be given to everyone, because to some extent they result from competition, and in competition some people win and some people lose.

The good thing about capitalism is that it is so extensively pluralistic that some people winning in one direction are losing in terms of some other set of values.

I think death is quite an important thing to think about in this context. I would emphasise that what I am concerned with is states not in war, and the instance of the Gulf War seems to raise quite separate issues. The question here is what kind of society people want.

Adolf Hitler wanted a racially pure society, and he was a collectivist, exactly like Stalin.

The image you have of people is of great masses; collectivists even talk of elites and masses.

The word masses is a contemptuous expression, I take it. It indicates a lot of people who have no significance except that an awful lot of them have weight.

Any collectivist view of that kind seems to me to dispose people who also are in the situation of having a lot of power over them to move very rapidly to the view that you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs — and people who have a lot of power have a strong disposition to make omelettes.

As they say in Moscow these days, it's easy enough to turn an aquarium into a fish soup, anybody can do that, the real trick is how you turn a fish soup back into an aquarium.

John O'Mahony sums up

Mr Minogue says it is fantasy to talk about "fighting" and "struggle". But Mr Minogue is fighting the class struggle in one way, and on behalf of people who fight the class struggle in many other ways.

For example, Mr Minogue is on the same side as the police who fought the class struggle with batons in their hands against the miners in places like the Battle of Orgreave in 1984. There's a continuing battle.

I don't want to insist on this or that metaphor, although I think the battle metaphor is a very accurate one, summing up a lot of things. But Mr Minogue's criticism strikes me as essentially obtuse. I'm sure Mr Minogue knows what he is doing here — fighting a battle of ideas. He might not like the metaphor, but that is what he is doing, describe it as he may.

If I accepted his picture of socialism, if I accepted the picture of socialism as the ant-hill society (as somebody called it) then I am certainly anti-socialist.

Even if you are rather badly off in this society, would you prefer to be a well-fed ant?

If that's what we are talking about, then I can understand the point of view of the other side.

But it's not what we're talking about. What we are talking about is changing the fundamental framework of social life. We're not talking about regimenting social life, we're not trying to reduce human beings into so much input of food or electricity or

whatever.

We are talking about changing the basis of life from one where individual development, individual liberty, intellectual development and so on are the privilege of a minority. We're in favour of individualism. We want more individualism. We want all the people — all the working class — to have the chance to develop as individuals. We advocate a different arrangement of fundamentals in society to allow that to happen.

We locate the reason why capitalist society has immense potential for doing the sort of things we want, but doesn't do what we want, in the contradiction between the social means of production and their private ownership by capitalists, and all that follows from that in the way of keeping the workers down and exploiting the workers.

We are for individual development. We see the road to that as being the destruction of the system we live in, in which individual development is reserved for a very small minority.

Now, Hitler, Nasser, Ben-Gurion and Clement Attlee were all "socialists". So "socialist" is rather a meaningless term. But our definition of socialism is the Marxist definition.

Marx's analyses of socialist possibilities within capitalist society indicated that socialism comes after advanced capitalism, and was impossible in conditions like Russia.

We can use two ways of judging — what Marx believed to be socialism, and what the working class experienced — to look at the alleged socialisms, and then we must define them as simply not socialism.

They were not socialist according to the Marxist premises which pre-date the modern labour movement, and pre-date the Russian revolution, and they were not socialist according to the way they treated the people.

As for Mr Minogue's argument about death — I don't think Marxism believed that human beings are so many battery hens, which is how I vulgarise what I heard Mr Minogue say.

You can argue that human life is fundamentally tragic. We are leaves on the biological tree. We will cease to exist very quickly, all too quickly, and we become conscious of the reality that our lives are fundamentally tragic.

But what do you conclude from that? Do you conclude that nothing is of any importance? If you are religious, you may think that nothing is of any importance except waiting for the future life. But if you're not religious, what do you say?

What you do say if you're a reasonable being is that you make this life better, not just better in the sense of better for yourself, but better for human beings in general. You transform this life.

That seems to me to be what Marxism says about how we relate to death.

During the Russian revolution — at a certain stage of the bloody, brutal civil war, and the wars of intervention — you could say that such state organs as the Cheka became death obsessed.

If we do say that, we must do it critically, and look at what created the atmosphere in which they could slaughter people so casually or so recklessly.

It was created by the bourgeoisie in World War 1.

Now how do the people who defend this system get the right to talk about socialist bloodlust? The first great massacre in relation to a communist revolution didn't involve communists murdering bourgeois. It took place in Paris, after the Commune in 1871. Ten to fifteen thousand of our people were murdered in cold blood after the bourgeoisie won.

We want to fight the culture that is death infected.

Capitalism has possibilities, but it cannot realise them because of the class structure. Capitalism grew up in the womb of feudalism, and it is a fact that socialism — for all the pressures that socialists may feel — is ripening in the womb of capitalism.

Real capitalism is not thriving individualistic capitalism, but massive monopolies, a concentration of social wealth, that is actually not social at all but the property of a minority. Socialism is about converting that social wealth into socially controlled property.

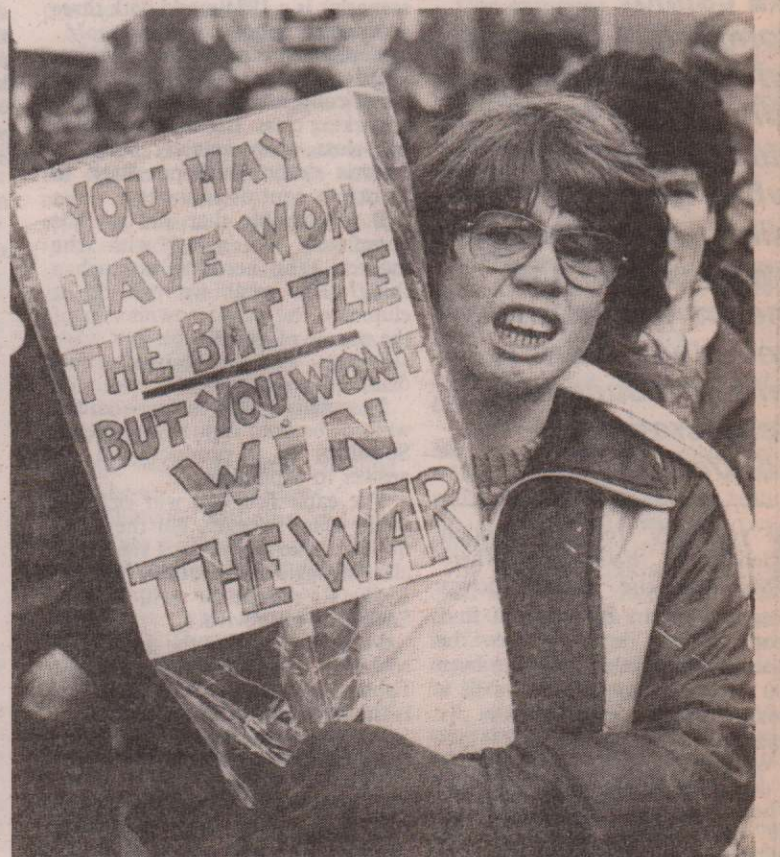
In the capitalist world of today, we can already see the outlines of future capitalist conflicts — possibly future capitalist world wars, almost certainly capitalist trade wars. The old way of putting the alternative before humankind — the choice between socialism or barbarism — is still with us.

We are fighting for a socialist, humane, democratic control of the means of life, which can lead to a tremendous flowering of real, mass human liberty, individualism and self-development.

Those who advocate the worship of the established fact, and the hidden hand that supposedly guides capitalism are as remote from reason as the friends of some pagan cult.

The Aztec priests cut out human hearts for their gods. The Thatcherites with 12 years of rule have cut out an awful lot of human hearts. They have created mass poverty and barbarised part of a whole generation of young people.

We represent the future. The class struggle cannot be contained. It cannot be beaten. It is necessary to the capitalist system. If capitalism lives, so does socialism.



'Minogue is on the same side as the police who fought the class struggle against the miners in 1984'

The Battle of the Somme

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna



The big framed, coloured certificate on our wall in Ennis (which is in the West of Ireland, about 20 miles from the Atlantic) puzzled me for a long time when I was very small.

To the left of the fireplace, near the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, it was decorated at the top by a circle or semi-circle of little flags of different sorts. It was the inscription I could not make sense of. It testified that John O'Mahony "had given his life" in July 1916 "to defend the liberty of his country".

No, it was not my uncle's name — my own name, too, in English, in memory of him — that confused me, but the reference to "his country". Which country? John was in the English army. England was not his country, or mine; and England's army was not the army of Ireland, his country.

I could not identify the Empire flags on the certificate, but I knew the Irish tricolour, and that was not there.

At first I was just puzzled; later, as I learned official 26 Counties history at school, I became vaguely ashamed and angry. My uncle John died "defending his country" just a few weeks after the English army burned the centre of Dublin and killed 15 of their captured prisoners of war in cold blood. They were the heroes who, with the earlier Republicans and the Irish saints and missionaries of ancient time and of our own time, were held up to us as embodying the highest ideals of Catholic Ireland.

I was uneasy, but pitying too. John was real to me. I knew his face. On the staircase there was a big framed old-fashioned sepia picture of a couple posing in a photographer's studio. The man, though he had a broad mustache and was in uniform, looked a bit like my father; the woman was bareheaded, in a long-skirted tight-bodied dress. Good-looking people in their twenties, both of them looked out at you boldly, not afraid of anything, it seemed.

It was a wedding picture. John and Bid were married, then John's leave was up, and he was gone — for good. And I knew Bid. She, the handsome, bold-eyed woman in the photo, was a tall, strong-boned, gaunt-faced old woman, one of the few women in the town who still (in the early '50s) dressed not in a coat but in the old-fashioned long black tasselled shawl. She never remarried. She had had a husband for one week.

As I got older, I could make more sense of my father's stories. John got drunk one evening, broke some windows, in a fight perhaps (I can't remember), and the magistrate press-ganged him into the army.

But the magistrates and the others who wielded the pressures of the established order did not recruit the hundreds of thousands of Irish men who joined up.

Sometimes it was "economic conscription". In places like Ennis, a market town with almost no industry, the town poor eked out a living as best they could, hiring out as drovers at fairs, doing building work, cutting firewood in the woods outside the town and hawking it, cutting hazel saplings ("scollops") and selling bundles ("barths") of them for use thatching houses. They were not quite a modern proletariat on which society lived, nor a proletariat like the one in ancient Rome which could (as Marx put it) live off society, but something in between.

John's brother Bob was carrying an enormous bundle of scollops from the woods on his back down miles of country road into the town one day, and having a back-breaking time of it as always. He stopped to rest against a wall, and there and then decided that the army was "better than this". He survived, shell-shocked.



One of the wounded, being wheeled away from the horrors of the Somme. Millions of Irish men fought — and were slaughtered — in the First World War, fighting in the British Army

His younger brother Gagen followed him and went through the war unscathed, only to be crippled by a hand-grenade when fighting, probably for mercenary reasons, on the wrong side in the Irish civil war of 1922-3.

My father and another brother escaped the pull to go too only because they were still children. But they did not escape the loyalties. To my childish exasperation, not even the struggle for Irish independence and the terrorist campaign of the Black and Tans to repress the elected Irish secessionist parliament which declared Ireland a Republic in January 1919, about which my father would tell stories from his experience, eradicated those loyalties. The ordinary British soldier, my father would say, was decent enough, and would try sometimes to stop the Black and Tans ill-treating people.

He would tell a story about himself aged 14 and his half-blind father being cornered and bullied by sportive Tans on a country road, and "rescued" by ordinary soldiers. Apparently this was a common experience, and a common feeling about the soldiers.

Nor was it only for economic reasons that men went off to kill other "young men they did not know" and with whom they had no real quarrel. Everywhere in the armed camps of the nations — in Germany, Britain, France, Austria — there was delirious enthusiasm for the war.

It was a break in the dull routine. Men who were to be destroyed in the clash of enormous de-personalised military machines, who would go out "over the top" for as long as they lasted against machine guns which scythed them down like corn standing in a field, went off to the army with images of war as gallantry, adventure, and personal initiative. They died in their millions.

In Ireland people of all sorts and classes flocked to "the colours".

By April 1916, when the Rising in Dublin led by Connolly and Pearse began to change the course of Irish history, 150,000 Irish men were in the British army. By the end of the war, over 200,000 Irish were fighting under British flags.

The historian Roy Foster sums up some of the reasons why. "Town labourers predominated over agricultural labourers, often encouraged by unemployment at home and the prospect of a generous separation

allowance for their families; Belfast provided a higher proportion for reasons of proletarianisation as much as Protestantism".

In the north of Ireland, the men who had organised in the Ulster Volunteer Force and armed themselves, backed by the Tory party, with imported German guns on the eve of the war to resist the British Liberal Government if it tried to coerce them into a united Ireland, joined up en masse. In Catholic Ireland many thousands had organised and armed themselves in the Irish Volunteers to back Home Rule, and if necessary fight the Northerners. They joined the British Army

"Some of them helped drive Britain out of Ireland: the most successful Republican field commander in Ireland's war of independence, Tom Barry, had gone through the entire World War in the British Army. Everywhere in Europe, soldiers returned embittered, and many of them turned to communism, pursuing a new definition of freedom"

too, in their big majority, to prove that a Home Rule Ireland would be "loyal" to the Empire. That is what their leaders told them to do.

They met, Northerners and Southerners, Catholics and Protestants, Nationalists and Unionists, far away in France, and found that they could after all unite — in the mass graves of places like Ypres and the Somme.

Orange and Green were united not in the brotherhood of an all-Ireland national identity, and not by the benign white with which those who designed the Irish tricolour in the 1840s had linked the Orange and the Green, but by the red of England's army and by their

own blood.

The battle of the Somme was ending just about now — after four months in which nothing was decided one way or the other — exactly 75 years ago.

Over a million men died in that battle alone, most of them workers from the slums of Berlin, Paris, Manchester, London, and similar places. Many thousands of them were Irish. A great compact mass of them, 12,000 strong, were Ulster Protestants. The men who had first come together to fight Home Rule, and if necessary England, perished en masse fighting Germany on behalf of England.

Yet that great slaughter helped to transform Ireland. It was not only the 1916 Rising that changed the course of Irish politics. It was the attempt to force conscription (introduced in Britain in 1916) onto Ireland which united Catholic Ireland behind the Sinn Féin coalition which won the November 1918 election on a platform of secession from the United Kingdom.

In the last half of the war, recruitment in Ireland fell off dramatically. According to Foster, "By 1917, figures prepared for the Cabinet showed that the percentage of the male population represented by enlistment was down to 4.96 in Ireland, compared to 17% in England, Scotland and Wales".

The Rising, with the cold-blooded killing afterwards of some of those who surrendered, was no doubt one reason for this. The young men of Ireland turned from "defending the liberty of their country" to attempting to win it from those with whom they had far greater reason to quarrel than they ever had with Germany.

Some of them helped drive Britain out of Southern Ireland: the most successful Republican field commander in Ireland's war of independence, Tom Barry, had gone through the entire World War in the British Army. Everywhere in Europe, soldiers returned embittered, and many of them turned to communism, pursuing a new definition of freedom.

Poor John O'Mahony, one of millions who died in the great senseless imperialist slaughter, and the other Irish dead, were past learning.

Ted Grant analyses the Walton fiasco

Why Militant is wrong

The decision of the majority of Militant's leaders to make a turn towards SWP-style "party building" is an important event for the left.

It has thrown Militant's organisation into a profound crisis. Amongst the opponents of the new turn is Ted Grant, the founder of Militant.

The minority resolution, which Grant, together with Rob Sewell, presented to the mid-July meeting of Militant's leading committee, echoes *Socialist Organiser's* criticisms of Militant's decision to stand against Labour in the Walton by-election. Other things in the resolution are far from our politics. We print the resolution here as a service to the left.

If we are to develop the organisation and prepare the ground for the future, we have a duty to seriously weigh up all our actions in the light of experience and learn the lessons of our mistakes.

Those who fail to recognise their errors or admit mistakes, stated Trotsky many times, will never be able to construct a viable, healthy organisation.

To characterise the Walton result as some type of 'victory' is to completely misread the situation and miseducate the ranks of the organisation. Our first responsibility is to tell the ranks what it is, and not what we would like it to be. To dress up a setback in this fashion is the worst kind of deception for a Marxist organisation.

In making these criticisms, we do not for a moment take away the sterling efforts and sacrifice of the comrades involved in the election campaign who fought against all the odds to secure an electoral victory. The problem lies squarely with the false politics of standing independently.

The policy was rushed through the Central Committee after it was given a completely exaggerated, and therefore erroneous, view of the position in Walton. The majority of comrades, unfortunately, allowed themselves to be influenced mainly by subjective considerations, i.e. their hatred of Kilfoyle. It is true that Kilfoyle is a gangster, but this is the case with most of the right wing candidates nationally.

The argument, used by the majority to justify their position, that we must orient our work for the next period 'independently' is nothing new. We have, to a great extent both nationally and internationally, been forced to do so by the collapse of Left reformism, the boom, the swing to the right by social democracy and the virtual collapse in many countries of Stalinist parties.

But our orientation towards the mass organisations was crucial. To put up a candidate in Walton was to break with the method, perspectives and theory formulated over forty years. As is the suggestion now that, despite the defeat in Walton, candidates may be put up in Scotland and elsewhere.

A great part of the political capital of the tendency in Britain and internationally was the fact that we were conceived as a component part of the labour and trade union movement. We were entirely different to the sects, who try and create phantom 'mass' revolu-

tionary parties outside of the time, experience and consciousness of the masses.

Part from a few countries the classical conditions for entristm have not existed for forty years. This was certainly the case in Britain. All our trade union and political work has to be determined by our orientation towards the Labour Party.

The classical conditions for entristm will undoubtedly arise during the next epoch — two, three, five or even ten years — as the crisis of world capitalism, and especially British capitalism, unfolds.

These conditions are:

1) A revolutionary or semi-revolutionary crisis.
2) The leadership of social democracy loses complete control of the Party.

3) The masses move to left reformist or even centrist conclusions — there is a social ferment within the party. The left membership becomes open to revolutionary and Marxist ideas.

4) The subjective factor is present to take advantage of the situation.

But by putting up a candidate or candidates this work is jeopardised. It can lead to a complete miseducation of the new layers, especially the youth, who may move towards us in

"To characterise the Walton result as some type of 'victory' is to completely misread the situation and miseducate the ranks of the organisation."

the next few years. It is a complete miseducation of the cadres, who can draw dangerous conclusions. They can become ultra-left and adventurist, this in its turn rapidly leading to passivity and substitutionism.

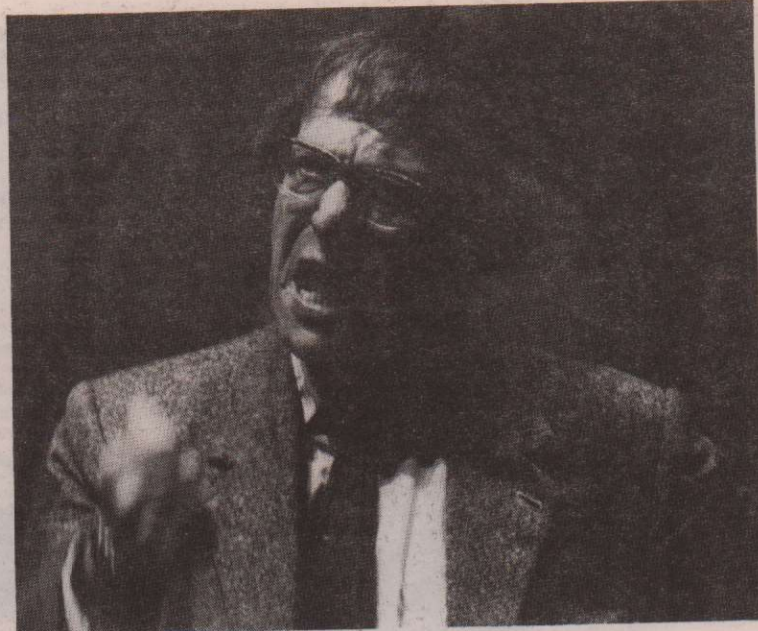
There could be an argument for an independent revolutionary party, though incorrect. But to put forward the idea of an 'alternative' or 'real' Labour Party would necessarily be still-born. To be neither fish, nor fowl is to get the worst of all worlds. A few years ago we had a good laugh at the expense of the Lambertists (an alleged 'Trotskyist' sect) in France who tried to create a substitute Socialist Party. Like the Lambertists, the attempt to create a 'substitute' Labour Party in Liverpool can only end in tears.

The perception of many workers in the trade unions — who regard the Labour Party as their party — would be that of regarding us as alien to their political aspirations. The propaganda in the *Militant* over the last four weeks would reinforce this impression.

Up to now workers have recognised that we are organised, but as a component part of the Labour Party. But now the setting up of an 'organisation' or Party in Scotland will break this view. The illusion that such an organisation or Party could gain affiliation to the Labour Party, like the Independent Labour Party (ILP) or the Co-op, is false and even dangerous.

The ILP and the Co-op, despite the former adopting a centrist policy for a time, had an affinity with the Labour bureaucracy. They were not afraid of the ILP, but regarded it as a possible left flank when the workers moved left, preventing them drawing revolutionary conclusions. They would be terrified of a revolutionary Marxist organisation or Party.

The bureaucracy changed the constitution to prevent the affiliation of the CP in the immediate post-war period. There is no possibility of even the most leftward Labour



Militant's erstwhile guru, Ted Grant

Party accepting the affiliation of a Marxist party or organisation.

Now if before or after the general election Kinnock launches a mass purge nationally the results could be disastrous. Formerly if a mass purge was launched we would have retained the sympathy and support of wide layers in the Labour Party and trade unions. Now they would be indifferent. If you have an independent party or organisation go ahead and organise it. You can paddle your own canoe without being linked to the line of Labour.

The argument that when the conditions for entristm arise we can switch policies will not hold water. Youth and industrial workers, miseducated by an 'independent' orientation would not be prepared to change. We would have a crisis in the organisation of massive proportions. Moreover it would be very difficult to get back under these conditions. At the same time we would lose many if not most of the new movement.

Our greatest gain over a period of decades was that we became a crucial and component part of the left. Despite the collapse of the left in both the trade unions and the Labour Party, we would have been strategically placed to become an important and even dominant part of the left.

At best this has been jeopardised by the ultra-left binge in Liverpool and now in Scotland. The full effects of the defeats in Liverpool and nationally will be shown in the next few years.

As predicted the 'Broad Left' did very little apart from our own comrades. Now it will fall apart. The Broad Left in any event comprises around 400 people — 100 in Walton, 300 in the rest of Liverpool.

The mistake of the majority comrades was not to understand that the 'left' in the trade unions and Labour Party was running in advance of the broad mass of workers. Now the entire Liverpool Labour Party and trade unions have been handed over to the right wing for a number of years.

The Liverpool organisation will have to maintain two apparatuses — the 'real' Labour Party and Militant.

The Labour Party nationally has been reduced to a skeleton. But it is not Labour which will 'wither on the vine' but the artificial Labour Party which is being created in Liverpool.

The 'left', having stubbed their toes on the reactionary policies of the reformists on the councils, in the unions and the national bureaucracy in their impatience can draw for a while ultra-left and radical conclusions because the mass of workers 'let them down'.

On the industrial front we have

the example of Pilkingtons in the early 1970s, when the selling out of a strike by the national leadership of the GMBU under Lord Cooper led in desperation to the setting up of an 'independent union'. This was supported by the SWP, WRP, CP and the *Tribune* lefts. We alone opposed it and pointed out the consequences. The majority of workers did not support it and the employers and union bureaucracy joined together to smash the union.

Unfortunately many of the Liverpool comrades, on the basis of their success in the council elections, thought they could repeat this on the parliamentary plane. Instead of most of the leading comrades of the tendency firmly opposing this they capitulated to this mood. This will have grievous consequences for the tendency in Liverpool and nationally.

That is the lesson of the attempts to create independent 'left' Labour Parties in the pre-war and post-war period. All such efforts were doomed to failure. This new adventure on the part of the Liverpool comrades will inevitably fail, and will have as a spin-off a bad effect on the Liverpool organisation which right up to the present has to be subsidised by the national tendency.

The new layers in the trade unions, even with a right wing

"The action has undoubtedly played into the hands of Kinnock, Kilfoyle and Rimmer, who were able to portray the result as a victory for them and a rejection of the organisation by the workers of Walton."

Labour government will not orient toward us but towards the Labour Party in order to change it. Far from being a 'detour', it is a blind alley to which the comrades are being led.

The argument that there was no alternative to standing is false from beginning to end. The fact that 500 workers attending Eric Heffer's funeral wanted a candidate to stand showed the lack of objectivity and sense of proportion of the Liverpool and national leadership. Liverpool has a population of 500,000 — Walton is a constituency of 70,000. The idea that we had to stand, due to pressure from the working class, was proved to be false given the vote and the lack of participation by the Broad Left. In effect, the organisation substituted itself for the Broad Left.

At each stage, the majority comrades had to change their over-

exaggerated views and expectations given the response from the workers of Walton. As the campaign progressed, reports varied from 'victory' to 'neck and neck', then 'substantial vote', down to 10,000 votes, 5,000 votes, then lastly to 3,000 votes. Of course this change was not alluded to in our public material and seemed to disorientate our comrades and supporters.

Big concessions were made to the non-comrades in the Broad Left: not to sell papers openly, no *Militant* leaflets on the official canvass. Recruitment was not seen as the priority despite the majority targets of doubling and trebling the membership on Merseyside. Everything was subordinated to maximising the vote. Even the programme we stood on was not a revolutionary one. There was no explanation of the capitalist crisis and the need for a socialist planned economy, etc. The programme we offered the workers of Walton was in effect a left reformist one.

Our ideas were sacrificed to preserve the 'unity' of the Broad Left — which refused to participate in the campaign in any case. It appears now they are preparing to attack us for undermining the campaign.

The argument that if we had refused to stand the rest of the Broad Left would have nominated a candidate is specious. We had a majority of the Broad Lefts and could have exerted pressure against this. In reality we pushed the issue. On the other hand if a splinter 'Broad Left' had stood we could have disassociated ourselves from them. We could have supported the official Labour candidate while criticising Kilfoyle and the local and national bureaucracy of the Labour Party and putting forward a socialist and revolutionary policy.

There is nothing 'new' in this. We have maintained this position in contra-distinction to the sects for many years. A campaign of education of our tendency in Liverpool could have prevented the fiasco of Walton. In the next period we could lose members and supporters in Liverpool as the futility of maintaining a dead 'real' Labour Party becomes obvious to all.

For the last decades we have been criticised by the sects for alleged 'passivity' and 'adaption' to the bureaucracy because we refused to break with the Labour Party. We laughed at this stupidity. Now for want of a better argument the majority have adopted the same spurious criticism of the minority. A continuation of the tried and tested policy of Marxism is hardly passivity.

We have been to the fore in advocating that the tendency takes initiatives and independent work, but always with the proviso that all the work is subject to our general orientation, perspectives, strategy and tactics.

The action has undoubtedly played into the hands of Kinnock, Kilfoyle and Rimmer, who were able to portray the result as a victory for them and a rejection of the organisation by the workers of Walton. It will now be used, as was predicted beforehand, as the excuse for a purge in Liverpool and elsewhere.

In order that we can avoid disastrous mistakes of this type in the future, it is necessary to recognise the reality of the situation and draw out all the lessons concerning the medium and long term development of our work.

Above all we must strive to avoid the sickness of ultra-leftism and impatience. The Walton episode can only be seen in this light. That is why the proposed 'Scottish turn' — the launching of an independent organisation — would be a grave mistake and result in the abandonment of 40 years of entrist work.

WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT WE MUST BECOME

An analysis of what is wrong with the *Militant*, written in 1966. £5 plus 32 pence postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Reissued version of 'Spartacus'

A brilliant film of slave revolt

Cinema

Thomas J Patrick reviews *Spartacus*

A reissued version of *Spartacus* opened this week. Stanley Kubrick's film of slaves revolting in the midst of the Roman Empire was a revolutionary film when it was made in 1960, and it has stood the test of time as a masterpiece.

It begins in 73 BC, in a gladiatorial school near the Italian city of Capua, where a third-generation slave who has previously worked in the mines, Spartacus, is being trained as a gladiator. He leads a revolt, which spreads from the gladiators at the school to most of the slaves in the surrounding part of Italy.

"The gladiators functioned almost as a political party at the beginning of the revolt, deliberately going round and rousing the slaves to form a revolutionary army"

Spartacus, originally a book written by Howard Fast in 1951, was later translated to film by Dalton Trumbo. Both were witch-hunted in the McCarthy era. Fast served a year in jail, and had to get his book published himself. No publisher would do it commercially, at first.

If you were a slave in that era, you were no longer a person, you were property. You could be sold, bought, killed, or eaten. Whatever your masters wanted to do to you they could do it and they would do it.

One of the reasons the revolt was so successful was that the gladiatorial school had created a group of trained fighters, who, once freed, were like an army. And, at the beginning, the Romans were contemptuous, thinking a slave revolt no credible threat to their Roman Republic.

There had been, and would be, many slave revolts.

The gladiators functioned almost as a political party at the beginning of the revolt, deliberately going round and rousing the slaves to form a revolutionary army.

The film is full of hatred of slavery, and that hatred has a real emotional power that comes through in the film.

Given the politics of Fast and Dalton Trumbo, it is unlikely that the feeling against slavery, which in the film targets chattel slavery, is only a hatred of the ancient form of slavery. It is hatred of modern wage-slavery that, disguised but vibrating, radiates from this film.



Kirk Douglas plays Spartacus

Trumbo was just coming out of a ten year period of being blacklisted. The one really off note in the movie was presumably put in by Trumbo to placate the witch-hunters. At the beginning, a narrator says that Christianity was soon to create a new and better society in ancient Rome. It did nothing of the sort!

But, apart from that, the film is left-wing. For example, the revolt in the gladiatorial school is sparked off when a black slave who has

beaten Spartacus in the arena refuses to kill him on the order of Roman nobles. Instead, he attacks them. It is a true parable of what a proper human being should do.

In America at that time (1960), this was a powerful message for the blacks. America had its own version of near-apartheid, and the black civil rights movement was picking up speed.

This film is very long — only the second I've been in that had an in-

termission — and drags a bit at the end. But I will not forget for a long time the powerful scene where the slaves are beaten and the survivors are rounded up and faced with death.

The Romans offer them their lives if they will identify Spartacus. Spartacus is about to sacrifice himself for his people when the person he is chained to shouts, "I am Spartacus". Then another slave says, "I am Spartacus".

Then another, then another, until the entire hillside is full of men shouting defiantly, "I am Spartacus".

Spartacus is no longer a man. He is a people. He is an idea. A person or a hero may be bought off or killed, but once an ideal grips a people, a community, or a class, once they really believe in that ideal, you would have to kill all those people to kill that ideal. If even a few people survive, the ideal survives, and may spread and take root again in the minds of many other people.

Spartacus is brilliant. Go and see it!

The trials of Oz

Periscope

Sat 9 November BBC2 9.30pm

In 1971, the editors of the "underground" paper *Oz* were charged at the Old Bailey with obscenity.

BBC2 has dramatised the trial. If you are inclined to favour censoring "pornography" and other



things that you dislike, take this chance to look back to when the censors were still very powerful.

Women and violence

Television

By Jean Lane

Heat of the Matter on TV last week, investigated the argument surrounding the Sara Thornton case, as well as those of Amelia Rossiter and Kiranjit Ahluwalia who murdered their violent husbands.

A life sentence is automatic for murder. However, it is possible to get a sentence reduced to manslaughter due to provocation. This means a sudden and temporary loss of control. Since the woman had time to get away from her violent husband, find a knife, come back and then stab him, provocation could not apply. According to Hananna Siddiqui of Southall Black Sisters, after 20 years of violence, walking away and getting a knife is not necessarily a cooling-off period, but one of fear and desperation.

Campaigns on Sara Thornton's behalf argue that the law does not reflect women's experience and is based on double standards.

It does not reflect women's experience because it assumes a fight between equals as eg, in a pub, which is usually not the case in domestic violence.

The woman is often weaker, lacks confidence, has children to shield and, in any case, responds to violence in a different way.

Based on double standards, because a man who kills his wife will be treated as, at most, "having gone too far this time", but often with sympathy and leniency due to the inconvenience he has had to put up with from a nagging and drunken wife.

Thus, a man may be deemed to have been "provoked" if he kills his wife for moving a mustard pot. But a woman is more likely to get "diminished responsibility". Violence is accepted and expected in men, but not in women.

Those who argue against the law being changed often do so on the grounds that provocation means sudden loss of control, that to widen the time in which a provoked person can murder would be a charter for revenge killings.

This is the reason why, horrible as it is, 20 years of violence, being hit with a hammer, burned with cigarettes, rape and death threats to the woman and the kids cannot be taken into account. The law has to be above emotion, must not be swayed by history, and must stick strictly to the facts.

Does this mean that, when a judge gives a suspended sentence to a man who kills his wife for moving a mustard pot, he did not take into account and treat with sympathy, the years of nagging and drunkenness he had had to endure? I think not.

It could conceivably be argued that it is the misuse of a just law on behalf of sexist judges which is to blame. That the law as it stands could be meted out more evenly.

But only if you are dealing with a situation of equality in the first place. Just as working class people do not have equality under the law because they cannot afford representation, so women do not have equality under the law because they are not in reality equal citizens to start with.

All women suffering domestic violence, and working class women in particular, who cannot defend themselves at a specific time of violence, cannot leave because of fear of reprisal or because of lack of money or through fear for their children, cannot get equal access to a law which, because of its interpretation of provocation, excludes them.

This is not arguing a special case. The law on many occasions takes people's personal circumstances into account before sentencing. Mitigation, a person's history, reports from social workers, etc., are brought into account in many court cases, including those of men who murder their wives. Women who murder their husbands should be given the same consideration.

According to the programme, in the last year, 15 men have been killed by their wives while 70 women have been killed by their husbands. Yet 40% of these women are convicted of murder compared to only 25% of the men.

Either this is because women are naturally violent in a more premeditated way than men or it is because they are treated unfairly under the law. I suggest the latter.

Britain helps Islamic tyranny

The Islamic regime in Iran is one of the most brutal and repressive dictatorships in the world.

Since its ascent to power in 1979, it has systematically attacked all the democratic and social gains of the Iranian people achieved through the great many sacrifices made

during the revolution. In this country, the reports about this situation in Iran by the mass media have left a lot to be desired. Indeed, the reports themselves, and their so-called opposition to the Islamic regime, have appeared only when the British government has sought to put pressure on the Iranian regime out of its own self-interest. Otherwise, they have

had no problem in supporting the reactionary politics of this regime and in covering up the arms sales by the West (especially from Britain).

Now, with the release of British hostages from Lebanon, the normalisation of relations between Iran and Britain has speeded up. This could mean increased arms sales and consequently more repression of the working

class in Iran. This is why we think that the British Labour Movement should do all in its power to oppose the Islamic regime and expose the hypocrisy of the present government in its attitudes towards this reactionary regime.

Amin Kazemi, the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (BM CARI, London WC1N 3XX)



Tomas Borge

Sandinista leader hails collapse of Stalinism

EYE ON THE LEFT

In this interview with Cecilia Garmendia (translated and abridged here from the French socialist weekly *Rouge*), Tomas Borge, the sole surviving founder-member of the Sandinista Front, argues that the collapse of Stalinism was a step forward for socialism.

Personally, I rejoice at the events in the East: we have won the right to start again, but now we will start from correct positions, and we will not take any more blind alleys.

The revolutionaries no longer have reasons to go wrong from a strategic point of view, as in the past.

We have gained from the events in the East. The time of bureaucracy and authoritarianism, and of absence of freedom of expression, has gone. The grey colours with which socialism had clothed itself have been burned.

We must start to sew the most beautiful clothes for socialism, starting, of course, with nappies of all colours! Socialism must be reborn.

Of course, imperialism is more aggressive. It reckons it has won. It does not know that the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the East European states, instead of being a victory for it, will eventually constitute a loss for it.

The fall of the Berlin Wall constitutes the beginning of the stage of the destruction of imperialism, even if that prediction seems madness today. The first stone of capitalism has fallen with the Berlin Wall.

In Nicaragua, the revolution took advantage of an exceptional moment. A knot of contradictions permitted our victory, and we knew how to cut it at the right moment.

But soon facts intervened which complicated the

development of our revolution and of any change in Central America. Reagan's coming to the presidency of the United States was linked with the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution. He represented the choice of an expansionist and violent policy.

The events in the East have not had great ideological consequences in Nicaragua, but they have had great effects in the economic field. However, they have had political effects for the majority of the international left, and, of course, the Latin American left.

The electoral defeat of the Sandinista Front only coincided with the overtures in the East at the level of dates. We did not lose the elections because of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The maintenance of the internal unity of the Sandinista Front, despite the contradictions of our revolutionary process, which has been complex and marked by breaks, has been essential for Sandinism.

That unity is the vertebral column of the survival of the revolution. Despite the worst mistakes and errors we have committed, we have been able to maintain the cohesion of a strong organisation with an enormous social influence...

The political strength and the great resources of the Sandinista Front are used to defend popular interests and the gains of the revolution...

Besides, the government — and I say advisedly the government and not UNO [formally the ruling party; but in fact the government of Violeta Chamorro depends also on the consent of the Sandinistas] — is not trying today to dismantle the gains of the revolution. When the government, for example, vetoed the laws voted by the Assembly on property [reversing expropriations carried out after the 1979 revolution], it contributed de facto to defending those gains.

It does that, with a certain political wisdom, starting from its understanding of reality and of the relation of forces, as well as in line with the agreements which it has been forced to make with the Sandinista Front.

The Korean war, Healy and Cliff

Tom Wheeler (SO 505) re-raises an important question for socialists.

It split and scattered the

forces of Trotskyism 40 years ago — the Korean war and the attitude socialists should have taken to it.

Today, North Korea is almost a pure stalinist state

crowned with something that looks like a hereditary monarchy. In 1950, the stalinist North Koreans invaded capitalist South Korea. Then the US (under the flag of the UN) intervened in the Korean civil war.

Six months later, so did the Maoist Chinese. In 3 years of war, most of Korea was levelled to the ground. At one point, when US generals came close to invading China, the world came close to a nuclear World War 3.

Even so, it was right, I think, for socialists to support the North Koreans against US imperialism, then smarting over the "loss" of China and uncertain whether to take on the role of old-fashioned colonial imperialist power.

You did not have to have the illusion that Korean stalinism was "progressive" to support the Koreans' right to self-determination.

Of course, Gerry Healy, like Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, his mentors then, had illusions in expanding stalinism, believing it to be the expanding "world revolution".

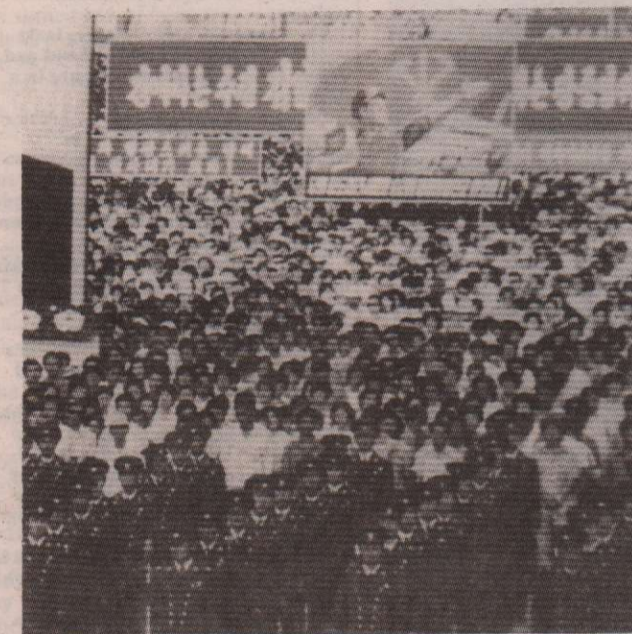
What a shame then that those like Tony Cliff of the SWP, who did not have such illusions, failed to stand by the right of a small country to self-determination against imperialist invasion.

Cliff rediscovered his Leninist principles for Vietnam — which in principle was identical to Korea — in the '60s, when they were a lot easier to live with. He now seems eagerly to scan the political horizon for a Khomeini or Saddam Hussein to support for their "anti-imperialism".

Gerry Healy was a muddlehead and then a scoundrel. He was able to gain the position he did, because for a while he was in Britain the defender of important Marxist principles.

Tom Macara, New Cross

Editor's note: Jack Cleary's series on the Trotskyists in the Labour Youth Movement will be continued next week



North Korea is today almost a pure Stalinist state. Even so, it was right for socialists to support the North Koreans against US imperialism

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 7 November

"Oppose the Whittington Hospital opt-out". Archway Central Hall, London N19. 7.00. Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn MP and Chris Smith MP, and local unions

"Is Socialism dead?" Debate hosted by Sheffield SO. 7.30, Town Hall. Speakers include Pat Murphy, Anthony Arblaster and the Tory PPC for Hillsborough "Socialists and Ireland", Kent University SO meeting. 7.00. "Fighting racism and fascism", Leeds SO meeting. 7.30, Swartmore Centre, Clarendon Square. Speaker: Nick Lowles

Saturday 9 November

Teesside SO dayschool. 11.00-4.30, St Mary's Centre, Middlesbrough
Crisis in London conference. 10.30-5.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Contact: Ed Hall, 6a Acre Lane, SW2 5SG

Sunday 10 November

Anti-fascist demonstration. Assemblé: 1.00, Aldgate East tube, London. Organised by AFA
Anti-fascist rally. 1.00, Cliffs Tower, York
"After the collapse of Stalinism", Manchester SO dayschool. 11.00-4.00, Town Hall

Tuesday 12 November

"Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?" Debate between Fabian Society and John McIlroy. Hosted by Manchester University SO. 1.00, Meeting room 1

Wednesday 13 November

"Art and revolution", Brighton Poly SO meeting. 1.00, Grand Parade. Speaker: Matt Cooper
"South Africa: which way to liberation?" Debate hosted by Essex University SO. 6.00. Speakers include Tom Rigby

Thursday 14 November

"The politics of identity", Brighton SO meeting. 7.30, the Great Eastern pub

Friday 15 November

"Labour and the General Election", Huddersfield Poly SO meeting. 1.00. Speaker: Richard Love

Saturday 16 November

"Socialists for Labour" conference. 11.00-5.00, Camden Town Hall, London

Sunday 17 November

Labour Party Socialists AGM. 10.00-4.00, Camden Town Hall, London

Stand Up For Real Socialism

I have just picked up a copy of your leaflet 'Stand Up For Real Socialism', unfortunately not in time to attend your conference.

However, I am in full agreement with your statement. I would be very interested if you could send me more details of the nature and aims of your campaign.

Dave Backwith, Bristol

Join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty!

The case for a socialist revolution to replace capitalism remains as strong as ever.

In the Third World, capitalism today means increasing poverty, misery and hunger, imposed in order to meet the interest payments demanded by international banks.

In the advanced capitalist countries unemployment is high and rising, and the welfare systems won by decades of working-class reform effort are everywhere under attack. In Eastern Europe and the USSR, the rush towards capitalism will turn millions into paupers.

Capitalism can inflict defeats on socialism and the working class. It can never abolish the working class, and so it can never abolish the class struggle and the ideas of socialism.

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.

Contact the AWL c/o P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

COHSE, NUPE, NALGO merger

By Nik Barstow, NWAH NALGO and Rob McLoughlan, secretary Bury NALGO

The potential of a New Union — bringing together the memberships of COHSE, NUPE and NALGO — is enormous. So often in the past we have seen opportunities to defend ourselves squandered in inter-union rivalry.

We face continuing cuts, privatisation and attacks on union rights in local councils, the NHS, education, and all those public services that have already been sold off to big business. Whatever the result of a General Election many of those threats will stay — the rights of trade unionists will only be defended and strengthened by their own action.

One big union can mean real unity and solidarity in action — but it is not guaranteed by a merger. Already our leaders have shown this is not what they want.

Many branches already have experience of inter-union solidarity. This Conference aims to build on and strengthen that unity 'on the ground'. The morning session will allow members to share their experiences of joint-union action.

To build on this, the first afternoon session will focus on the principles for a new merged union set out by NALGO's 1990 Conference:

- * Lay member control and the sovereignty of Annual Conference
- * Adequate financial resources for Branches
- * The rights of women, black members, lesbian and gay members, and of members with disabilities to self-organisation within the New Union
- * The rights of branches and campaigns to organise within the Union to secure policy changes.

Union democracy is basic to creating a Union that fights for the rights and interests of the members... but democracy is far from the minds of some of our leaders.

The "New Union Committee" made up of senior officials of all three unions, discussed



democracy in June. This is what they said: "Concern was reiterated about the ability of NALGO's Conference to amend the final report... NALGO would examine the feasibility of the 'quid pro quo' proposal, i.e. that in return for the Special Conference, they should discourage and endeavour to minimise the effect of amend-

ments to the final report." Members of all our unions at workplace and branch level will not be "discouraged"; we want to maximise the effect of our views on the merger so we win the fighting, democratic union we want to see. The last session of the Conference will discuss how we can best do that.

Walk out in Lewisham

By Liz Dickinson, Lewisham NALGO

NALGO and NUPE members in social services departments across the borough walked out of their workplaces on Monday afternoon (4th).

This action was in support of 16 team clerks who were suddenly called to a meeting last week and made redundant.

There had been no consultation or negotiation with the unions involved, and the stunned workers, mainly women, have had to wait another week for an appointment with personnel to discuss their "options".

Their posts have been deleted and there is little or no chance of redeployment — not much in the way of "options"!

Social workers have made it clear that they will not collude with the redundancies, and will not cover the work normally undertaken by the team clerks. These workers are vital to the effective functioning of the social

work teams and social workers.

Around 200 social services workers lobbied a council meeting on Monday night at which social services director John Thompson was in attendance. Despite a presentation by the workers involved, the decision to axe their jobs was rubber-stamped by the social services committee.

Thompson left the building to cries of "resign, resign" from the furious crowds. This is just

the tip of the iceberg in Lewisham, a decision to cut 44 jobs in the vital meals on wheels service was deferred at the same meeting.

When these cuts are eventually implemented, as they surely will be, it will hit one of the most vulnerable sections of the community — the elderly.

Union meetings will be held next week to decide on further action.

Manchester victimisation

By a Manchester City Council NALGO member

NALGO is preparing to ballot Manchester City Council Housing Department on all-out strike action over the victimisation of a shop steward.

The shop steward, a Rehousing Officer at a Neighbourhood Office, was suspended on 23 October. He is now facing a

disciplinary over the production and distribution of an anonymous leaflet criticising a senior Rehousing Officer.

Housing Department management are trying to establish a regime where criticism of managers is banned. Over the last year there has been a long list of suspensions and disciplinarys.

The suspension must be dropped and the worker reinstated or else the Housing Department is likely to be brought to a standstill by an official strike.

Where now for the CPSA Broad Left?

The CPSA Broad Left meet for their annual conference in Blackpool on 9 and 10 November. Trudy Saunders, DSS HQ, looks at the immediate tasks facing the Broad Left.

Since coming to power in 1979, the Tories have hacked away at the jobs, pay and conditions of workers in the Civil Service.

Twelve years on, the latest Tory attacks threaten not only the interests of the members of the civil service unions, but the very existence of the unions themselves.

The Treasury recently announced its withdrawal from the long-term pay agreement in time for the 1992 pay rounds. The Tories intend to push down the basic pay rates of civil servants through the increased use of performance pay. They also intend to allow certain departments and civil service Agencies to withdraw from the nationally agreed rates of pay. Those deemed unsuitable for withdrawal will have greater flexibility.

This attack on pay and on national pay bargaining has solicited a weak response from the civil service unions, in particular the Civil and Public Service Association (CPSA). The right-wing National Executive of CPSA have made it clear that they will not lead a fight back against this threat to our pay and our union.

Union members in both CPSA and the National Union for Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS) must pressurise their Executives to call national delegate pay conferences to determine the response to the Tories' attack. We should argue for the unions to defend the national rate for the job and national pay bargaining, and link this to a pay claim which makes up for the losses on pay since 1979. We must be clear that to win civil servants will need industrial action.

Motions are up for discussion at CPSA Broad Left conference, calling for a Broad Left Pay Conference on 7 December and for the Broad Left to organise unofficial industrial action if the National Executive refuses. The Broad Left must ensure that these motions are not just words on paper.

We must step up the Broad

Left campaign around pay, and ensure that the 7 December conference is as broad as possible, reaching out to the thousands of members who are not Broad Left supporters but want to fight over pay. We should approach the NUCPS and IRSF Broad Lefts to organise the conference jointly, and make it a working conference, not simply a rally.

Just what it means to work for Agency bosses has been felt sharply by workers in the Employment Service (ES), set up in April 1990.

This week Employment Service bosses have offered the greatest provocation to our union since the banning of trade unions at GCHQ by compulsorily transferring strikers, some of whom have been on strike since April this year protesting over the removal of protective screens from offices dealing with claimants. This was a response to the one-day national Employment Service strike on 1 November.

The CPSA national leaders and the union's Department of Employment Section Executive Committee have been unwilling to escalate the strike since April, and only pressure from members has forced them to take action. Their response, if any, to the compulsory transfers is likely to be ineffective.

The Broad Left is well placed to work with other activists to launch a fight back against Employment Service management. An immediate call to spread the strike to the computer centres and the DSS benefits service should go out.

The three offices where compulsory transfers are threatened — Marylebone, Forest Hill, and Bristol — should call a meeting of all activists in the Employment Service and Department of Social Security benefits service to discuss the way forward, not only on the issue of screens but against other threats, such as the announcement by Employment Service bosses that they will break with the Department of Employment Personnel Handbook on 1 April 1992.

As the largest opposition group in the CPSA, the Broad Left is best placed to organise and lead a fight back.

But such a fightback, to be effective, must involve forces wider than the Broad Left. The Broad Left must work with all those who wish to fight.

Last year the Socialist Caucus, part of the Broad Left since its inception, split from the Broad Left because of *Militant's* bureaucratic methods and sectarian practices. *Socialist Organiser* argued long and hard for the Caucus to remain in the Broad Left; but it is not helpful, when we are faced with the Tories and a right-wing National Executive, for *Militant* supporters to denounce the Caucus.

Instead, every attempt should be made to work with them and bring them back into the Broad Left. The Left in the CPSA must work together to fight the Tories' attacks on our interests and on our union.

Newton DSS

The strike at Newton DSS office in mid-Wales is now entering its seventh week.

Strikers are demanding a permanent increase in staffing levels in the office.

Lawrence Chapple, CPSA DHSS Section Executive, reports: "Management have been doing their best to deliberately antagonise and demoralise the strikers, but they will not succeed."

"Morale is high and determination is growing. With Christmas coming up it is vital that the support we have received from other civil servants and trade unionists continues."

Contact: Lawrence Chapple, c/o Strike Office, TGWU, 2 Commercial St, Newton, Powys, SY16 2BL.

OILC: the new union picks up momentum

Recruitment to the new offshore workers' union is going very well and steadily.

Regular weekly meetings will be started in Dundee in addition to Aberdeen, Glasgow and Newcastle, and offshore workers in Liverpool have asked for meetings to be set up.

The priority for the next six months or so will be setting up recruitment meetings, and getting solidarity motions through other unions' meetings, pressing for TUC recognition.

Support from Trades Councils and other unions has generally been very favourable — many activists are puzzled that an independent, offshore workers' union was not set up 15 years ago.

The first conference of the new union will be held in spring 1992, and will provide an opportunity to assess what has been achieved and to plan for future struggles.

The art of negotiation

Negotiation is a much-used word in the field of industrial relations. We often hear that certain union leaders are skillful negotiators, and it is because of these skills that we achieve good agreements from management.

The question arises, should we rely on well-trained skillful negotiators to get things achieved, or is it a case of relying on the militancy and action of our members? The short answer is that we need both.

Whether you are a steward, safety rep or branch secretary, a lot of your time will be spent negotiating with management. It is therefore a skill that needs to be learnt. But it is important to put it into context.

The issue of negotiations reminds me of an experience I had whilst I was on a trade union studies course at the LSE. During the course the Industrial Relations Department decided to organise a negotiating role play, between shop stewards and those in the Business Studies Department

STEWARDS' CORNER



By Alan Fraser

(potential managers).

The Business Studies people would be stewards and the shop stewards would be managers. We would be negotiating a wage claim with one condition — that no strike action be taken. The results of our shared experience would then be fed into a computer and used as a role model. All in the interests of shared experiences and learning negotiating skills.

Eventually we got our briefings. Everyone was looking for-

ward to arguing the ins and outs of the issue. However, they (the tutors) hadn't bargained on Jimmy (a Glaswegian shop steward) with many years experience. His part in the role play was as managing director for the company.

The "stewards" came in, sat down, and outlined their case in a detailed manner, then sat back and waited for Jimmy's response. Jimmy sat there for a moment, looked at them, and then growled, "Get to f***, go on f*** off, you're getting nothing."

The "stewards" were shocked and so were the tutors. They said, you can't do that. Jimmy just sat there and repeated the same message several times until they left. The negotiating role play was due to last all day. Jimmy kyboshed it in three minutes. All the real stewards just sat there laughing. Eventually the tutors asked Jimmy what was going on and what were his reasons for stopping the role play.

Jimmy replied: "Firstly, I am not in the business of teaching potential managers how to screw the working class. Secondly, on the question of

shared experiences, they haven't got a clue what it's like for workers on the shopfloor, and therefore have no experiences we have! And we understand the needs of workers.

"Third, before you academics go away and write your theories about negotiations, you need to learn one fundamental lesson. That is, any dummy can be a manager, but not anybody can be a shop steward. Being a shop steward and a good negotiator means having commitment, determination, and ability to represent your members."

Clearly, what we need to recognise is that good negotiators are not about theories or clever people, but are a fusion of the experiences of stewards and the rank and file. Yes, if you are a shop steward and want to be a good negotiator you need to learn to identify problems, do your research, find out facts, and collect information.

You need skills such as interviewing the members, getting their support, using arguments, note-taking, analysing documents, using the law, and articulating ideas. We need to know how to work with other

unions and reps, we need to examine a multitude of issues, operate democratically, work out tactics, develop strategies.

Central to our negotiating skills is ensuring that our members are aware of, and understand, the issues. That structures and mechanisms are created to ensure their participation and involvement at every level. That any decisions and outcomes of negotiations are democratically agreed by the whole of the membership before any agreement is signed. That's what makes a good negotiator.

The main point Jimmy was making is clear. Yes, the art of negotiation is an important skill and needs to be learnt. But the involvement, support and action of the membership is the most important. As Jimmy said, any dummy can be a manager, but not anybody can be a shop steward.

So the next time you negotiate with management, just remember Jimmy and the art of negotiation.

Alan Fraser has worked in the building industry and the Post Office where he was victimised in 1983. He is now a TUC tutor.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Arguing the case for real socialism

One hundred and sixty people attended the *Stand Up For Real Socialism* conference

in London on Saturday 2 November.

The purpose of the conference

was:

- * To make the case for real socialism;
- * To defeat the ideas of the right in direct debate;
- * To clearly state how socialism is the opposite of Stalinism.

We are aware that, despite the unjustness of the claims that Stalinism was actually-existing socialism, this lie had a certain amount of credibility.

Both the Stalinists of the Eastern Bloc and the Western ruling classes were happy to portray Stalinism as socialism.

For the capitalists — ignorant of or uninterested in historical fact — this lie served as one of the weightiest ideological weapons in their battle against the western workers' movements.

The capitalists could say: so you think capitalism is bad? Would you really prefer totalitarian and socialist Russia?

Stand Up For Real Socialism aims to reveal the historical truth: the real socialists were killed and murdered as the Russian Stalinists came to power.

Now that the Russian Stalinists have been smashed, socialists are faced both with new pressures and new opportunities. The pressure comes from the bourgeois press and politicians crowing about the death of socialism.

The opportunity for socialists is that of clearing the socialist project from any taint of Stalinism as we enter a new phase of history.

Stand Up For Real Socialism was initiated by *Socialist Organiser*. We believe that workers' liberty is as necessary as ever in a world full of the horrors of capitalism. Workers' liberty is the only way out.

We urge readers to help us realise the project of real working class socialism.

The most serious attack since GCHQ:



In 1984, the government took away all trade union rights at GCHQ, the Government Communications Head-Quarters

Civil servants say:

Defend our union!

By John Williams, victimised CPSA Department of Employment activist

"It's a worry, it's not very nice having your job held over you. It's designed to threaten people back to work but we're still staying solid".

That's how Peter Featherstone, one of the CPSA strikers at St Marylebone Unemployment Office responded this week to management's violent escalation of the long-running safety dispute in the Department of Employment.

Peter had just received a letter from management telling him to report for work at an axed office as from Monday 4th November. All the strikers in three offices — St Marylebone, Forest Hill and Westbourne Park — had received exactly the same letter. It amounts to an implied but nonetheless clear sacking threat.

Area management certainly seem to be gearing up to make that threat a reality. The attack comes after a successful strike throughout the Department of Employment last Friday in solidarity with the workers of three local offices which are protesting at having to work without the security of screens to protect them from potentially violent claimants.

As Peter Featherstone put it: "I wrote a letter to the Secretary of

Strikers transferred to break strike:

State that something would happen without the screens and it did. I still haven't got a reply from him".

The strikers immediately decided to stand firm: "Notwithstanding the stress", said Peter, "We voted to continue action in our campaign for the right to feel safe at work".

What's needed now is for workers across the DE to rally to their support.

Scandalously, this week's CPSA NEC spent just 2 minutes discussing the matter right at the end under 'Any Other Business', and decided to look into the legal situation. But it's quite clear. DE bosses can now sack the strikers if they dare to. So Agency management are now making the most serious attack we've seen against the Civil Service trade unions since GCHQ.

Immediately, activists in the DE need to look at ways of spreading the action. This isn't just an attack on the workers of the three offices concerned. It's an attack on every civil servant.

* All those offices where management plan to remove screens should immediately come out alongside Forest Hill, Bristol and Westbourne Park

* DE activists should start a rolling programme of lightning strike action across the entire Employment Service

* This action should be used to build momentum for sustained action across the whole of the DE. Meetings should be held in every office to explain the significance of the attacks

* DE activists should go out and organise a levy amongst other civil service departments to finance the all-out action that is likely to be needed to win

* Other civil servants who face the new 'get tough' Agency managers must be drawn into the action.

In Nottingham last week DSS workers responded well to appeals for support for DE workers and 2 offices closed for Friday afternoon in solidarity with the national DE

strike.

The basis for uniting large numbers of civil service workers behind the DE strikes is certainly there.

Management are on the war-path with their decision to scrap national pay-bargaining, attempts to ditch the established redundancy agreements and to impose petty discipline in the form of corporate dress codes ie, uniform and name tags.

As Mark Serwotka, CPSA DSS Section Executive Committee member put it: "If this issue is explained properly, then the rank and file will be up in arms about it. It is an attack on our union and it affects every civil servant. This is no time to mess about, we need to mobilise all the weapons at our disposal. You don't go into a decisive battle and keep your big guns in reserve".

More on CPSA page 15

Support your socialist paper

Socialist Organiser is asking our readers to help us expand. We aim to raise £10,000 to buy new equipment.

This week we received £624.91 bringing our total raised so far to £3276.58 — 32% of our target.

Thanks this week for an £8 donation from a reader in Nottingham; £2 from a reader in Glasgow; and £80 from Hull.

Thanks to supporters in Manchester for £183.76 in fundraising.

£215.00 was collected for *Socialist Organiser* at the Stand Up for Real Socialism conference on Saturday 2nd November.

How to help

• You can make a donation by sending a cheque or postal order (made out to 'Socialist Organiser') to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

• You can join our "200 Club" lottery for £5.00 per month. Each month, there is a £100 prize to be won in the "200 Club" draw. Details from SO sellers or from the address above.