

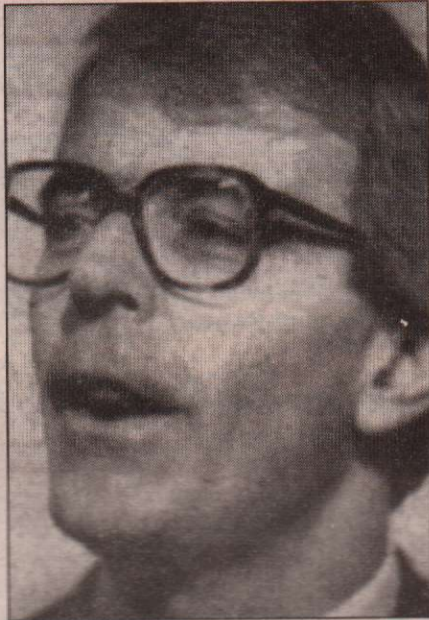
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

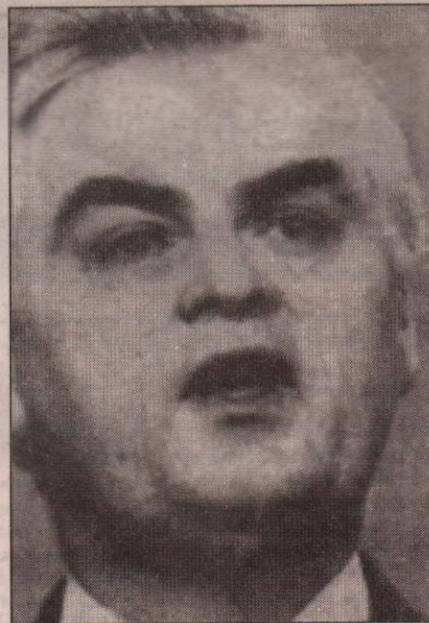
Tories in crisis

The LIAR



LIAR: Prime Minister John Major is covering up the Government's systematic secret promotion of arms sales to Iraq at the same time as it was publicly declaring that such sales were against the law.

The THIEF



THIEF: Chancellor Norman Lamont took public money to pay his private law bills.

And the WRECKER



WRECKER: Trade and Industry Secretary Michael Heseltine wants to shut down two-thirds of Britain's coal mines, destroying many communities and wasting valuable coal reserves.

The whole Tory team stands condemned. They are ruining the Health Service, strangling local government services, imposing a cut in real wages for public sector workers, and axing workers' rights.

They say that mass unemployment is a price worth paying for lower inflation, and that "there is no alternative" to mass unemployment, homelessness, and despair.

But there is an alternative! Workers are fighting back. The job now is to swing the big organisations of the labour movement into effective action, and to drive the Tories out!

See page 11: Labour must fight!

KICK THEM ALL OUT!

Success for Irish Labour

Jim Kemmy, TD for Limerick, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the Irish election results

The Irish election was a tremendous success for the Labour Party. Labour has always been in a small minority, having to battle against the power of

the Church and the Civil War parties — Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

People have become very tired of the dominant party, Fianna Fail, and were looking for alternatives. Fianna Fail has become arrogant and had lost any idealism. They are a party of professional politicians without ideas.

Labour won 33 seats; it

had 16 previously. Perhaps we could have won six more seats.

Labour's success follows Mary Robinson's Presidential victory two years ago. Mary Robinson was put forward by Dick Spring, Labour's leader. From this point Labour saw the opportunity of greatly increasing our vote.

In the past Ireland has had

the most weak and fragmented left. The Democratic Left have five seats. I believe it is necessary to bring about left unity. There is not room for two Labour Parties in Ireland.

The more the Democratic Left abandons the ideas of the past, the more it becomes a democratic socialist party. We need to join forces and build one, united labour movement.

Labour has made big gains in the cities. We have 300,000 unemployed — a worst rate than even Thatcher managed in Britain. Workers have lost

faith in Fianna Fail's politics and want something new.

There is now a great responsibility on Labour. We must keep true to its history and its mission. We cannot betray the people who voted for us.

For these reasons I would normally oppose coalitions. But the people have voted for change — they do not want another Fianna Fail government.

So this is the dilemma we face. And in the past Labour has come out of coalitions very badly.

• *More on Ireland: page 4.*

Cut-price Queen? Better a Republic!

The Queen has agreed to pay taxes and trim down the Civil List of state handouts to her family.

This concession, obviously designed to placate rising mass discontent with the monarchy, does not go very far. The state will still spend tens of millions of

pounds each year on palaces, yachts, aircraft and so on for the Royal Family.

And the central issue is not the money but the politics of the monarchy. A family of unelected, upper-class dimwits has powers to make and unmake governments, to veto any laws

voted by Parliament, and to vet Government proposals before they go to Parliament.

In normal, peaceful times, those powers are held in reserve. In times of major upheaval, they would be a major weapon for the Establishment.

As recently as 1975, a reforming Labor government in Australia was sacked by the unelected Governor-General on behalf of the Queen.

The answer is: sack the Queen! Up the Republic!

Scargill calls for TUC day of industrial action to back the miners

Next Wednesday 9 December will see the TUC's 'National Day for jobs and recovery'.

So far, very little has been done to publicise this 'event'. Those union activists who have heard something from Congress House have been told to set up a meeting with their boss to discuss how to save jobs.

With the bosses pushing for redundancies in most industries and sectors, this is just a sick joke.

But, despite this lack of a lead from the TUC, rank and filers are still pushing for action on the 9th.

Civil servants and local government workers have tried to link up the min-

ers' case with the public sector pay freeze and will be fighting for protest strikes at a local level.

What is really needed is a clear and unambiguous lead from the TUC.

Arthur Scargill spelt this out last Wednesday after the TUC met in Doncaster:

"What we need is a day of action. And I don't just mean the sort of action that means walking up and down with placards but the only kind of action the Tories understand: industrial action!"

The TUC must call such action before the expiry of the Government's 90-day deadline for the threatened pits.

[See miners' notice-board, page 11.]

Nottingham students start the fightback

By Angela Chorley, Nottingham Trent University

On 19 November, 150 students from the Education Department of Nottingham Trent University met to discuss underfunding and overcrowding in our department.

The mood for action was strong. Petitions to the Dean of Education led to a further meeting where students met three representatives of the Dean. They sympathised, they said, but things were out of their control! Then student reps met the

Dean. Again we were fobbed off. The Dean too was sympathetic, telling us to criticise the Government, not the University, otherwise we would force him onto the defensive "which wouldn't be very nice for us".

We have the college administration on the run. Lectures are now being boycotted. We want to spread this action to other departments and other institutions. The mood for action is definitely there. Students are fed up with swelling numbers being met with diminishing resources!

Left Unity fights to defend student movement

By Elaine Jones

The regional conferences recently held in the National Union of Students (NUS) have been massively unrepresentative. Average attendance was 35, mostly Higher Education students.

They have no powers to discuss or pass policy! They are mainly vehicles for getting right wing delegates sent to the National Council to be held on 9 December in London. The National Council replaces the traditional NUS Winter Conference, corruptly abolished by the right wing.

NUS is fast becoming a farce. Its right wing Labour leaders have refused to run outgoing campaigns that involve the membership, such as activist-based campaigns to defeat Tory plans for Voluntary Membership of student unions.

NUS leaders recently outlined four areas in which they plan to campaign — MPs, the press, Community Groups, Vice Chancellors and Directors — with no mention of students!

This is in keeping with their scrapping of Winter Conference. With its 700-plus delegates, this was a lively policy-making event. The National Council will have 60 delegates who discuss reports from the Executive Committee members and "commissions".

A witch-hunt against the left will be the big event at the Council. Kevin Sexton, Left Unity supporter and convenor of NUS's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual campaign, stands accused of "overspending" on the LGB budget. Demagogically playing one liberation campaign off against the other, they claim this was at the expense of other liberation campaigns. Kevin is also accused of sexual harassment.

Kevin denies the allegations — as did Mark Sandell and Steve Mitchell when they were witch-hunted at the last national conference. But "innocent until proven guilty" and a fair trial, mean nothing to the NUS leadership. Winning the faction fight is everything!

At National Council, some right-wing stooge will ask for an indicative vote of no confidence in Kevin. If it is carried (left activists will be vastly outnumbered at this event), Lorna Fitzsimmons will be asked to make a Presidential Ruling. Guess what ruling she will make!

The right wing abolished Winter Conference to gain greater control over NUS with less accountability. But they do not yet have the stranglehold they want. The left still controls a number of NUS Area organisations. We must fight to maintain this strength.

The leadership are already "investigating" at least two Areas on very spurious grounds with a view to closing them down.

Area organisations are the structures that ordinary activists relate to, especially in the FE sector. Areas run campaigns, address the needs of the rank and file, and take up the issues that affect them. Areas have been starved of cash, yet have remained at the core of activity in the colleges.

The leadership insist that "we keep our heads down" and "don't upset the Government". The best activists in NUS will once more have to fight within in their own organisation — against the right wing as well as fighting the Tories!

Left Unity has launched a campaign to defend Areas and against voluntary membership. There will be an activist conference early in the new year. We will be lobbying the National Council on 9 December demanding the reestablishment of NUS Winter Conference. If you would like more details, phone Jill or Mark on: 071-639 7967.

Farm row shows capitalism is crazy

The GATT world trade deal is still in danger, with France's Government saying that it will block the agreement on rapeseed between the European Community and the United States.

Possibly France's defiance will turn out to be a bluff, designed to placate the country's angry farmers in the run-up to elections next spring but to be dropped after the elections. But time is very short.

The affair shows how crazy capitalism is. As the French socialist weekly *Lutte Ouvrière* says:

"What's shocking is not that the European Community is going to suppress a few subsidies which are theoretically for peasants but in fact mostly serve the interests of the big agricultural and food businesses.

"What's shocking is that more land is going to be left fallow; production of meat, milk, and oil will be reduced; some peasants will join the unemployed — while hundreds of millions of human beings are dying of hunger".

German anti-racists mobilise

Two little girls and a woman, of Turkish origin, were killed last week by firebombers in the German town of Molln. The killers ended their phonecall to the police announcing the bomb with the cry "Heil Hitler!"

Germany's Christian Democrat (Tory) government has promised that the law and the police will be used more harshly in future against neo-Nazis. The leaders of the Social Democrats have made the same call.

None of that is likely to stop the rise of fascist and racist militancy among young people who are disoriented by the chaos and economic difficulties following German reunification and who see little chance of a job or a decent future.

There is a sizeable anti-racist movement in Germany. An anti-racist demonstration in Berlin on 8 November drew 350,000 people. Although it was officially called by the Christian Democrat mayor of Berlin, it was dominated by the left.

Another demonstration, in Bonn on 14 November, drew 150,000 people to demand that the Social Democrat leaders drop any compromise with the Christian Democrats' drive to restrict Germany's liberal laws on allowing political refugees into the country.

Some German anti-racists have taken a moralistic, ultra-left approach, refusing to use social and economic arguments about workers' unity to appeal to disoriented and prejudiced German workers. Other sections of the left, however, have insisted on the need to couple any anti-racist agitation with campaigning against the social and economic conditions which breed racism.



Protest diverted to nationalism

Marchers in Bootle on 25 November protested at coal dust pollution in the area under the slogan "Stop Coal Imports!" But the valid protest about pollution should be separated from the nationalist outcry against imports: see article, page 15.



Anti-racists protest against racist attacks in Germany. Economic and social oppression in Europe will not be fought by nationalistic slogans and policies

"No to Maastricht" must be coupled with "yes to Europe"

For a democratic united Europe!

The Maastricht Treaty is mainly about replacing the different West European currencies — the mark, the franc, the pound, and so on — with a single European money.

Socialist Organiser objects to the Maastricht Treaty because the European Central Bank which the Treaty proposes is to be "independent", i.e. run by bankers with no democratic control over them. In other words, the Treaty is a blueprint for a sort of "Euro-monetarism", with Euro-bankers imposing tight limits on public spending and no chance of a democratic comeback against those bankers.

We believe that the European labour movement should fight for the European Central Bank, and all the machinery of the European Community, to be under the democratic control of an elected European Parliament. The labour movement should demand that the Central Bank's control of credit be used to rebuild public services, basic industry, and jobs, across Europe.

Workers' rights and conditions should be levelled up across Europe, to the best existing standard, not levelled down.

The cost should be met by taxation and confiscation of the wealth of the rich, and by cuts in military spending. The existing European Community tax — Value-Added Tax, a tax which hits harder at the poor than at the rich — should be replaced by progressive direct taxes on incomes, wealth, and property.

A struggle for this alternative to Maastricht could unite labour and working-class movements across Europe, and get them all moving for the same demands.

However, the great majority of the people saying "No to Maastricht!" would not want our alternative at all.

Margaret Thatcher, Norman Teb-

bit, and the *Sun* say no to Maastricht, and yes to a Britain which will be a cheap offshore European production site for American and Japanese multinationals, with lower wages and less social legislation and fewer workers' rights than the continent.

The French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, and the majority of France's big right-wing party, the Gaullists, say no to Maastricht, and yes to bigoted French nationalism.

A sizeable minority of the German bosses and bankers say no to Maastricht, and yes to a looser European Community in which they can dominate by sheer economic strength, without being tied down by formal political structures for unity, and without having to pay out a lot of money to poorer European countries like Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece to help them join an integrated European economy.

None of these dominant mainstream alternatives to Maastricht is any good from a socialist point of view. That is why, in France's referendum on Maastricht, the French revolutionary socialists of *Lutte Ouvrière* called on workers to abstain — "neither yes with Chirac, nor no with Le Pen!"

11 million French voters did abstain, and nearly one million spoiled their ballot papers as a protest.

Unfortunately, most of Britain's Labour Left has different ideas. They have been campaigning round the single slogan "No to Maastricht!", and next Saturday, 5 December, they will be gathering in London for a conference. All their campaigning over the past year indicates that, although the conference is titled "Alternatives to Maastricht", serious alternatives are precisely what they will not discuss!

The conference, organised by Ken Livingstone, features Labour right-

wingers Bryan Gould, Austin Mitchell, and Peter Shore among its main speakers. Shore is a member of the ultra-Thatcherite Bruges Group! Apparently Livingstone and his friends believe that saying no to Maastricht is an issue which overrides all divisions between right and left, and all questions about what our alternatives are.

They will make speeches about the terrible welfare cuts implied by Maastricht's Euro-monetarism — as if the Tories who shut pits and hospitals so casually needed to sign a treaty in Holland in order to con-

"To combat nationalism, and build European workers' unity, is the most important task for socialists everywhere on the continent."

tinue their cuts!

They will use "Maastricht", "Brussels", and "Europe" as scapegoats and lightning-rods — targets on which to divert the anger and resentment which should really be channelled into a fight against the Tories and the British bosses.

They will be vague about what they propose positively — but they will suggest, again and again, that looser ties in Europe, less integration, and continued barriers between countries, will at least ease or reduce the pain. They will talk about "British sovereignty" and the needs of "our" industry.

In short, they will not say straight out what they all said ten or fifteen years ago — "Britain should get out

of the European Community" — but they will get as close to it as they can.

This is to tilt at windmills, because Maastricht has become largely a dead letter.

And it is wrong for socialists for more fundamental reasons, too.

An "independent" Britain, firmly separated from Europe, is a stupid idea under capitalism and utter nonsense under socialism.

Modern technologies and methods of production long ago outgrew the limited framework of the European nation-states.

The bosses know it. That is why they have been trying to create a united European economy — slowly, clumsily, and with constant difficulty because of their national rivalries.

From a socialist point of view, too, a more dynamic united European capitalism is better than a stagnant, divided European capitalism. It is certainly better than a divided European capitalism lurching into trade wars and then shooting wars, as in 1914-18 and 1939-45. A more dynamic capitalism does not guarantee better conditions for the workers, but it does mean there is more room for a fight than in a stagnant, backward capitalism.

We are against a united Europe being capitalist — but we are not against a capitalist Europe being united! Even under capitalism, European unity would bring advantages. More workers moving from country to country; more workers speaking several languages and familiar with several cultures; more similar conditions for workers all across the continent — all these factors must increase the chance of building a united European labour movement.

And that united European labour movement is essential for socialism. Capitalism can be developed in single countries, separated by high

barriers from the rest of the world. It can only be a backward, inefficient sort of capitalism, but it is possible.

Socialism in a single country is utterly impossible. For socialism, we need to be able to produce enough for everyone to live comfortably, and to do it without anyone being exhausted and overworked. We have to take the best productive and technological achievements of capitalism, and build on them — not go backwards.

In Europe, already closely intermeshed by capitalism, it is nonsense to imagine even starting on socialist development in a single country alone. The workers of that country would either spread their cause to the other countries, or be crushed by the surrounding capitalist powers.

To combat nationalism, and build European workers' unity, is the most important task for socialists everywhere on the continent. Those who campaign against plans for a united capitalist Europe by objecting primarily to it being a *united* Europe, rather than to it being *capitalist*, are only helping the nationalists.

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser
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Accidents will happen

"Things are rarely what they seem". The appearance this week of a draft report on the future of relations between the Labour Party and the unions serves to underline this old pearl of wisdom.

At this year's Labour Party conference the GMB, TGWU and UCW delegations threw their weight behind the left and voted to defend the "historic" and "inalienable" links between the Labour Party and the trade unions. They appeared to close the door on any major changes in that relationship, but some of us at least had an inkling that things were not what they seemed.

Despite all their declarations of commitment to the link, the union barons also voted to throw everything into the melting pot and set up a review into every aspect of the union/Party relationship.

Various factors were at work. The main union barons were asserting themselves against the new Smith leadership — telling him that he could not simply expect them to rubber-stamp everything he did. It had 'become known' that Smith himself 'favoured' the end of the block vote. Morris, Edmonds and Tuffin were also reflecting pressure from their own rank and file who want to keep the link. The union leaders were endorsing the 'principle' of collective trade union representation in the Party, the better to be able to gut that representation of any real substance.

They didn't so much want to 'keep the link' as to bureaucratise it and thus immunise themselves and John Smith against the influx of any inconvenient rank and file pressure.

The problem for the Morris/Edmonds axis is that instead of putting some gutless, unprincipled, slimy, left faker who would do their bidding in charge of the review, they put in place someone who actually *believes* in some form of collective, trade-union representation in the Labour Party.

This 'dangerous red' is Lewis Minkin, an academic from Manchester University, one-time left-winger, former adviser to Neil Kinnock, virulent anti-Trotskyist, and a man with an obsessional desire to collect trivia about the Labour Party and its relationship with the unions — a sort of labour movement train-spotter.

As a result, Minkin has actually tried to do what he was supposed to do.

His report is unlikely to please anyone. GMB boss John Edmonds is already stabbing one of Minkin's closest collaborators, Tom Burlinson of the GMB, in the back. Burlinson's own region has disowned their man's great work. On the right, Labour MP John Spellar, an old friend of Eric Hammond, was apoplectic. "The report talks of collective representation in a way that went out of fashion in the *Daily Worker* in the fifties."

The left will be none too pleased either.

Minkin's proposal to put all trade unionists into one pool as 'registered sympathisers' in an electoral college system for the selection of MPs will mean the beginning of the end of *collective* trade union branch representation at a local level.

And giving the MPs a guaranteed 20% say in policy-making is a very big step backwards indeed. It makes one MP's vote worth about the same as those of 6,000 rank and file trade unionists. (A unique form of one member, one vote.)

Unless Minkin is forced to dramatically rewrite the report so that it is unrecognisable in its present form, what we could see at this year's union conferences and then at Party conference, is a three-way split — hardline supporters of breaking the link, the Minkinite middle-ground, probably supported by people like Tom Sawyer of NUPE, and principled defenders of a *collective* trade union input.

No group is guaranteed a majority. Remember, a poll of General Secretaries this September declared Minkin's favoured option of trade unionists becoming 'registered supporters' a non-runner by a very big margin indeed.

What started as a stitch-up looks like fast becoming a cock-up.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Joan Trevor



Pro-choice activists protest in Dublin. Their message is beginning to be heard

Ireland's fight for choice

Alice Sharp, National Union of Students Women's Officer, reports on the recent referendum and the campaign for more choice on abortion in Ireland

The NUS Women's Campaign decided to take a minibus of women over to Ireland to help the pro-choice campaigners for the 25 November abortion referendum.

The Referendum had three parts: one for free information on abortion, one for the right to travel abroad for an abortion, and one for abortion in certain life-threatening illnesses.

The Pro-Choice groups got together in Ireland under "The Alliance for Choice" and decided to campaign for a yes vote to both information and travel, but no to the third part as it rules out suicide, rape and health reasons for abortion. It would be better to get full legislation than for this part to be passed. The referendum was scheduled on the same day as Ireland's General Election which further confused the issues.

We arrived in Dublin after various ferry difficulties to see that the anti-abortionists had already been out on the

south side of the river, where they had flyposted foetus posters with "Abortion Kills Me" beneath them. We met up with the Women's Officer of USI, Shauneen Armstrong.

Our first day was spent driving for about nine hours round tiny towns in the heart of Ireland, flyposting and leafletting. Many of us were surprised by the positive response from passers by. In country towns like Thurles and Birr — after initial amazement at our flyposting squad of women — the majority of people were very welcoming.

The different political parties were stepping over themselves to promise things in the election, and one constituency was promised trees which were dug up the day after the election! The leading party, Fianna Fail, wanted a Yes, Yes, Yes vote which would have been a step backwards from the recent Supreme Court ruling. The Labour Party are pro-choice, but kept very quiet about it during the election.

The women we were staying with had spent the last few months debating anti-abortionists up and down Ireland, including members of Youth Defence, an anti-abortionist group recruiting youth to "saving babies". In these

debates members of SPUC and LIFE had backtracked on issues such as contraception and sex education — which used to be taboo in Catholic Ireland — saying they weren't against them. The pro-choice speakers said this was because the ground has shifted towards choice.

"SPUC and LIFE backtracked on issues such as contraception and sex education saying they weren't against them. The ground has shifted towards choice."

Anti-abortionists were portraying themselves as reasonable and moderate, and accused the Pro-Choice organisations of making money out of women having abortions in Britain. The Pro-Choice organisations make no money and just help women make appointments at clinics and get them counselling.

The day of referendum and General Election was spent in Dublin. The majority of women leafletted shopping centres, the rest toured round polling booths putting up pro-choice posters. We also flypost-

ed over the distressing foetus posters. This involved several close calls with the Dublin Gardai, including driving on the pavement the wrong way up a one-way street!

Our best reception was in the city centre, where many shoppers were keen to take our leaflets. A few women were confronted with accusations of "murderers" and foetuses given priority over women's lives. We retorted with the need for women to make full, informed choices over our bodies, and at times walked away to avoid a punch-up.

We were thrilled to see the No, Yes, Yes vote we had campaigned for. The Irish women were concerned with the size of the vote against information and travel. We all came back thoroughly exhausted, but feeling we had played a small part in improving the lives of Irish women. We are determined to continue our solidarity by twinning women's groups in the UK with those in Ireland.

The Alliance for Choice needs money for its campaign. Please send donations to: Repeal the 8th Amendment Campaign, Rotunda Branch, Bank of Ireland, Dublin 1. Account No: 27762523.

Tubeworkers pay the price of disunity

By a RMT member

On 26 November 1991, London Underground bosses announced their Company Plan. It promised a "new dawn for the heart of London" - and 5,000 job losses and the destruction of working conditions and job security for 21,000 Tube workers.

On 23 November 1992, the rail union RMT called off their planned strike against the Plan, effectively conceding that the Plan would be introduced in its entirety, exactly as the bosses wanted it.

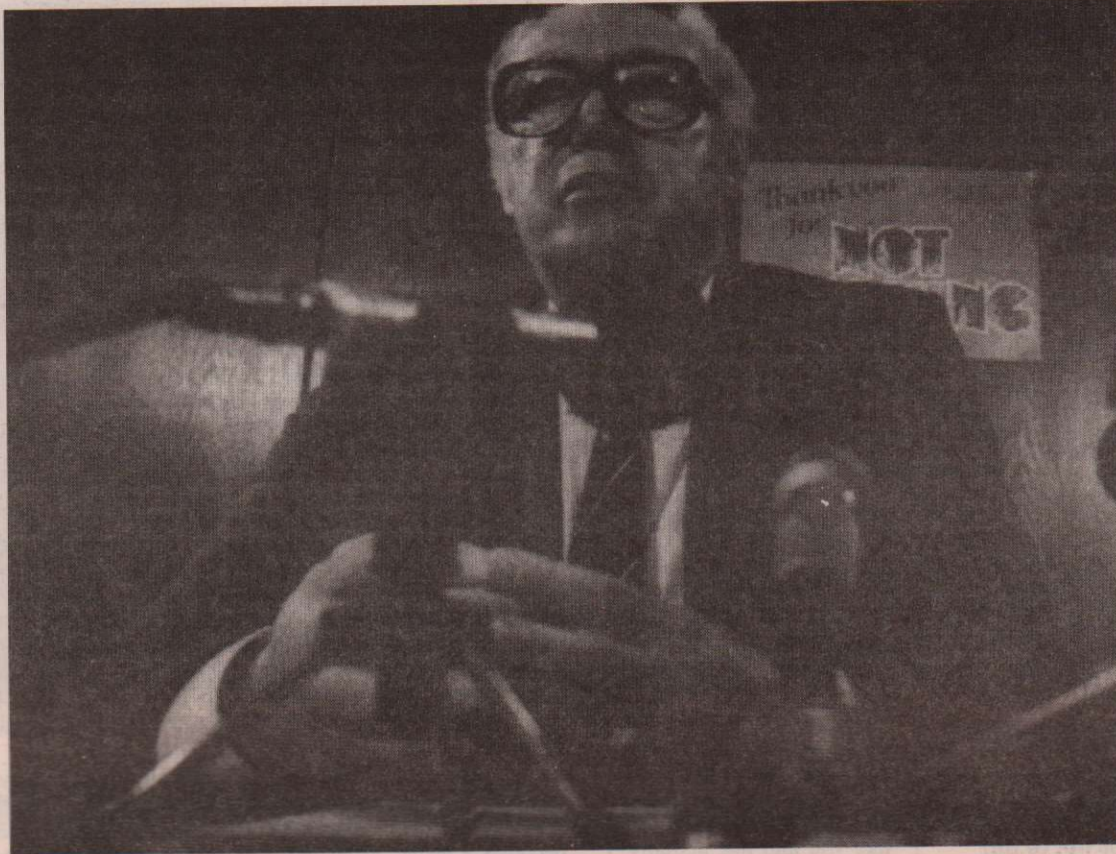
How could we suffer such a defeat - the worst sort of defeat, a defeat without a fight - in an industry which in 1989 saw a powerful unofficial movement bring London to a halt and inflict humiliating defeats on both the Tube management and the Tories?

RMT had a ballot majority for a strike earlier this year, but called off the strike (in May) when the bosses agreed to negotiations. Joint working parties were set up covering different grades. But the management did not move an inch from their original positions on any matter of substance in any of the working parties.

There was no movement, either, when the working parties reported back to the Central Negotiating Committee level. The management clearly never had any intention of negotiating seriously. Eventually they walked out of the government conciliation service ACAS announcing that they would impose the Plan, and that was that.

RMT responded by calling a second strike ballot. The second major union on the Tube, ASLEF, which mainly organises train drivers, decided to organise a postal referendum on whether or not its members wanted the Plan, thus wasting two weeks as the date for the Plan to be imposed on train staff - 7 December - drew nearer.

RMT got a three to one majority for a strike, and ASLEF a three to one rejection of the Plan. ASLEF then started a strike ballot. The RMT's National Executive decided



Jimmy Knapp has sold tubeworkers down the river

to call an all-out strike from Tuesday 24th, despite the ASLEF ballot result not being out until the 30th.

RMT could have postponed action until after ASLEF result, thus winning a chance for a united strike while still moving before the crucial date of 7 December.

As we came closer to the strike date of 24 November, it became clearer and clearer that the bosses' threat to sack strikers, combined with uncertainty about whether ASLEF members would cross RMT picket lines, meant that any strike would have been patchy, leaving workers wide open to victimisation.

By Monday 23rd, when the strike was called off, little else could have been done. To go ahead with a strike in those circumstances could have been disastrous.

However, the circumstances need not have arisen, and that is the crux

of the matter.

The ASLEF leaders never had any intention of fighting the Plan. All their actions were designed to sow illusions in the benefits of the Plan and to demobilise hostility to it.

"RMT could have postponed action until after ASLEF result, thus winning a chance for a united strike while still moving before the crucial date of 7 December."

But ASLEF is more than its leaders. What about the ASLEF rank and file? By calling its strike before the ASLEF result came out, RMT simply let the ASLEF leaders off the hook.

Instead of coming under rank and file pressure to organise united action with the RMT, the ASLEF leaders could say: "RMT is jumping the gun. We can't legally take action until after the 30th - which is

before implementation on 7 December".

ASLEF blames RMT. RMT blames ASLEF. While they squabble, the Plan comes in. This fiasco is likely to boost non-unionism, particularly as both unions are now stepping up their membership war.

We need a genuine rank and file movement uniting activists from all the unions around policies to defend Tube workers' interests - not the interests of the ASLEF or RMT bureaucrats.

And it is not good enough for the unions to say "we are not opposed to change (i.e. selling conditions) as long as the money is right". We need a workers' plan for the Tube which sets out positively what we want.

That needs to be done now. The Plan is not really in yet. When its effects start to be felt we will face the threat of compulsory redundancies - whatever assurances may be given now.

We could stop that - but only if we do not repeat the stupidities that we have just witnessed.

"If it sounds disastrous, that's because it is"

On Monday 23 November, the London "Evening Standard" quoted a senior Underground manager.

"The unions can claim what they like, but at the end of the day no important ground has been given by us, and the Company Plan will now be introduced just as we promised all along".

For once, Underground management are telling the truth. The Plan will change both work conditions for different grades, and the general principles of employment which affect everyone.

For train crew, for example, the Plan will mean starting as early as 4.48am or finishing as late as 1.30am. The night shift has been abolished, so early and late trains have to be worked as part of the normal day, as "extreme earlies".

There will be no "travelling time", and, with depot closures, more train crew will have to travel further to get to work.

Remote booking-on will ensure that the travelling is done in our own time. As trains will already be prepared, we will get our minimum seven minutes' booking-on time before we are on trains and working.

There will be no paid meal relief, but during the meal relief we will be forbidden from leaving company premises.

Flexible rostering will mean that shift lengths will vary widely, instead of being eight hours, as they are now.

Even when you think you have finished, you can be ordered to do compulsory overtime. Refusal will be gross misconduct, making you liable to be sacked. Also, we lose two weeks' holiday a year.

General principles of employment are changed by the abolition of seniority and the PT&R agreement. From now on, promotions and transfers will be at the whim of local managers, who will also have the power to hire and fire and decide who gets performance-related pay.

Job licensing will mean everyone regularly having to reapply and requalify for their own job.

If all this sounds disastrous, that is because it is. London Underground have won, and now they are going to try to make us pay.

When a united fight was vital

The RMT union called off its planned all-out strike despite a three-to-one vote for action.

RMT leader Jimmy Knapp sold us down the river. But it was right not to go ahead on Tuesday 24 November. The strike should not have been cancelled, but postponed until the ASLEF ballot result.

RMT organises the majority of the traincrew on the two lines which still have guards, the Northern and the Central. On the one-person-operation (OPO) lines, ASLEF has a big majority of traincrew.

Traincrew are crucial in deciding the success or failure of any strike. Because of the ASLEF leaders' hostility

to action, and the RMT leaders' stupidity in calling their strike before the ASLEF ballot result, it was clear on Monday 23rd that the response to the strike was likely to be poor, especially on the OPO lines.

Because the bosses are legally entitled to sack all strikers at a particular workplaces, a strike with a small minority of RMT and ASLEF activists out on the picket lines while the big majority of workers went in would have enabled management to carry through a mass clean-out of the best trade unionists.

The sooner any decision to postpone the strike was taken, the better, but even on Monday 23rd it would not have been too late.

Sleepwalking into battle

Given the disgraceful role played by the ASLEF leaders - doing the bosses' job for them, and trying to undermine the fight against the Plan - and by the RMT national leaders, are we wrong to criticise the RMT London Transport District Council?

Not at all. Until the District Council learns to face up honestly to its mistakes and failures, it will repeat them - to our cost.

The District Council leaders act like paranoid Stalinists, unable to tolerate any criticism or deviation from the District Council "line". They want it both ways. Anything that goes right is down to their "rank and file leadership"; any-

thing that goes wrong is down to ASLEF or the RMT National Executive. They are chronically incapable of accepting responsibility for their action. When the strike vote came out, they insisted as a matter of pride on calling a strike as soon as possible. To wait for ASLEF would be to "allow them to dictate to RMT". Being an RMT patriot was considered more important than trying to get united action!

On the Friday before the strike (20 November), an open meeting of the District Council Executive was told by the District Council leadership that it was impossible to postpone the strike, because that would "break the consti-

tution of the union". Then on Monday the strike was cancelled, not postponed!

Preparations for the strike revealed an appalling state of RMT organisation, with the union's sectional councillors and other activists not being seen, or going sick. The District Council leaders just carried on sleepwalking - until the strike was called off.

The District Council leaders went from "forget about ASLEF, they're a small union", to "it's all ASLEF's fault", without once having a serious policy for united action. Leadership? You'd laugh if it weren't so disgraceful..



But nice Peter Brooke will fix it up

The diary of Princess Squidgy

GRAFFITI

Friday

Yes, to you, dear diary, I can reveal the truth. These were the last, sad, minutes of Windsor Castle...

11.00: Fergie lit the light purple paper and took a long, deep drag. "Mmmm," she yawned, sinking back into the chair. The glow ate away at HM's head and down through "Bank of England".

Smoke filled the room. Fergie's 'cigarette' of the day — "the finest Stoke Newington police can provide," she had often joked. More recently I have wondered whether this is a joke... I turned and peered through the window. Squinting, I could just make out the Secret Service chaps doing their jogging. Gorgeous!

11.15: Peace is broken by Edward. Runs through room in toga. Yells "To be or not to be!" Disappears. And they say I'm thick and idle!

11.20: Fergie stops swearing at Edward... joins me at window to ogle MI5.

11.25: Unusual burning-type smell.

11.26: Tapestry behind us on fire. Never liked it much.

11.27: Hop out of window. Much grunting from Fergie who barely manages to get her large bulk out. Ladder in tights. How awful! Nip round the back and pretend to be surprised by large number of lackeys with fire extinguishers, bell-ringing-type noises, etc.

Early lunch.

Saturday

1.40: HM in big huff. Duke is wandering around with gun. Threatens to shoot Big Ears. Three cheers for the Duke!

12.30: Nice Peter Brooke has patched things up. The government will pay, he says. Brookie joked with HM that Norman Lamont would put the bill on his Access card. What a wag! Fergie strangely absent.

Sunday

4.30: HM announces over tea that she plans "Annus Horribilis" speech. Smile and nod — but what does she mean? It's all Greek to me...

Duke glaring at Big Ears...

The headlines read "National Tragedy", "Tears as Windsor Burns" etc. Very nice, but "Fergie burns down biggest Corgi kennel in Europe with giant spliff rolled out of £20 notes" would be more accurate.

Toodle-oo!

GRAFFITI

Bum deal for the republicans

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Whatever you think of the *Sun*, you've got to admit that it has style. Last week it dubbed itself "Newspaper of the Annus", which amounted to the thoroughly justified boast that it has played the leading role in giving the Queen such an "annus horribilis" (or "Bum Year", as the *Sun*'s front page roughly translated it).

Within a couple of days the Newspaper of the Annus could chalk up a real victory for its increasingly vigorous campaign to get the Queen to pay income tax just like you and me. Well, not quite just like you and me, actually. I haven't noticed the word "voluntary" anywhere on my P60's over the years. But still, it was enough to evoke an uncharacteristically conciliatory response from the *Sun*: "You spoke, she listened" it told its readers.

The conciliatory tone was a bit disappointing I thought.

No better than the response of the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* (both of which have argued for Her Majesty to pay tax on the grounds that not to do so might jeopardise the future of the monarchy itself). Come to that, even the *Daily Mail* took much the same line, thought its tone was suitably deferential.

I'd been hoping for better from the Murdoch press. For years there have been rumours that the Digger and his editors are closet republicans. This summer, when the *Sun* went to town over "Squidgygate" and the *Sunday Times* serialised Andrew Morton's "Diana" revelations, the more bufferish sections of the Tory Party and press (e.g. the *Sunday Telegraph*) openly accused Murdoch of master-minding a "republican campaign".

Alas, the Digger has let us down. This week's *Sunday Times* editorial, almost certainly penned by Murdoch's mouthpiece Andrew Neil, spells out the official line: "It [the public] wants change, the entry of the monarchy into the modern world where it becomes a leaner, fitter and more responsive institution, with the royal household staffed by more meritocrats and fewer aristocrats... The Queen needs the best and brightest around her, and that means going into the market and paying the proper rate." Not republicanism, but consistent Thatcherism,

in other words.

The *Sun*'s climb-down over the Queen has been swiftly followed by a similar capitulation over Norman Lamont. In the days following the ERM fiasco, the *Sun* (together with its sister publications the *Times* and *Sunday Times*) demanded Lamont's head on a platter. The anti-Lamont campaign gained new momentum with the revelation in last Thursday's *Sun*, that the Chancellor is currently £470 over his £2,000 Access spending limit and has gone over his limit no less than 22 times since he got his card from the Nat West eight years ago. He has been sent five legal warning letters for not making monthly payments.

It would seem that the management of the nation's economy in the hands of a profligate. His relationship with his manager at the Nat West bank is, if anything, slightly more fraught than my own. This was splendidly reassuring news.

Then the whole story got side-tracked into an argument about whether Lamont used his Access card to buy a bottle of cheap champagne and a packet of 20 Raffles cigarettes on a Monday night at a Thresher off-licence in a "seedy" street in Paddington, or whether he purchased three bottles of wine at a more respectable branch of the same chain, the previous evening. The Treasury,

together with Thresher's management (i.e. Whitbread, a major donor to Tory funds) were very insistent that the latter was the case. The unspoken sub-text to this strange row was whether Lamont was up to no good in a "seedy" area of Paddington, or merely stopping off for a few bottles of innocent plonk on his way to No. 11.

What does it matter? The important point is that the man can't handle his own bank account, let alone the nation's economy. Yet on Monday, the *Sun* backed down and accepted that a receipt (miraculously produced by the Thresher's) "backed Lamont's story". The whole business, according to the *Sun*, was a part of a "dirty tricks campaign to discredit him". I think the *Sun* has been leant on, don't you?

Mind you, the *Sun*'s role in this affair is nowhere near as craven as that of four Labour MPs who attempted to use it to push a Commons motion condemning the "outrageous breach of privacy" involved in publishing details of the Chancellor's own financial affairs. The role of shame is: Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire North), Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton North East), Clive Betts (Sheffield Athercliffe) and Calum Macdonald (Western Isles). And they even get their facts wrong, blaming the *Evening Standard*, not the *Sun*, for breaking the story.

Who suffers when the bus doesn't come?

WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

The Tories, with their cuts in services, with their sell-offs and union-bashing policies, have managed for a whole period of time to slash public services even when it is blatantly obvious to everyone who uses them and works in them that this is madness.

In all cases, a reduction in services sets workers against users. Public transport is no exception. And when the public suffers, working class women suffer the worst.

Over 90% of part-time workers are women. When prices of transport rise, these low-paid workers struggle to find a reason to go to work at all.

Most of those part-time women workers work hours that fit in with family commitments: early in the morning or

late in the evening. Take the number 36 bus from Peckham at 5.30am.

The bus is full to bursting with women, mostly black, from North Peckham and nearby housing estates, where the living conditions are shitty. 20 minutes later, cruising along Park Lane, the bus empties. The women are off to clean the hotel bedrooms of the rich. They do it for a pittance and they have no job security.

If the bus is late, non-existent, or breaks down on the way, they could lose their jobs.

They are travelling to and from work in the dark at times when few people are about. They can be left stranded, isolated and alone at empty bus stops or tube stations.

The cutting of staff means their safety is at risk. The cutting of maintenance means more breakdowns. The cutting of staff training and the working conditions they endure guarantee they have no pride

or enjoyment in the work. Who gets it in the neck when the bus or tube is late? The transport worker. The workers come to hate the public and the public come to hate the workers. The Tories have managed to sit above us, create all this chaos and watch us take it out on each other rather than on them.

But the tide is turning. The tubeworkers are flexing their muscles and, hopefully, the busworkers will one day soon follow suit. They are fighting to retain a service for people rather than for profit. It is important that this is got over to users by striking transport workers.

What the Tories don't realise is that setting us against each other is hard and expensive work: divide and rule does not come easy. But, once a fight-back has started, our getting together and recognising that we have the same interests in fighting the real enemy is

much easier.

A woman busworker on a picket line during a strike against the sell-off of a nearby garage was accosted by a very irate member of the public.

"You bastards," he said, "You are always letting us down. You are never there when you're needed. You're always on bloody strike." The woman explained that the strike was on because new contracts at this garage meant that the workers would have to work an average 7 hours extra a week at about £30 a week less than their already poor pay.

"How long will you be out for?" the man asked, resigned to a long walk home.

"Oh, only today," she said. "Only today?" The man's shoulders went up. "That's ridiculous. You want to stop it like that? You wouldn't see me going back 'til they withdrew the contract." And left with 'good lucks' all round.



Will the Israeli government be pressurised into conceding some of the Palestinians' demands?

Five years of the Palestinian uprising, the "intifada"

Will Israeli Labour make peace?

Adam Keller, editor of *The Other Israel*, reports from Tel Aviv.

The new Israeli government is an alliance between peaceniks and pragmatists.

Meretz is a significant partner in the government. Meretz is the parliamentary expression of the Peace Now movement.

Meretz stands for withdrawal from the occupied territories (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Arab areas occupied by the Israeli army since 1967), talks with the PLO and a Palestinian state.

There are a number of Labour Party people who have similar views. The most prominent now is the Minister of Justice.

The biggest success of the doves is to isolate Rabin, the prime minister, over intervention in Lebanon. In November Rabin wanted to launch a large raid or invasion. Together with the US the doves forced Rabin to back off. Among the pragmatists first and foremost stands Rabin himself. He is both Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

The Minister of Defence means that he is, in effect, absolute ruler of the Occupied Territories.

Rabin also personally conducts the peace negotiations. He has around him other "pragmatist" Ministers - the Ministers of Police and of Housing.

Rabin has a large concentration

of power. Rabin and the "pragmatists" really run things.

Rabin is moving with slow measured steps and it is unclear what his final agenda is.

There are two views of Rabin in the Israeli peace camp. Some say that Rabin is heading in our direction and that over time he will make peace with the Palestinians and give up territories. This group believe that Rabin is not able to move quickly because he was elected by courting the middle ground.

This view can point to the gov-

"Despite a year of discussions since Madrid, nothing substantial has changed on the ground."

ernment's talks with the PLO. It is now very clear that Faisal Husseini meets the Central Committee of the PLO to get instructions before negotiating with the Israeli government.

On the other hand Rabin still insists that he is not talking to the PLO but only to the local Palestinian leaders. He says that the discussions only concern an interim agreement for five years and that talks about a Palestinian state can only take place three years into an interim settlement.

So there are also those on the left that say Rabin is cheating us and does not intend to end the occupation.

Personally I dislike Rabin very much - he has been responsible for terrible policies. However I think it is in his interest to make a settlement.

The occupation

For the average Israeli the occupation is too expensive and does not provide much in return.

There is a terrible feeling of insecurity. In an hours time I could be stabbed to death on the street. Perhaps the statistical probability is very low, less than that of being killed by a car. But it could happen, anywhere, at any time. This is the mood here.

One promise which Rabin made to his voters was to make an agreement with the Palestinians which could end their fear of daily life.

The Territories have for several years now been "enemy territory" for Israelis. The normal Israeli would not dare to go to Nablus or Gaza. They are in danger there.

The situation among the Palestinians is not good. Despite a year of discussions since Madrid, nothing substantial has changed on the ground. There are still daily confrontations with soldiers. The military still come in the middle of the night. There are

still arrests and there is still torture.

11,000 Palestinians still remain prisoners - although Rabin released 800, this is clearly not enough.

The only real, positive move Rabin has made is to stop the deportations of Palestinians. He did it under pressure from the UN and US.

The Peace Movement

Since the election of the Rabin government the Israeli left has not been very active. Peace Now has stopped demonstrations and protests in favour of lobbying the government.

In the first months, members of the peace movement felt "we have won". Now people are awakening.

A struggle is emerging in Peace

Now. The youth wing is demanding action. In part this is because the right are mobilising.

The right are concentrating on a campaign against withdrawal from the Golan Heights (a border area between Israel and Syria, seized by Israel in 1967). Many of the Golan settlers are Labour supporters, and the right want to win support from Labour hawks.

Golan Heights

Rabin says he is prepared to give up part of the Golan Heights. The Syrian leadership say this is not enough.

An agreement may be reached for Syrian sovereignty over the Golan in return for a long Israeli withdrawal, perhaps with some settler remaining.

Rabin is playing off the Syrians against the Palestinians. This is not hard. There is a lot of suspicion for him to work on. Nearly all of the Palestinian leaders have, at some point, spent time in a Syrian prison.

I think the current situation is quite dangerous. There must be an agreement. The Palestinian leadership involved in the negotiations is becoming more discredited among the Palestinian people. And if the Palestinian attacks on Israeli streets continue, Rabin will also become discredited.

If no agreement is reached the situation could become much worse than if there had never been any negotiations.

**Contact The
Other Israel
POB 956,
Tel-Aviv,
Israel 61008**

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty in c

Building for

The change in the political climate and what socialists must do now dominated much of the discussion at the 1992 annual Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference, held in London last weekend (28-29 November).

Participants reported that there is now a far better reception for our ideas than they have known for a long time. The outcry against pit closures has convinced many thousands of people that they are not alone in their hatred of what the Tories are doing to Britain, and, for the first time in years, many feel that a fightback is possible. The Tories no longer look invincible.

But it is an uneven process, the revival of working class self-confidence we are now living through. Conference met just after the collapse of the plans for strike action on the London Underground. RMT members present blamed the failure so far on general misleadership and particularly on blind sectionalism by the RMT leaders competing with ASLEF.

The work of AWL Trade Union fractions was discussed by Conference and in special commissions. Other subjects discussed included Yugoslavia, the Labour Party, the Child Support Act, the attitude of socialists to the bourgeois courts, and student work.

Before it disbanded, Conference elected a new National Committee to guide the work of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty in the coming year. At its first meeting, the National Committee will elect a new Executive Committee.

Here we print brief extracts from some of the documents discussed.



The outcry against pit closures has convinced many thousands of people that they are not alone in the hatred of what the Tories have done to Britain

Socialists and the trade unions

The trade unions are the basic defence organisations of the working class. They carry out several positive functions: providing elementary resistance to exploitation; defending the immediate economic interests of workers; developing class consciousness and organisation amongst workers; and creating a training school for working class activists.

Marx and Engels were the first socialists to clearly grasp these positive functions. The unions became central to their conception of socialism from below. As Marx argued in the 1840s:

"There exists a class of philanthropists, and even of socialists who consider strikes as very mischievous to the interests of the 'workingman himself'..."

"I am, on the very contrary, convinced that the alternate rise and fall of wages, and the continual conflict between masters and men resulting therefrom, are, in the present organisation of industry, the indispensable means of holding up the spirit of the labouring classes, of combining them into one great organisation against the encroachments of the ruling class, and of preventing them from becoming apathetic, thoughtless, more or less well-fed instruments of production.

"In a state of society founded upon the antagonism of classes, if we want to prevent slavery in fact as well as in name, we must accept war.

"In order to rightly appreciate the value of strikes and combinations, we must not allow ourselves to be blinded by the apparent insignificance of their economical results, but hold, above all things, in view of their moral and political consequences.

"Without the great alternate phases of dullness, prosperity, over-excitement, crisis and distress, which modern industry traverses in periodically recurring cycles, with the up and down of wages resulting from them, as with the constant warfare between masters and men closely corresponding with those variations in wages and profits, the working classes of Great Britain, and all of Europe, would be a heart-broken, a weak-minded, a worn-out, unresisting mass, whose self-emancipation would prove as impossible as that of the slaves of Ancient Greece and Rome."

As our socialism is a class-movement socialism we must direct our attention to where the class is organised, in the first place the trade unions.

Through our work in the unions we can root our tendency in the class and in the workplaces.

Trade union organisations — even the least bureaucratised — have their own limitations.

Marx explained, in *Wages, Price and Profit*: "At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to

themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady.

"They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries that it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society.

"Instead of the *conservative* motto, 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

"...Trades Unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system."

On top of these limitations another problem

has developed: the trade union bureaucracy.

The working class does not develop power and wealth organically, as part of society it is destined to supplant and outgrow. Its nearest *organic* equivalent to the intellectual and political representatives which the pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie threw up is the trade union bureaucrat.

But these bureaucrats (like all workers who have not made a conscious break to socialist politics) are dominated, more or less, by bourgeois ideas: indeed they are a major channel for the consolidation of bourgeois ideas in the working class.

In addition, the officials normally earn considerably more than the average in the trade they represent. They adopt a different petty-bourgeois mode of life and grow away from the realities of working class life.

Over time the bureaucracy has developed into a distinct stratum. But it is a distinct stratum of the workers' movement, *not* a separate class.

In essence the bureaucracy is an unstable social layer which develops *out* of the working class and then finds itself in a position as a negotiator between the working class and capital.

The bureaucracy and the capitalists are organically linked together. They work together to maintain the system.

The bureaucrats' relationship to the working

socialism!

class is parasitic. The bureaucracy needs the working class, the working class does not need the bureaucracy.

As the trade union bureaucracy develops, trade union democracy declines.

This inevitably generates movements of the rank and file against the bureaucracy, but not necessarily a rank and file movement.

A sustained, co-ordinated and organised movement of this kind generally requires a political tendency to provide it with some backbone and permanence.

It is one of our central aims to help build a new rank and file movement.

We take whatever small beginnings exist, but seek to build rank and file groups along the following rough guidelines:

i. Their platforms must be clear and easily grasped by union activists and members. They have to give answers to the burning questions of the moment — like contracting out and privatisation — which confront the workers' movement even if, for the time being, the answers are supported by a small minority.

ii. They should be based on the structures of the union branches, shop stewards committees etc rather than being a collection of individual members of left groups.

iii. They should take disputes seriously, respond quickly and attempt to seize the initiative.

iv. Where necessary they should attempt to function as an alternative leadership in the union. As the old slogan goes, "if the leaders won't lead, then the rank and file must".

v. They should challenge for the national leadership of the union at the same time as acting to make the leadership accountable and recallable.

vi. Ideally it is best *not* to present unofficial movements as formally 'socialist'. This can unnecessarily narrow their base of support.

Rather, we should advocate trade union democracy and fighting politics as the cutting edge of such bodies. Why? 'Trade union democracy' provides an antidote to the pressures of bourgeoisification, while 'fighting politics' allows us to reach out to wider layers of militants who may not consider themselves socialist, but who wish to fight.

If we adopt this approach then we can draw out the political logic of, for instance, a consistent fight against Compulsory Competitive Tendering — which would involve democratic popular control of services by the users and providers of those services — *without* presenting our demands in the form of an ultimatum.

This is how the Minority Movement proceeded. They linked the struggle against wage cuts in the mines to the question of a workers' government by way of the nationalisation of the coal industry under workers' control, as a way of imposing a cut in hours not jobs.

We should attempt to advance our proposals in such a way that the demands we raise grow organically out of the struggle.

Students and the working-class movement

The Tories' "pile 'em high and teach 'em cheap" attitude to further and higher education is a way of dealing with youth unemployment.

Over the last decade the number of students entering further and higher education has increased massively, whilst cuts in spending on education and students has been cut dramatically in real terms.

Student poverty, and overcrowding in classrooms, labs, student accommodation are commonplace, as is the scarcity of library facilities and teaching resources. The recent end to the so-called binary divide in higher education, turning all polys into universities, has simply created a first, second and third class university system. Ex-polys are moving away from non-degree, higher vocational courses in order to compete for funding, the older established universities are running at big deficits, the whole system is a shambles.

Where young people 10 years ago would get a place on the Government's Youth Training Scheme, or maybe even a job, now they go to the local tech.

"It is by no means a foregone conclusion that the Tories and the NUS leadership will succeed in their attacks."

With a shortfall of around 60,000 places (and still rising) on Youth Training, and removal from the benefits system, most young people have no choice but to go onto further education.

A similar situation exists in higher education. The Tories' plan for big increases in student numbers by the year 2000 is well on target. In a recent report it was shown that the class composition of students at university had barely changed in the last thirty years.

Education and training standards may well be falling but the aspiration of more young people may well be rising.

BTec certificates and degrees raise the expectations of young people. Having put time and effort into getting better qualifications, a job and career are expected in return.

The Tories are unable to provide this. The anger and frustration felt by many young people needs to be organised. We are by far the best placed in the student movement to do this.

The confidence of the class is rising and this

can only have a knock-on effect in the student movement.

The Tories are pursuing "voluntary membership", to destroy student unions, but they have not yet succeeded. When John Patten announced his proposals on voluntary membership at Tory Party conference he got tremendous applause. It would seem that the Tory leaders can appease their own right to an extent by going for student unions.

The Tories are in a mess, though. The economy and Europe are obviously more important than NUS.

The Tories have so far had the NUS leadership on their side in as much as the NUS leadership refuse to fight back. Even the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is more opposed to the threat of voluntary membership than the NUS leadership. Rank and file activists in the student movement are angry about the proposals and, as we have already seen, they are prepared to fightback.

It is by no means a foregone conclusion that the Tories and the NUS leadership will succeed in their attacks.

The SWP have simply been parasites on the action called by us. Despite their numbers and the lies they tell themselves and the student movement, concretely have they nothing to offer but slogans and placards for demos.

Most comrades in student work have very limited experience (if any at all) in strike support work. This is hardly the fault of our comrades. Class action has been at a low ebb for some time now. Opportunities to develop the confidence and skills of such work have been restricted (but look a little better at the moment!)

All student comrades should do strike support work when the chance arises. This means going off to picket lines, talking to strikers about their dispute and politics and selling the paper.

It means building support in the colleges, taking resolutions to student union General Meetings, calling for student union/area support, organising strike fundraising e.g. proceeds from bar, discos, donations, bucket collections. It means inviting a striker to address meetings in colleges and offering union facilities e.g. printing.

Going down to a picket line can be a daunting prospect for many young student comrades. You may feel awkward and worried about preconceived ideas held of students by workers.

The overwhelming majority of strikers will welcome any support. And you have an opportunity to prove that not all students are useless, middle-class smart alecks.

Tories attack women

The Child Support Act was passed in Summer 1991, and comes into force in April 1993. It establishes a Child Support Agency, and compels parents who are claiming Income Support to name the absent parents of their children.

If a parent complies s/he will not receive any of the maintenance paid, as it will be deducted from his/her benefits. If a parent refuses to comply, their benefit will be docked by around £8.50 per week.

The Act primarily affects working class women. 90% of lone parents are women. More than 750,000 lone parents depend on Income Support. Income Support represents 45% of the income of all lone parents.

It is reckoned that one in four children in Britain live in poverty.

The Act will also financially hit absent parents who, as a group, have lower than average incomes, and many of whom have second families to support.

The Act will pressure women into accepting very low-paid work. This will undermine wage levels in general.

The Act is an ideological weapon to bolster the family unit. It institutionalises the roles of both women and men within the family — women as childcarers, men as providers. It promotes ideas of how children "should" be brought up. Socialists should argue that both adults and children should be free to form relationships on the basis of choice, not of economic necessity.

The Act represents the Tories trying to scapegoat single parent families. Whilst fighting for the total reorganisation of the domestic economy, socialists must in the here and now defend all non-traditional families. This includes rejecting all notions of state-preferred families suggested not only by the Act but by Section 28, the Embryology Act, immigration laws and the legal institution of marriage.

Build Socialist Organiser!

Our central focus for the coming year should be to develop our work around the paper as an organiser.

We must gear activity around a sales drive, to turn comrades out to new contacts, and to talking to those contacts about the ideas in the paper.

We must develop paper sales in workplaces and trade unions, helping to make our activity there effectively revolutionary activity.

We must gear our trade union fractions to the paper, so that they use it effectively through reports, sales and contact work.

We must construct a basic skeleton of

activity in each branch, around paper sales, into which new, young comrades can be integrated. To complement this, we should make the paper more accessible to and more oriented to youth, without compromising its basic job of analysing the world and explaining Marxist ideas.

We must construct a working branch committee in every branch, which makes sure that the basic business of distributing the paper, organising sales, and collecting money goes "like clockwork". On the basis of that routine the branch can be made able to act promptly and alertly in disputes, campaigns, etc. as they come up.

We must use the paper for education of ourselves and our contacts, organising individual and group discussions around articles in it.



Our central focus for the coming year is to develop our work around the paper as an organiser

Karl Marx and his ideas

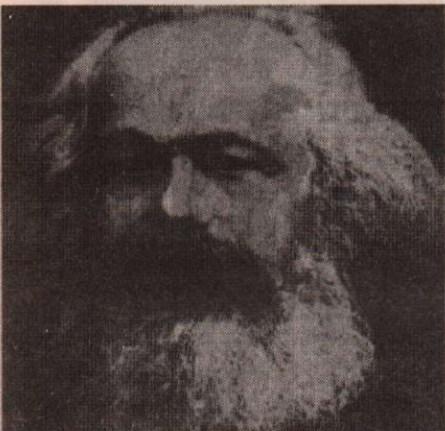
By Vladimir Lenin

In order to change the world, socialists need to understand it: socialists need to study Marxism. For many decades now a sort of pidgin "Marxism" has been used by the rulers in the Stalinist states as the basis of their state religion.

In the west, a synthetic pastiche of Marxism spread in the universities, completely divorced from the working class and its struggles. Real Marxism has been bawled and eclipsed.

The revolutionary Marxism of Marx has been the property of small groups, starved of resources and under relentless pressure from the Stalinists and bourgeoisie. The "Marxism" of many of these groups fossilised into unthinking dogma. Serious socialists need to go back to the texts of the original teachers of revolutionary Marxism.

Here we print the first in a series by Lenin, outlining the basic ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. If you want to be a better fighter against capitalism — study it!



Marx was the genius who continued the ideological currents of the nineteenth century

Marx's teaching

Marxism is the system of the views and teachings of Marx. Marx was the genius who continued and completed the three chief ideological currents of the nineteenth century, represented respectively by the three most advanced countries of humanity:

- classical German philosophy;
- classical English political economy; and
- French Socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines.

The remarkable consistency and unity of conception of Marx's views, acknowledged even by his opponents, which in their totality constitute modern materialism and modern scientific Socialism as the theory and programme of the labour movement in all the civilised countries of the world, make it necessary that we present a brief outline of his world conception in general before proceeding to the chief contents of Marxism, namely, the economic doctrine of Marx.

Philosophic Materialism

Beginning with the years 1844-1845, when his views were definitely formed, Marx was a materialist¹, and especially a follower of Feuerbach; even in later times, he saw Feuerbach's weak side only in this, that his materialism was not sufficiently consistent and comprehensive.

For Marx, Feuerbach's world-historic and "epoch-making" significance consisted in his having decisively broken away from the idealism of Hegel, and in his proclamation of materialism, which even in the eighteenth century, especially in France, had become "a struggle not only against the existing political institutions, and against... religion and theology, but also... against every form of metaphysics" (as "intoxicated speculation" in contradistinction to "sober philosophy").

"For Hegel the thought process (which he actually transforms into an independent subject, giving to it the name of "idea") is the demiurge [creator] of the real... In my view, on the other hand, the ideal is nothing other than the material when it has been

transposed and translated inside the human head."

[Capital, Vol I].

In full conformity with Man's materialist philosophy, and expounding it, Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring* (which Marx read in the manuscript):

"The unity of the world does not consist in its existence... The real unity of the world consists in its materiality, and this is proved... by the long and laborious development of philosophy and natural science... Motion is the form of existence of matter. Never and nowhere has there been or can there be matter without motion... Matter without motion is just as unthinkable as motion without matter... If we enquire... what thought and consciousness are, whence they come we find that they are products of the human brain, and that man himself is a product of nature, developing in and along with his environment. Obviously, therefore, the products of the human brain, being in the last analysis likewise products of nature, do not contradict the rest of nature, but correspond to it."

[*Anti-Dühring*]

Again: "Hegel was an idealist; that is to say, for him the thoughts in his head were not more or less abstract reflections [in the original: *Abbilder*, images, copies; sometimes Engels speaks of "imprints"] of real things and processes; but, on the contrary, things and their evolution were, for Hegel, only reflections in reality of the Idea that existed somewhere even prior to the world."

In his *Ludwig Feuerbach* — in which Engels expounds his own and Marx's views on Feuerbach's philosophy, and which Engels sent to the press after re-reading an old manuscript, written by Marx and himself in 1844-1845, on Hegel, Feuerbach, and the materialist conception of history, [the German ideology] — Engels writes:

"The great basic question of all, and especially of recent, philosophy, is the question of the relationship between thought and existence, between spirit and nature... Which is prior to the other: spirit or nature? Philosophers are divided into two great camps, according to the way in which they have answered this question. Those who declare that spirit existed before nature, and who, in the last analysis, therefore, assume in one way or another that the world was created... have formed the idealist camp. The others, who regard nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism."

[*Ludwig Feuerbach*]

Any other use (in a philosophic sense) of the terms idealism and materialism is only confusing. Marx decidedly rejected not only idealism, always connected in one way or another with religion, but also the views of Hume and Kant, that are especially widespread in our day, as well as agnosticism², criticism, positivism in various

forms; he considered such philosophy as a "reactionary" concession to idealism, at best as a "shamefaced manner of admitting materialism in through the back door while denying it before the world."

(On this question see, besides the above-mentioned works of Engels and Marx, a letter of Marx to Engels, dated December 12, 1866, in which Marx, taking cognisance of an utterance of the well-known naturalist, T. Huxley, who "in a more materialistic spirit than he has manifested in recent years" declared that "as long as we actually observe and think, we cannot get away from materialism," reproaches him for once more, leaving a new "back door" open to agnosticism, and Humeism).

It is especially important that we should note Marx's opinion concerning the relation between freedom and necessity: "Freedom is the recognition of necessity. Necessity is blind only so far as it is not understood" (Engels, *Anti-Dühring*).

This means acknowledgment of the objective reign of law in nature and of the dialectical transformation of necessity into freedom (at the same time, an acknowledgment of the transformation of the unknown but knowable "thing-in-itself" into the "thing-for-us," of the "essence of things" into "phenomena").

Marx and Engels pointed out the following major shortcomings of the "old" materialism, including Feuerbach's (and, *a fortiori*, the "vulgar" materialism of Buchner, Vogt and Moleschott)

- 1) it was "predominantly mechanical," not taking into account the latest developments of chemistry and biology (in our day it would be necessary to add the electric theory of matter);
- 2) it was nonhistorical, non-dialectical (was metaphysical, in the sense of being anti-dialectical), and did not apply the standpoint of evolution consistently and all-sidedly;
- 3) it regarded "human nature" abstractly, and not as a "synthesis" of (definite, concrete-historical) "social relationships" — and thus only "interpreted" the world, whereas it was a question of "changing" it, that is, it did not grasp the significance of "practical revolutionary activity."

Dialectics

Marx and Engels regarded Hegelian dialectics, the theory of evolution most comprehensive, rich in content and profound, as the greatest achievement of classical German philosophy. All other formulations of the principle of development, of evolution, they considered to be one-sided, poor in content, distorting and mutilating the actual course of development of nature and society (a course often consummated in leaps and bounds, catastrophes, revolutions).

"Marx and I were almost the only persons who rescued conscious dialectics... [from the swamp of idealism, including Hegelianism] by transforming it into the materialist conception of nature... Nature is the test of dialectics, and we must say that science has supplied a vast and daily increasing mass of material for this test, thereby proving that, in the last analysis nature proceeds dialectically and not metaphysically [this was written before the discovery of radium, electrons, the transmutation of elements, etc.]"

Again, Engels writes:

"The great basic idea that the world is not to be viewed as a complex of fully fashioned objects, but as a complex of processes in which apparently stable objects, no less than the images of them inside our heads (our concepts), are undergoing incessant changes, arising here and disappearing there and which with all apparent accident and in spite of all momentary retrogression, ultimately constitutes a pro-

gressive development — this great basic idea has, particularly since the time of Hegel, so deeply penetrated the general consciousness that hardly any one will now venture to dispute it in its general form. But it is one thing to accept it in words, quite another thing to put it in practice on every occasion and in every field of investigation.

In the eyes of dialectic philosophy, nothing is established for all time, nothing is absolute or sacred. On everything and in everything it sees the stamp of inevitable decline; nothing can resist it save the unceasing process of formation and destruction, the unending ascent from the lower to the higher — a process of which that philosophy itself is only a simple reflection within the thinking brain."

Thus dialectics, according to Marx, is "the science of the general laws of motion both of the eternal world and of human thinking."

This revolutionary side of Hegel's philosophy was adopted and developed by Marx. Dialectical materialism "does not need any philosophy towering above the other sciences." Of former philosophies there remain "the science of thinking and its laws — formal logic and dialectics."

Dialectics, as the term is used by Marx in conformity with Hegel, includes what is now called the theory of cognition, or epistemology, or gnoseology, a science that must contemplate its subject matter in the same way — historically, studying and generalising the origin and development of cognition, the transition from non-consciousness to consciousness.

In our times, the idea of development, of evolution, has almost fully penetrated social consciousness, but it has done so in other ways, not through Hegel's philosophy. Still, the same idea, as formulated by Marx and Engels on the basis of Hegel's philosophy, is much more comprehensive, much more abundant in content than the current theory of evolution.

- A development that repeats, as it were, the stages already passed, but repeats them a different way, on a higher plane ("negation of negation");
- a development, so to speak, in spirals, not in a straight line;
- a development in leaps and bounds, catastrophes, revolutions;
- "intervals of gradualness";
- transformation of quantity into quality;
- inner impulses for development, imparted by the contradiction, the conflict of different forces and tendencies reacting on a given body or inside a given phenomenon or within a given society;
- interdependence, and the closest, indissoluble connection between all sides of every phenomenon (history disclosing ever new sides), a connection that provides the one world process of motion proceeding according to law... such are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of evolution more full of meaning than the current one.]

Notes

1. A materialist — as distinct from idealist — here does not mean a brutal, Thatcherite grabber, nor does idealist mean someone with high ideals. Philosophical materialism is the belief that matter is the sole reality, and mind a special function of matter. Philosophical idealism, holds the opposite, that mind, ultimately the mind of God, is the fundamental reality.

Ludwig Feuerbach was a German philosopher who in the 1840s counterposed a crude materialism to the then-prevailing religious idealism. George Hegel was an idealist and the leading German philosopher in the early 19th century.

2. Agnosticism here means a denial that it is possible to know one way or the other. Hume was an 18th century English philosopher who taught that only ideas exist.

Why Labour must fight

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty's conference held last weekend, 28-29 November, decided to launch a broad campaign around the theme, "Labour Must Fight".

The conference resolution stated:

"The political climate has changed. With the mass revolt against pit closures, the labour movement has begun to rally itself after nearly eight years of depression in the wake of the miners' defeat in 1985. A shift in political attitudes across a much wider section of the population has encouraged and stimulated the rallying of the labour movement.

The change in climate means a limited revival of industrial militancy, illustrated already by the Lyons Maid occupation and the DVLA strike. But it means more than that. There is a wider mood of distrust and disillusion with the Tory dogmas of market economics — a willingness to see social provision as a feasible alternative.

The revival of the labour movement, and of confidence in a "political economy of the working class", is only in its beginning stages. It will not go up and up without any breaks or setbacks. There will be defeats and disappointments. The Tube debacle illustrates this: bad leadership and determined pressure from the bosses brought a potentially very powerful group of workers down to a miserable defeat.

But, given the Tories' disarray and the depressed state of world capitalism, the most probable general trend for the coming months must be for the revival to continue and deepen.

We should fight for a two-dimensional campaign: industrial action and political protest. This policy is summed up in our "Labour Must Fight" appeal. We should use this appeal — on petitions, in motions, in meetings — to tie together our work in the coming weeks and months.

Labour's vote against the Tories on Maastricht, and John Smith's presence alongside Arthur Scargill on 25

October, indicate that even the Labour leadership has shifted a little. The general prospect is for some revival of the Labour Party grass roots and of the Labour Left. However, the Labour Party revival will probably be slow, lagging behind the industrial revival and the shift in the broad public mood."

Sign this appeal

Below we print the text of an appeal addressed to the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party.

Get labour movement activists to sign it, and get them to persuade their friends to sign it.

Pass the text (suitably amended) at your trade union and Labour Party branches. Organise broad local meetings to build support for these demands:

- Solidarity with the miners. For a national TUC day of action on a weekday!
- Rebuild the Health Service! Stop the Tory cuts! Labour must

commit itself to reversing all Tory cuts in health, education and other public services.

- Support all workers in struggle! Smash the Tory 1.5% pay limit. Occupy to stop closures!
- Free our trade unions! Support workers in conflict with the anti-union laws! Labour must commit itself to repealing those laws and replacing them with laws guaranteeing the right to organise a union, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.

For more details write to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Or 'phone: 071-639 7965.

Don't just march, act!

WHETTON'S DIARY

By Paul Whetton

There is still a great deal of doubt in many miners' minds about whether they will get the support which has been promised. Many miners feel they can not trust the TUC. Some have said "enough is enough", and got out. This leaves the younger lads who have little redundancy money to come.

"The lads are getting tired of marching around the streets with banners. They want action."

The trade union movement must show solid, real support if they expect the miners to fight.

It is difficult to know what will happen on the TUC's day of national recovery on 9 December. The TUC are good at organising rallies, but that will not save pits, jobs

or communities. The lads are getting tired of marching around the streets with banners. They want action.

One of the options open to the miners is occupying the pits. It's not something you talk about — you just do it.

It is actually quite difficult to take over a pit. Again, I do not think that pit occupations could be done by the miners on their own. They would need a lot of support.

There is a leaflet circulating in the coal field which tells the story of Roy Lynk, the "pet pig". It's been taken from an idea in *Socialist Organiser*.

Dr. Griffin, the Coal Board's tame Industrial Relations Director seems to have got very annoyed about the "fate of the pet pig". Griffin has written to one of the local rags to complain about the leaflet.

It's really touched a nerve! Paul Whetton was Secretary of the Notts NUM Rank and File Strike Committee in 1984-5.

Miners' noticeboard

Emergency appeal for funds

The National Miners' Support Network, set up by a wide range of people on the left, has won strong backing from the labour and trade union movement and has been active in organising meetings and other activities in defence of the occupied pits.

If this campaign is to succeed it needs £3,000 at once to pay for the mailings and printed material.

We are appealing to you and your organisation to make as generous a donation as possible.

Please make it payable to National Miners' Support Network (address below).

We have not got much time to save the pits and a lot hangs upon the extent to which we can mobilise the backing of all those who are sympathetic to this cause — which is the cause of all of

us. Please help — and help now.

Yours fraternally,
Tony Benn MP
Frank Cave,
Vice President, NUM

National Miners' Support Network: Secretary Jeremy Corbyn MP, 219 Mare Street, London E8; or 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7. Telephone: 071-263 9450. Fax: 071-281 5720.

Saturday 5 December

Trentham:

Mass action to defend Trentham pit called by Trentham NUM. 11am march from Hanley Park through Stoke City Centre. Rally, Hanley Park 12.30pm. Speakers: Peter Heathfield (NUM), Ken Capstick (Yorkshire NUM), Ken Cameron (FBU), Rose Hunter (North Staffs Miners' Wives Action Group), Paul Foot.

Newcastle upon Tyne:

March and rally with Arthur Scargill; noon

Wednesday 9 December

Manchester:

NW TUC half-day conference on coal at University of Manchester

Saturday 12 December

Ammanford, South Wales:

March and rally

Darlington:

March and rally

Seaham:

Mass rally

Thursday 17 December

Reading:

Rally to meet the Scottish NUM marchers; with Tony Benn.

March for Jobs

Glasgow to London • Saturday 14 November to Saturday 19 December

Scottish miners and supporters from local coalfields will march the 636 miles, over 36 days, from Glasgow to London to protest against Government plans to close 31 pits. Well-wishers and friends can join the march, provide funds, and join rallies as they pass through the towns and villages along the route.

Thursday 3 December: Rotherham to Sheffield
Friday 4 December:

Sheffield to Chesterfield
Saturday 5 December: Chesterfield to Mansfield
Sunday 6 December: Mansfield to Nottingham
Monday 7 December: Nottingham to Ashbourne
Tuesday 8 December: Ashbourne to Stoke
Wednesday 9 December: Stoke to Stafford
Thursday 10 December: Stafford to Walsall
Friday 11 December: Walsall to Birmingham
Saturday 12 December:

Birmingham Rally
Sunday 13 December: Birmingham to Coventry
Monday 14 December: Coventry to Stratford
Tuesday 15 December: Stratford to Banbury
Wednesday 16 December: Banbury to Oxford
Thursday 17 December: Oxford to Reading
Friday 18 December: Reading to London
Saturday 19 December: March and Rally: Assemblé Hammersmith



Roy Lynk: Coal Board bosses don't like to hear him called "the pet pig"

Pamphlets Available from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

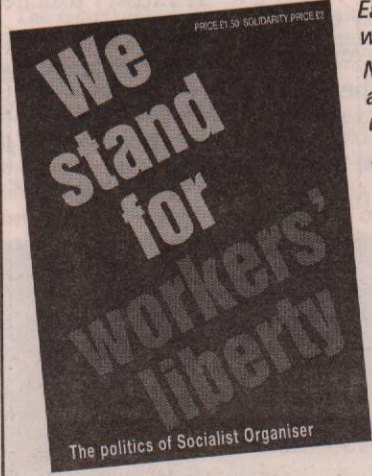
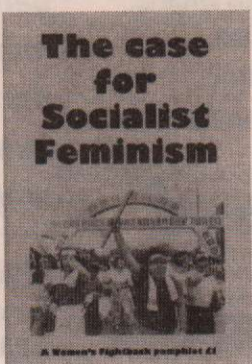
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A bit wrong on Chartism

LETTERS

Histories of Chartism have traditionally been occasions for the historians concerned to air their current political theories, so there is no reason at all why Gary Scott [SO 543] should not argue that the *Miners' Association*, a book about Chartism and mining trade unionism, proves that it is possible to build political unionism in a period of economic downturn. It

does not of course, but it is only par for the course.

What the book does suggest and where Scott might more fruitfully have aimed his gun, is that, in a period of working class upsurge, such as the 1842 General Strike, which was the biggest anywhere in the world in the 19th century, the working class surged ahead on all fronts, political and economic, and often made links between the two which did not occur in harder times.

This point annoys the right wing

in the labour movement as much, if not more, now than when the book was first published 25 years ago. Scott should read the review of the book in the current issue of the *Labour History Review* where Colin Griffiths asserts the revisionist view that mining trade unionism and Chartist politics had nothing to do with each other. I have heard that Colin Griffiths is a pseudonym for Norman Willis but I do not believe it for a moment.

Joe Lane
Vauxhall, London

Abusive men are not powerless, little creatures

I was rather dismayed by Rebecca Van Homan's article regarding obscene phone calls (SO 542).

Whilst I agree with her that better screening and support from British Telecom [BT] would help women in combating obscene phone calls, her lack of any analysis regarding obscene calls was rather remiss, considering that feminists, including radical, Marxist and socialist feminists, have been debating and making public these types of issues for the past twenty years.

The only suggestion that Van Homan can come up with is that it is most probably men who need to somehow compensate for their 'powerlessness' in their everyday lives and that this has to be 'reclaimed elsewhere' i.e. through threatening women.

This is precisely the stereotypical viewpoint that feminists have been attacking; the notion of pathetic, little men who are in some sense not responsible for their actions. Who are these 'powerless' men?

Stanley and Wise, who wrote about their experience of obscene phone callers during the 1970s, argue that the men who rang them were in no way pathetic, that the phone callers deliberately and consciously chose to verbally assault women [Stanley and Wise, *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Research*, RKP].

Feminists often get accused of placing too much emphasis on women's victimisation, yet the fact that most sexual violence is directed towards women still needs to be addressed.

Liz Kelly, who has researched the effects of sexual violence on women, argues that "obscene phone calls are a form of intrusion... which women cannot anticipate. It is this, alongside the intention to shock, humiliate and frighten women, which makes these calls a form of sexual violence." [See Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Polity Press].

Tighter regulations by British Telecom will not eradicate obscene phone calls, although it may deter a few men, just as legislation

regarding other forms of assault, such as rape and sexual harassment, has had very little impact on its occurrence.

I do not subscribe to a universal concept of patriarchy nor indeed a universal concept of gender, both have to be located within an historical and cultural context. However, neither do I accept the view of obscene phone calls that is reduced to the level of production and the economic sphere. Men's violence towards women pre-dates capitalism. Men's power over women in patriarchal societies result in men assuming rights of sexual access to

and intimacy with women, and in certain levels of force, coercion or abuse being seen as justified.

I have only recently started subscribing to *Socialist Organiser* and, while I hold with many of your viewpoints, I feel that issues such as gender and race within your editorial are marginalised, which is why, I presume, you feel the need to have such a column as *Women's Eye*. If you are going to bring up issues such as obscene phone calls within this column, I suggest a more critical analysis is needed.

Antonella Mancini
North London

Many parents smack because they think it is right

Although on the surface Belinda Weaver [SO537] and Sigrid Fisher [SO536 & 540] might seem to be talking about different issues, there is a significant point that Sigrid Fisher is, in my opinion, missing. The easiest way to illustrate this is to compare SO's fundamentally accepted ideas on rape with the views that Sigrid has expressed on smacking children. SO's view of rape, as I understand it, is that however much we may understand the social conditions which produce men who commit rape, we do not excuse rape. Sigrid says she does not excuse or condone smacking. So far so good.

However, SO would also say that we do not content ourselves with arguing for a fundamental change in social conditions in order to combat rape. We propose specific measures, and also we argue against the ideology of male domination which feeds rape. Belinda's article specifically puts the case against the ideas about children which condone smacking.

What Sigrid does not concede is that smacking is not simply a response to provocation/stress (the rapist's justification — she led

me on, I was sexually frustrated etc.). Smacking is considered to be fair enough, and many parents smack, not out of any great anger or frustration, but because they believe that this is the right way to treat children, to shape them, to mould them, to bring them up.

In all sorts of ways, adults underestimate children, and abuse their sense of autonomy and self-esteem. Many adults particularly underestimate the intensity of children's emotions, and their level of comprehension. Adults talk to children, or more often fail to talk to them, ignore them, in a way which interacting adults would find offensive.

Because children are so dependent on adults, and because they are not as articulate, it is important that socialists defend the rights of children, including their right to personal respect that we stand up for eagerly in the cases of women, blacks, gays and other oppressed adult groups.

I suggest that passing comments about the social pressures which lead individuals to abuse members of these adult groups would generally not go unchecked in SO.

Janet Burstall
Australia

Blade Runner, recently re-released in director Ridley Scott's own cut, is a famous sci-fi movie set in 2019.

This is the future, and it's hideous, claustrophobic. The sets are dark and steamy; people grub for a living in an overcrowded hell.

Harrison Ford plays Deckard, a man hired by the Tyrell Corporation to kill four of their escaped replicants. These custom-built humanoid slaves are trying to get their four-year life span extended.

For me, the film raises the question: what does it mean to be human? The replicants want more than anything to live; compared to the "real" people we see, they're the only true humans in the movie.

Other people see it differently. Is it about God? Is it trying to show the wreck and ruin unbridled capitalism will wreak on humanity?

Judge for yourself.



The lightning Attorney General

Book

Gary Scott reviews *A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: WP Roberts and the Struggle for Workers' Rights* by Raymond Challinor

This book covers much of the ground covered by Challinor and Ripley in "The Miners' Association" (reviewed in *SO* 543). It deals with Roberts' battle against the Bond (a harsh employment contract adopted by mining bosses during the middle of the last century) and also deals with the interaction of Chartism and the trade unions.

WP Roberts came from a middle class background. His father was vicar of Chelmsford and, later, master of the local grammar school. Though not especially wealthy, he was able to send his son to Charterhouse Public School.

WP Roberts began his career as a lawyer dealing with conventional cases, and, politically, he supported the Tories. By 1837, however, his political views had changed. He became one of the leading figures in the newly-formed Bath Working Men's Association, and spent the rest of his life fighting for workers' rights.

As a delegate to the 1842 Chartist convention he helped draft and present the second national petition and in 1848, at mass demonstrations before the presentation of the third and final Chartist petition, he appealed to Irish rebels to make common cause with the Chartists against the British government.

Throughout his life he supported the creation of co-operatives and friendly societies. He was treasurer of the Chartist Land Company and was to die in 1871 at Heronsgate, where the first settlement of the Land Company had been situated.

WP Roberts is remembered mainly for the legal work he carried out for the Miners' Association. Engels said of him, "he conducted a crusade against despotic Justices of the Peace and Truck Masters such as had never been known in England... the name of Roberts became a terror to the mineowners... such was the dread of this... lightning Attorney General who seemed to be everywhere at once."

WP Roberts' work clearly shows that the legal fight for workers' rights can strengthen trade union organisation. After the defeat of the coalowners over the repressive system known as the Bond, workers who had previously been submissive gained confidence and began to form union lodges. The Durham Miners' Association came to life and miners at Wearmouth colliery had painted on their banner — and it remains today — the courtroom scene of WP Roberts breaking the Bond.

As well as telling the story of a neglected figure in labour history, Challinor sheds light on the methods used by the state to defeat working class and republican movements.

The book covers a lot of ground, dealing with events like the Newport Uprising and the case of the Manchester Martyrs, and the state's response to such events, issues that are particularly relevant today, given the attacks the labour movement has been facing. Challinor underlines the need for socialists to understand how the law is used to undermine workers' rights, and the way in which the law can be used to fight for workers' rights.

The book ends with the optimistic prediction: "when that happens, perhaps the spirit of WP Roberts will against stalk the land."

The killing game

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *The Crying Game*

The Crying Game is one of the most enjoyable films I've seen in ages. It's well-constructed, and full of surprises. It starts out with an IRA kidnap, but it isn't really about the IRA.

Songs for iconoclastic socialists No 1.
(To the tune of *What a friend we have in Jesus*)

What a friend we have in Smithy
Everything to him we own.
Let us sing his praise for ever
When to battle as we go!

With his oh! so benign features
And his quotes so aptly made.
We shall conquer all before us,
We need never be afraid!

He will tell us what is needed
To defeat the Tory foe,
Never flinching for an instant.
He just loves to have a go!

Loony Lefts they are not needed,
Nor Red Kens or Skinners too,
Only John will sure redeem us
This brings out my point of view.

Arthur Scargill's such a big
mouth,

Tony Benn has passed his best
We'll keep faith with John
forever,

He is heads above the rest.

Kinnock tried but he too faltered.
John will reach the Golden
Throne.

At Westminster we will crown
him
Major's smile will be a moan.

Trots and Marxists, only sinners,
Do not heed a word they say!
Our dear John he is our saviour
Leading us to victory!

Jesus, if you do believe this
Thinking it will come to pass,
If it does, I'll tell you this, pal
You can kiss my fucking arse!

JP Mathieson

It's the story of Fergus, an IRA volunteer, who discovers he's been wrong to join up, that he doesn't have the nature of a killer, even for a cause he believes in.

When he and his gang kidnap Jody, an off-duty black British soldier, Fergus is the only one who treats him kindly. The rest of the gang are harsh or indifferent. To them, Jody is not a person; he's a tool to be used, someone they hope to exchange for one of their captive comrades. They don't want to think of him as human; if they did, they couldn't use him.

Despite the strangeness of their situation and the power imbalance between them, Jody and Fergus connect. Sensing that he is to die, Jody asks Fergus to contact Dil, his lover in Britain, to pass on a last message.

When Fergus makes contact with Dil, he feels attracted. Yet when Dil reciprocates, Fergus's guilt about Jody's fate makes him hesitate.

By this time, the IRA have been pushed into the background. The film focuses instead on the odd courtship that springs up between Fergus and Dil. What happens between them helps him understand who he is and what he wants in life.

The IRA are not really central to the plot; they're the device that sets it in motion. Director Neil Jordan seems to have placed Fergus in the IRA more from the drama inherent in the situation than from any desire to work through the issues.

Issues are raised, but they're not dealt with; they're merely stated for the record. Fergus fights the British because he doesn't think the British should be in Ireland — end of story. Jody's reason for joining up is even briefer — it was a job.

Neither Jody nor Fergus seem what they're meant to be — soldiers in a war. Fergus, who's volunteered, hasn't thought things through. He hasn't accepted, or perhaps he hasn't realised, that joining up will turn him into something he doesn't want to be

— a person who could kill another person, and think nothing of it.

The rest of the gang are like that, in spades, and they start to worry about Fergus — none more so than Jude, the woman who lured Jody into the trap. Jude is the hardest of these hard men, so it's a wry joke when the rest of the gang expect her to be "womanly", when they expect her to comfort the prisoner, to make the tea.

"There's little humanity in the status quo in Northern Ireland. Fergus may find his own redemption in rejecting the hard man philosophy, but that's still no answer for Northern Ireland."

Jody simply isn't like a soldier. He's slack and soft, and trusting, terribly trusting; he's more babe in the wood than British Army. You wonder how someone so open, so vulnerable, could have survived Army life at all, much less active service in Northern Ireland.

Of course, Jody has to seem human, or we wouldn't care about him. We have to be made to see he

isn't hateful.

But if that's the point Jordan is trying to make — that the British (especially the put-upon Black British) are people too, just like us Irish — it's a weak point. Wars aren't stopped by appeals to people's humanity.

Jody may not be hateful to us, but he's hateful to most of the gang in the film. They hate what he stands for, and they have a right to. In IRA terms, it's Fergus who's out of line. If that puts him on the side of "humanity" (and Jordan seems to think it does), that's still no answer to the questions raised. The conflict isn't as simple as that.

After all, there's little humanity in the status quo in Northern Ireland, with its random bombings and tit-for-tat killings. Fergus may find his own redemption in rejecting the hard man philosophy, but that's still no answer for Northern Ireland.

Jordan is really more interested in the personal, and he does full justice to Fergus's shifts and scruples. Fergus is low key and likeable; his diffidence is winning. Yet he seems out of it, disconnected. It's hard to believe he volunteered for the IRA. It's hard to imagine him caring enough about anything to risk his life for it.

Yet he does risk his life, he does learn to care. He's redeemed. Don't miss it.

Solidarity

(West London)

By Matthew Arnold

Crouch'd on the pavement close by
Belgrave Square,
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and
tongue-tied.

A babe was in her arms, and at her
side

A girl; their clothes were rags, their
feet were bare.

Some labouring men, whose work
lay somewhere there,

Pass'd opposite; she touched her
girl, who hied

Across, and begg'd, and came back
satisfied.

The rich she had let pass with
frozen stare.

Thought I, "above her state this
spirit towers;

She will not ask of aliens, but of
friends,

Of sharers in a common human fate.

"She turns from that cold succour,
which attends

The unknown from the unknowing
great

And points us to a better time than
ours."

[This poem was written more than a hundred
year ago]

The Politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

We live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship of productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

From that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides; twice this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism, and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich, who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to

accept their own exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing with the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners strike — savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary.

Against this system we seek to convince the working class — the wage slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the *Alliance for Workers' Liberty*, write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Talk, talk...

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

Since it has been generally recognised that humans evolved from some pre-human but definitely non-human apes, people have speculated as to how our peculiarly human character could have developed. For instance, how did language arise? Our closest relatives are capable of learning sign language (they are physically incapable of making sounds like us) and even of using it in quite inventive ways. But they do not use their signs in the way that humans use words.

So why and how did our ancestors, perhaps similar to the modern chimpanzees, take the first steps towards the sort of communication that allows us to discuss why and how our ancestors... etc, etc!? Evidence is, unfortunately, scanty. What little there is has been discussed by such anthropologists as Robin Dunbar (*New Scientist* two weeks ago) and Marxist Chris Knight*.

Dunbar looks at the differences between human and primate societies for clues. He notes that in the social species of baboons and chimps a considerable period of time is spent in mutual grooming. Intense social bonds are thus formed which give primate bands a highly structured nature. The many complex social relationships of primates are reflected in the relatively large size of the part of the

brain, the neocortex, devoted to conscious thought.

There may well have been an advantage to being able to live in large groups and thus favoured the evolution of a large neocortex to be able to handle the enormous amount of social information entailed. Dunbar points out that baboons and chimps, who are ground living species with a need to live in large groups for protection, have the largest neocortices for their body weight of all but ourselves.

Here Dunbar carries out an intriguing comparison. Extrapolating from the size of the typical group of chimps or baboons, he calculates a typical group size for a primate with a neocortex the same size as our own. This gives a figure of about 150.

Looking at sizes of actual human groups, he finds that the "clan" grouping of hunter-gatherer people average about 150 in size, that archaeology suggests populations of 120-150 for Middle Eastern villages of 8,000 years ago, that fighting units in the British (and Roman!) armies number some 130-150, that small companies undergo a change when staff exceed about 150 and so on.

But if grooming holds primate bands together, what would this mean for the hypothetical ape with a human-sized brain? Dunbar estimates they would have to spend about 40% of their time grooming. This would seriously limit their ability to get enough food to eat. So Dunbar looks for a more efficient way of carrying out the func-

tions of grooming and comes up with language. By comparing human and chimp group sizes, Dunbar estimates we need a means of communication about three times as efficient as grooming, which can only involve one groomer and one groomed. Dunbar claims that most conversation groups are made up of one talker and three or four listeners. Any larger and the groups tend to fragment. The groups tend to talk about social matters of "gossip". Surveying people in his university's refectory, Dunbar claims that gossip takes up some 70% of conversation time.

Language may well have largely developed not to aid hunting and gathering of food but to cement social relationships back at the camp. All this is, of course, speculation supported, to some extent, by circumstantial evidence. But it is interesting, nevertheless, perhaps because it is a form of gossip!

* *Who was kind enough to send me several papers by himself, including one on the origins of human language.*

Alliance for Workers' Liberty School

From Friday 18 to Tuesday 22 December the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is holding an intensive political school. This "crash course" will cover two main themes:

The socialist political programme

- Political demands
- The Transitional Programme
- Workers' Government
- Revolutionary party and the working class.

Political economy

- Capitalism and crisis
- Unemployment
- Inflation
- The business cycle
- The world market.

The school will be held in London. Reading packs are available now. For your pack and for further details phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

Labour Party Socialists AGM

Unite the Struggles!
Drive out the Tories!
Organise the Left!

Saturday 5th December
11am - 5pm

Steve Biko Room, Mandela Building,
Sheffield Hallam University, Pond Street.

Speakers Include

- Bob Cryer MP (Socialist Campaign Group)
- NUM Speaker
- Women Against Pit Closures
- Islington NALGO strikers
- Sheffield NALGO strikers
- Manchester RMT (sacked guards)

Agenda Includes

- Uniting the Struggles
- Elections
- Towards a Socialist Europe
- Organising the Left

Rail union leaders duck cuts fight

By a railworker

On Thursday 19 November Sheffield Star quoted York Labour MP Hugh Bailey as saying he had documents that showed BR were seeking large scale redundancies in readiness for privatisation and that wage cuts were in the pipeline.

A BR spokesperson was quoted as saying "There is nothing new in all this, it was common knowledge that notices offering redundancy have gone out."

Later the same day BR held a press conference. They announced 5,000 redundancies

over the next four months, some of which may be compulsory, a cut back in investment, and more redundancies to follow in the next financial year - all aimed at balancing the books at a time of falling revenue.

Did Bailey's leaks push BR to come out into the open, or was it common knowledge among railworkers? If it was common knowledge, why have a press conference?

In fact BR have been making it plain for a long time that jobs are to go, but the leaderships of the different unions are

so pathetic that no fight has been made. It seems that BR have decided to raise the temperature themselves and splash it over the national media.

Perhaps they wanted to create an effect like that which followed the announcement of pit closures. There are certainly managers who appreciate the devastating impact that privatisation will have on the railway industry; and are concerned for their own jobs.

Jimmy Knapp of the RMT and Richard Rosser of TSSA are preparing a parliamentary campaign of lobbying Tory

MPs. They pin much hope on the fact that the Tory chair of the Select Committee is a rail enthusiast.

Meanwhile Derek Fullick of ASLEF has said that a series of general strikes is needed but hasn't been heard of since.

We need to combine now with coal and other workers to resist the devastation that lies before us.

Industrial Front

A massive vote for strike action at British Airways has forced management to step back from imposing wage cuts of up to 30%.

New negotiations are now to take place. It looks like management have decided to postpone confrontation until after the Christmas rush.

London busworkers are starting to organise against attacks on their jobs, pay and conditions in the run-up to privatisation.

There has been an official call for mass meetings in every garage to discuss the issues.

The fight against redundancies at Rolls Royce's Parkside place in Coventry has ended in defeat without a fight. The convenor convinced workers to rebalot after they had already voted to strike. His argument was that a strike would endanger redundancy payments.

Once again a potentially powerful group of workers have been let down by weak plant level leadership.

Workers at Ford are now balloting on strike action against compulsory redundancies. Management seem to have got enough "volunteers" from Dagenham and Bridgend. The danger is that Halewood could end up isolated.

TSB workers are balloting for a series of selective strikes to stop the loss of 6000 jobs this month.

Lyons Maid: still campaigning!

Despite the buyout of Lyons Maid by the Swiss-based multinational Nestle over a fortnight ago, workers at the Lyons Maid factory in Kirkby near Liverpool remain uncertain about their future.

The Kirkby workers went into immediate occupation when Clarke Foods (owners of Lyons Maid since last February) called in the receivers in late October.

The Lyons Maid workers are now circulating a petition around the local community and

factories on Merseyside, calling on Nestle to re-employ the workforce employed by Clarke Foods.

The purpose of the petition, which is to be handed over to Nestle at the meeting on 8 December, was explained by shop steward Carol Austin:

"We want Nestle to know that the whole community is behind us, and that the local community needs this factory. The petition can help keep the issue in the news and can help us get good

media coverage.

"Also, we need to keep our members together, which is particularly important since we have called off the picket. In addition to the weekly mass meetings we are holding, the petitioning will keep our people together and keep them involved in the campaign."

Copies of the petition available from: Lyons Maid workers, c/o Kirkby Unemployed Centre, Westhead Avenue, Kirkby, Liverpool L33.

Manchester housing strike

Manchester Housing Department workers in the north Manchester offices took strike action last week over management cover at offices.

The dispute was sparked by management insisting that offices open without a manager being present. When NALGO members at Miles Platting office refused to cover for the manager they were sent home without pay on Wednesday 18 November.

Labour Party expels two more for links with Socialist Organiser

Last weekend, 28-29 November, the Labour Party's National Constitutional Committee expelled two more socialists from the Labour Party on charges of association with Socialist Organiser.

Ruth Cockcroft and Mark Serwotka were expelled. Wendy Robson and Chris Croome had already been expelled at National Constitutional Committee (NCC) hearings in September. The four, all members of Sheffield Central Constituency Labour Party, are the first people to be expelled from the Labour Party under the ban on our paper imposed by the National Executive in 1990.

Fiona Monkman was suspended from Labour Party membership for two years. The NCC, apparently, could not decide on the conflicting evidence presented to it, but instead of the usual standard of justice - "reasonable doubt" means acquittal - it applied its own: "reasonable doubt" means half-punishment!

Jill Lewins was acquitted. As we go to press, we have no information on two other cases which were to be heard, those of Nick Lowles and Allison Roche.

Purges are continuing in many other areas, including Brighton and Coventry. Contact: Campaign Against the Witch-hunt, 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Road, Brixton, London SW9 7SL.

Stop press: CPSA DSS Nottingham and CPSA DSS Leicester are balloting their members on strike action on 9 December.

The lock-out turned into a strike as workers at Miles Platting and other north Manchester offices took action to try to win an acceptable procedure for opening offices with no manager present.

The strike took place in line with NALGO's rejection of management proposals.

On Friday 20 November workers voted to end the strike. Attempts to escalate the strike to other offices had not been as successful as hoped for. While many housing workers were

opposed to management's proposals they were not prepared to strike over the issue. The dispute was also undermined by hostile opposition by the NALGO branch officials.

As staff tried to return to work on Friday, management telling them to report to work on Monday (23 November), thus making staff lose an extra 2 and a half days' pay.

In negotiations on Friday 20 November some concessions on the procedure were gained.

IRSF to ballot on contracting-out

The leadership of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (IRSF) are balloting all IRSF members on non-cooperation with any further market testing of jobs in the Inland Revenue.

Typing jobs in four Inland Revenue sites are currently being market-tested. Any moves by the national leader-

ship to resist contracting out are to be welcomed.

However, IRSF leaders are already supporting an in-house bid on one of the four sites. Even if it wins, job losses are inevitable.

IRSF Broad Left members are campaigning against the contracting-out of jobs. A successful ballot on non-coopera-

tion will be a basis from which to push the leadership to take a clear, strong stance on organising the membership to take strike action against contracting-out. At a rank and file level, key activists from the IRSF Broad Left are linking up with CPSA and NUCPS members in organising an unofficial joint union conference on contracting out.

Left victory in Labour Party boosts NALGO dispute

As we go to press, on Tuesday 1 December, talks are due to take place between Islington council and NALGO over the long-running dispute caused by the oncel-left Labour council's push for compulsory redundancies.

NALGO members have been on strike for some time in the Poll Tax department and the Neighbourhood Offices, and have now been joined by the libraries and the Architects' department.

After months of hard-faceted stalling from the council, prospects for a deal look better, as much because of what has happened inside the Labour Party as because of the industrial action.

At a joint meeting of the

Islington Labour Party Local Government Committee and the council Labour group on 23 November Derek Sawyer was elected to succeed Margaret Hodge as Islington Council leader.

Left-wing candidate Liz Davies was the front-runner after the first round ballot. She then withdrew from the contest in favour of Sawyer. "If I remain in this race (right winger) Howard Mann will be elected and that will be an end to any hope of seeing humane treatment for our workforce and community in Islington."

Prior to the meeting, Sawyer had signed an agreement on the basis of which Davies's supporters were prepared to support him.

Commitments he signed

for include withdrawal of the threatening letters issued to the NALGO strikers, and immediate negotiations with NALGO to end the strike on the basis of a commitment to no compulsory redundancies.

Liz Davies's success - the result of an energetic campaign among the Labour Party rank and file - shows what can be done inside even those Labour Parties which, like the Islington CLPs, are currently at a low ebb of activity and morale.

But NALGO is, rightly, continuing and escalating its industrial action until a satisfactory deal is finalised. Right-wing councillors are still powerful, and are trying to stop Sawyer delivering on his promises.

Stop coal imports? No, build solidarity!

Over 300 people marched through Bootle, on the outskirts of Liverpool, on 25 November on a demonstration called by the North West TUC (NWTUC).

The demonstration, called under the slogan "Stop Coal Imports", was the latest initiative by the NWTUC in its campaign in support of the 30,000 miners whose jobs are under threat.

For over three years local community groups in Bootle have been campaigning in protest at the impact on the environment of the coal shipped in through the local docks, currently amounting to 1.5 million tons per year.

In some parts of Bootle six out of ten children suffer from asthma as a result of the amount of coal dust in the air. Noise and traffic hazards caused by the lorries which transport the coal out of the docks have added to the problems faced by the local community.

"Right now an alliance of miners, railworkers, civil servants, and local authority workers in a united struggle against the Tories is a real possibility."

But the demonstration also struck a nationalistic and divisive chord which directed the fight to save miners' jobs down a blind alley: the slogan "Stop Coal Imports" should not have any role in a labour movement campaign in support of the miners.

• Are coal imports the main reason for the Tories' plans to sack 30,000 miners?

No. The TUC's own document "The Case for Coal" recognises: "Although coal imports have risen, the principal cause of the new gas-fired power stations."

• Some of the coal imported through Bootle (and elsewhere) is from Colombia (where child labour is used in the mines) and from South Africa (where black miners' pay is one sixth that of white miners). Is the slogan "Stop Coal Imports" an expression of solidarity with oppressed miners abroad?

No. At the moment, for example, there are no speakers from Colombia, or Colombian miners' solidarity campaigns, touring this country and appealing for workers to refuse to handle Colombian coal.

References to child labour in Colombian mines merely

put a progressive gloss on a divisive demand.

In any case, not all coal imports are produced by child labour (not even all Colombian coal imports are). Australian mines do not employ child labour. Nor is child labour used in the generation of French electricity (annual imports of which are the equivalent of 7 million tons of coal).

• Coal imports have increased from 3.4 million tons in 1983 to 20 million tons this year. If such an amount of coal were mined in this country rather than imported, then many miners' jobs would be saved. Does this justify the slogan "Stop Coal Imports"?

Firstly, the argument "keep out foreign imports to protect British jobs" is only one step removed from the argument "keep out foreign workers (and kick out those already here) to protect British jobs".

The "logic" of the demand "Stop Coal Imports" is no different from the "logic" of the demand "British jobs for (white) British workers".

Secondly, one country's imports are another country's exports. If British workers campaign against French imports, French workers campaign against German imports, German workers against Polish imports, etc., etc., then the result is an international trade war.

Instead of trying to build an international campaign to defend jobs, workers thus end up engaged in narrowly nationalistic campaign to put each other out of work.

• Is the demand "Stop Coal Imports" a practicable, realisable demand, whereas calls for working class solidarity are just empty sloganeering? No.

Right now an alliance of miners, railworkers, civil servants, and local authority workers in a united struggle against the Tories is a real possibility.

• If socialists oppose the slogan "Stop Coal Imports", do they expect people in Bootle to continue to put up with the problems caused by coal shipments through the local docks?

No. The problems are caused by the coal, not by the fact that the coal is imported. If the coal shipped through Bootle docks were for export, would the NWTUC call a demonstration under the slogan "Stop Coal Exports"? Definitely not.

Socialists support a cessation of coal shipments through Bootle until local community groups and Labour and trade union bodies are satisfied that additional safeguards are in place which protect the health of the local population.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Help your socialist weekly!

Occupation saves hospital ward

As *Socialist Organiser* goes to press, University College Hospital management have agreed to reopen a ward they wanted to close, and not to victimise workers who occupied the ward to stop the closure. *Socialist Organiser* spoke to a CoHSE shop steward at the hospital which is in north London.

"There have been a series of ward closures over the summer, and we have been on strike four times already this summer in opposition to the cutbacks.

The recently released Tomlinson report advocates the closure of another four or five hospitals in London. 27,000 health workers' jobs are due to go.

At UCH we have decided enough is enough. Management plan to close ward 2.1, the only general surgical ward in the whole hospital. They did not follow any of the normal procedures, they just announced that the ward was to close.

Apparently casualty has been so hard-pressed they have asked for the ward to be re-opened.

The staff on the ward have decided to occupy the ward. They are ready to receive any patients who are referred to them.

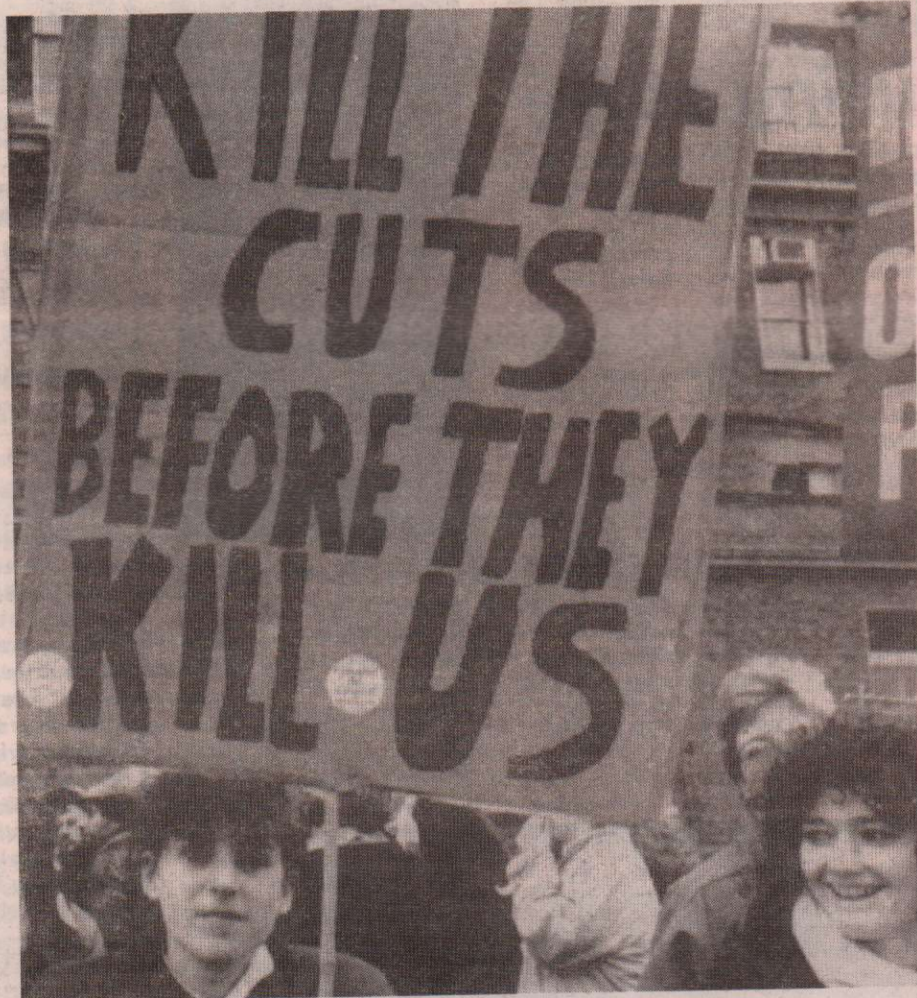
CoHSE and NUPE nurses at UCH have voted for indefinite strike action with emergency cover. The strike is solid.

Another four wards are likely to close, with no guarantee that they will be reopened after Christmas. I work on one of the wards — I could be out of a job.

In fact, if Charles Marshall, the Director, has his way I will be out of a job. He is out to close the hospital by 31 July 1993.

But UCH is not going to be open on 30 July and closed on 31 July. The cuts are happening now and local people are being deprived of our services.

All hospital workers should support our occupation, and if ward closures are being made in other hospitals then other workers should follow UCH's example and occupy."



Healthworkers can beat attacks on the NHS

What Tomlinson means

- Several famous London hospitals could close with the loss of over 20,000 jobs.
- Decent hospital treatment will become the preserve of the rich. Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley says, "We can't afford to have people lingering around for a recuperative holiday. We want the minimum beds necessary".
- Hospital sites will be sold off.
- Waiting lists will get longer. 150,000 Londoners are already on waiting lists. 18% of patients have to wait over 2 years for

treatment.

- We will lose key specialist facilities — the Royal Brompton has the most advanced heart and lung transplant unit in Europe.

Them and us

- Guy's manager Peter Griffiths earns over £90,000 a year and has two company cars. He offers the use of a Rolls Royce car to private sponsors.
- Griffiths has stopped Guy's heart doctors admitting local patients. Dr Graham Jackson says he knows of four patients who died after being refused admission.

Socialist Organiser is raising extra funds to help extend the influence of our ideas.

We have bought new equipment to help the production of our paper, and are putting resources into building our socialist organisation — the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Now is the time — when the miners have stirred the working class — to grow and to increase the sales of the paper. Workers are looking for new ideas and socialists have a larger audience.

If you think *Socialist Organiser* is doing a good job, why not help us? Send a donation to help our fund drive.

Cheques/postal orders (payable to WL Publications Ltd) to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Our fund target stands at £3,746.93. The collection at last weekend's AWL Conference raised £1,360.13. (We also received £1,410 in IOUs).

In addition donations received include £120 from Glasgow AWL and £13 from York AWL branches.

Grand Xmas Draw!

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty's Xmas raffle is well under way. Members and sympathisers are selling tickets for:

- A video recorder — first prize.
- A colour television — second prize.
- An Xmas hamper — third prize.

The draw will take place at 6pm at the Red Rose Club, north London, on Tuesday 22 December.

All profits from the raffle will go to help support *Socialist Organiser*.

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