

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Inside this week



MALCOLM

Behind the hype

see page 13

Buses, rail, pits, public sector

STRIKE



TOGETHER!



"I believe that by going into action together, miners and railworkers are creating the conditions in which we can link our fight to the battle to save the health service, education service and other public services. This is the first stage in our campaign which will lead to the end of this Tory government."

Arthur Scargill, President NUM
Full report on page 2

Unite to beat sackings, sell-offs, cuts

Buses, pits, rail, public sector

Strike together!

By Trudy Saunders

THE TORIES have declared war on public sector workers. We face hundreds of thousands of job losses, worsening conditions, a 1.5% pay limit, privatisation and the mass contracting out of our jobs to private profiteers. We need a co-ordinated, official, national fightback. Yet with the exception of the NUM, the national officials are not providing it.

All these attacks on public sector workers come from one source: the Tory government.

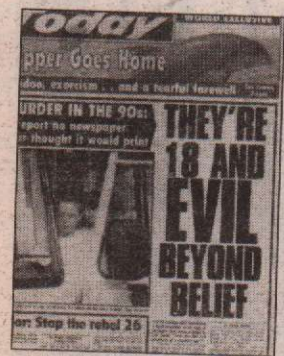
Last week's strike ballot by miners and railworkers offers a huge opportunity to the movement to develop a public sector-wide response to those attacks.

The poisoned well



A KNIFE through John Major's heart? What a pity it's just the usual Sun exaggeration. If that sounds a bit 'extreme', look at the picture above of Michael Holford, an unemployed man who has had his frostbitten legs amputated at the knees.

He developed frostbite while sleeping out, being homeless.



The two young murderers of an old woman pictured in Today are, indeed, evil. But the message — note the stress on their age — is part of the anti-youth backlash.

Activists across the public sector should be pushing for our unions to bring forward disputes over cuts, closures, contracting-out, privatisation and the pay freeze.

If ever there was a time for national, official, co-ordinated action across the public sector, then that time is now. When the miners name the day we should do everything we can to deliver strike action alongside them.

Just look at the battles that are coming up in the public sector:

- This month the Tories will have to publish their long-delayed White Paper on the coal industry. It will inevitably result in huge job losses, not just for miners but for rail and power workers, and for workers in other mining-related industries.
- London Busworkers are to start a series of strikes this week in protest at pay cuts, longer hours and privatisation.
- Tubeworkers face 5,000 job losses this year under the Company Plan. Compulsory redundancies are inevitable.
- 90,000 council workers' jobs are on the line as a result of Tory cuts.
- NHS workers face hospital closures up and

down the country. At University College Hospital in London a work-in is planned.

- Postal workers face privatisation and massive job losses, especially in London.
- Over the next few years 90% of civil service jobs are at risk through 'Market Testing' (the contracting-out of Civil Service jobs to private profiteers) — pay, hours, conditions and the rights of those who keep their jobs will be under attack.
- Lecturers in Further Education colleges are planning strikes against individual contracts, and other attacks on terms and conditions.
- Teachers are backing a boycott of English

NALGO day of action

NALGO is calling for a day of action on 18 March over public sector spending cuts and the Tories' pay freeze.

It now seems likely that the miners will organise a one-day strike on the same date.

With close to 100,000 council jobs threatened by cuts it is important that as many NALGO branches as possible vote to strike on the day. NALGO is authorising branches to ballot their members if they are "in trade disputes with their local authorities over budget cuts".

This formulation means that nearly every branch can ballot its members.

John Birt and the Budget

THE TORIES' Budget next Tuesday, 16 March, will probably extend VAT, and maybe even put a five per cent tax on food and newspapers.

The Government will tell us that in hard times we must all pull together and pay more tax to avoid even worse public service cuts.

Ordinary working-class people have no choice but to pay these increased taxes. The rich have a wide range of choice — and they use it.

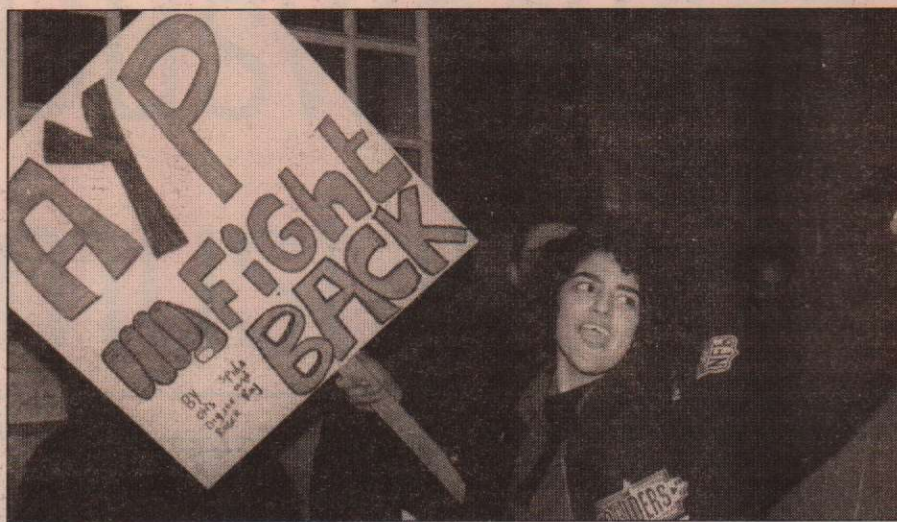
A lot of economists will tell you that, whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, in practice there is no point raising the top tax rate much above the present level of 40% because higher rates only produce more energetic tax avoidance and evasion.

The case of BBC TV Director-General John Birt seems to show those economists have a point — only the avoidance and evasion remains energetic even after the Tories have cut the top tax rates.

Birt gets £150,000 a year from the BBC, plus two free cars and all sorts of expenses. To avoid income tax, he got his money paid not as wages but as fees to "John Birt Productions Ltd", which wrote off "travel", "entertainment", "clothing", "administration" and so on against the fees and then paid £59,000 "wages" to Birt, and £14,000 to his wife.

Now, Birt's high-profile public position has forced him into agreeing to be paid on PAYE. But many top people in commercial television have the same

Asian youth fight cuts



The Asian Youth Project in Leicester is being threatened with closure. It is situated in Belgrave, where many Asian people live and where there are very few resources for local youth. It is used by Asian, Afro-Caribbean and white youths, and provides a wide range of activities.

On 3 March the Asian Youth Project organised a very loud and lively demonstration outside the Leicester City Council House during a Council meeting.

Photo: Mark Salmon.

Tests for 14 year olds. Over 90% of English teachers support this resistance to the Tory education reforms.

Campaign to free Frank Johnson

INJUSTICE

IN SEPTEMBER 1976, along with two other men who have since been released, Frank Johnson was jailed for life for the murder of John Sheridan. The recommendation was that Johnson should serve at least twenty years.

Although Frank Johnson has served seventeen years he is unlikely to get parole because review boards see Johnson's protests of innocence as a refusal to come to terms with the crime.

The evidence against Johnson comes from the other two co-defendants: David

Smart, who admitted his part in the murder, and Jack Tierney, a police informer.

Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn states that "Anyone reading the trial records and the evidence can only conclude that Frank Johnson was wrongly convicted. He is suffering an outrageous injustice which we must all fight to reverse."

- For more information write to the Free Frank Johnson Campaign, c/o 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7.
- Messages of support to Frank Johnson, 338667, HM Prison Swaleside, Eastchurch, Kent ME12 4AX.

Junior doctors face pay cuts

JUNIOR doctors employed by Lanarkshire Health Board face pay cuts of up £300 a month.

The Government review of junior doctors' hours recommended that they work a maximum of 72 hours a week. Many now work over 100.

As there has not been a sufficient increase in staffing levels, many junior doctors will still be required to work in excess of 72 hours to ensure that adequate cover is provided overnight and at weekends. But they will not get paid for this extra work!

The Health Board claims

that these extra hours are extra-contractual and therefore voluntary.

The Government's recommendations on reducing junior doctors' hours are meaningless without increasing resources. Meanwhile, Health Boards can continue to make cuts at the expense of staff.

Sheffield council workers' deal is disaster for trade unionism

No to wage cuts!

THE BOSSES' journal, The *Financial Times* has called it a "landmark agreement". And well it might.

20,000 Sheffield council workers have voted to accept a 3.25% pay cut in order to help the Labour politicians who run local government in the city balance next years' council budget and keep it within the guidelines laid down by the Tory government.

The deal is the first of its kind in Britain. As a little sweetener, workers will be allowed to work one hour less a week.

The deal also stipulates that the 1993-4 annual pay increase conditional on a big increase in productivity. No productivity, no pay increase!

2,000 manual workers refused the deal, but it will be imposed on them: "The cut will be treated in the same way as a pay rise would," says the council.

For the labour movement this 'landmark' agreement has a skull and crossbones and the words 'poisoned ground' embossed on it.

Like the recent deal negotiated by the leaders of the AEU for the workers at the Hoover plant near Glasgow this is not trade unionism. This is *negative* trade unionism.

Instead of fighting for a cut in the working week while maintaining or bettering pay levels, these workers have been persuaded to vote to sacrifice their own interests on the altar of council solvency. And what is council

"Learn the lesson of the '80s! Each retreat only encouraged the Tories to come after us."

solvency? Council solvency is defined and policed by the Tory government — council solvency involved acceptance of savage Tory cuts, it involved the implementing of these cuts by Labour councils.

Instead of standing up to the Tories and mobilising support from the workers of Sheffield for a council policy of defiance against the government, the politically bankrupt right wing Labour leaders of the council made Tory "solvency" their god and put pressure on the council's workers, forcing them to choose between the sack and a wage cut!

Instead of standing up to the council and encouraging their members to fight, with strikes



Sheffield parents march against the council's education cuts. But the council unions have decided to accept wage cuts rather than ally with parents and others to force the Labour council to fight the Tories.

where necessary, the union leaders bow to the council's god, Tory "solvency", preaching defeat and demoralisation.

Caught in the middle, the rank and file pays.

Labour Council Leader, Mike Bower thinks that his employees have really "shown a remarkable degree of commitment to their colleagues and community". No, Mr Bower, they have shown that faced with unscrupulous people like yourself, backed by the Tory government and by mass unemployment, they can be bamboozled and intimidated!

The workers who voted for this deal did so because they know that the Tories have plan to scrap up to 90,000 local government jobs in a cost-cutting exercise which will — in the middle of a slump and worsening unemployment! — waste three times the number of jobs Michael Heseltine tried to take from the miners last October. With a scabbing right wing Labour council and a no-lead gang of union leaders, they have let themselves be cudgelled and bamboozled into trying to save their jobs this way. They delude themselves.

This is not a matter concerning Sheffield alone. The Sheffield deal will be taken as a benchmark by every Tory and right wing Labour council in the country.

Now the pressure will be on for more of this negative trade unionism — for trade unions to negotiate pay cuts and for council workers everywhere to accept lower wages and deteriorating conditions.

The contrast between what a militant trade union leadership like that of the NUM can achieve in the fight against redundancies and what the Sheffield council worker union leaders are doing adds up to a powerful advertisement for militancy.

Arthur Scargill and the NUM have got the Tories politically on the run — though they're not yet beaten. In Sheffield local government, the Tories and their right wing Labour agents have got the council unions on the run.

The idea that jobs can be secured in that way is an illusion.

NEGATIVE TRADE unionism is weak trade unionism. Every blow peacefully accepted weakens the unions. After every weak retreat the Tories attack again. If Sheffield becomes the norm for council workers, local government trade unionism will have suffered a tremendous blow to its strength and morale. And then the Tories will come back for more. You can be sure of it!

Learn the lessons of the '80s! At first the Tories attacked cautiously, in a limited way.

They were careful at first, not to clash with the miners. But each Tory success and each retreat by the Labour and trade union movement made them bolder.

Each episode of running away by the labour movement only encouraged the Tories to come after us with relentless vigour and an appetite for the destruction for the labour movement that grew with each victory.

By the end of the '80s they had wrecked terrible havoc on the labour movement and half-wrecked its greatest political achievement, the Welfare State.

Things like the vote by the 20,000 in Sheffield to cut their own wages are a direct consequence of that. But things can get far worse.

They will get a lot worse for council workers unless council workers everywhere begin to organise now against "a Sheffield" in their area.

The Sheffield affair shows once again that the right wing and the ultra-lefts — the SWP and the new *Militant* for example — act like the proverbial Siamese twins in the affairs of the labour movement. For the councillors it is business as usual. Theirs is not to reason why, to question what the Tories tell them to do, still less to

"The Sheffield wage cut will be taken as a benchmark by every Tory and right wing Labour council".

stand up to the Tories and their "solvency". For the ultra-left too, all this is fixed and given. That is what Labour councillors do. They reject the idea that the

Sheffield labour movement — including the unions affiliated to the Labour Party — should call the wage-cutting councillors to order inside the Labour Party and where necessary, fight to deselect them and replace them with better men and women. The only worthwhile fight is in the unions, they say. Yet we see here that the activity of a hostile right wing Labour council can inhibit and even cripple the workers' will to fight.

Opposition to wage cutting in the Labour Party or on the council would have encouraged the council workers to reject Tory "solvency" and those in the Labour Party tied to it. The Labour Party and trade unions are indivisible. Politics is not the property of the right wing. Serious left-wingers will not leave it to them.

No to wage cuts! No to negative trade unionism!

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

Karl Marx

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Petrified at the top

YOU DON'T HEAR much talk of "leadership" on the left these days. There was a time when a lot of left-wingers believed that "leadership" was the central issue in the unions. The membership were straining at the leash, ready for battle: all that was holding them back was the "leadership" — or lack of it.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

In fact, the obsession with "leadership" very often involved down-playing the importance of organising the rank and file independently of the leaders. At its worst, it also involved a crude and one-sided misunderstanding of the role of the bureaucracy.

Strangely enough, now that it's less fashionable to go on about "leadership" all the time, the issue itself really is of crucial importance. The class struggle is at a fairly low ebb, after some brief signs of revival towards the end of last year. The slump is continuing and unemployment will continue to act as a brake on militancy for the foreseeable future. In a very dangerous precedent, Sheffield Council workers recently voted to accept a 3.25 per cent pay cut in order to avoid redundancies.

But there are clearly limits to what workers are willing to accept: at Timex in Dundee and Yarrow Shipyard, militant action has broken out after years of redundancies, wage cuts and attacks on conditions; Ford workers look ready to take action against redundancies, and at Peugeot Coventry, workers have already voted once for strike action over pay and conditions and are now being re-balloted after minor concessions from management.

And there is plenty more inflammatory material ready to ignite: pit closures and bus privatisation for a start.

Meanwhile the financial crisis of the councils makes further disputes amongst local authority workers almost inevitable.

No, the rank and file isn't straining at the leash — in fact all the flashpoints mentioned above have come after massive set-backs and retreats. But there does seem to be a mood for a fight-back developing. What's lacking of course, is leadership. Willis and the TUC are clearly terrified of the prospect of a serious, generalised fightback. John Smith and the be-suited yuppies who now lead the Labour Party wouldn't be seen dead on a picket line; dissident Tory MPs made more of a fuss than Labour over the pit closures.

Perhaps the most startling example of this lack of leadership is Derek Fullick, leader of the rail union ASLEF.

His case deserves special investigation.

Pit closures and privatisation could lead to whole sections of the railways — like the freight sector — disappearing. The resulting job losses will lead to great bitterness and anger amongst rank and file train drivers (part of which will obviously be directed at Fullick himself) not to mention a huge loss of income for ASLEF.

According to the usual rule of thumb this should force Fullick to the left. So why hasn't it?

There can only be one answer.

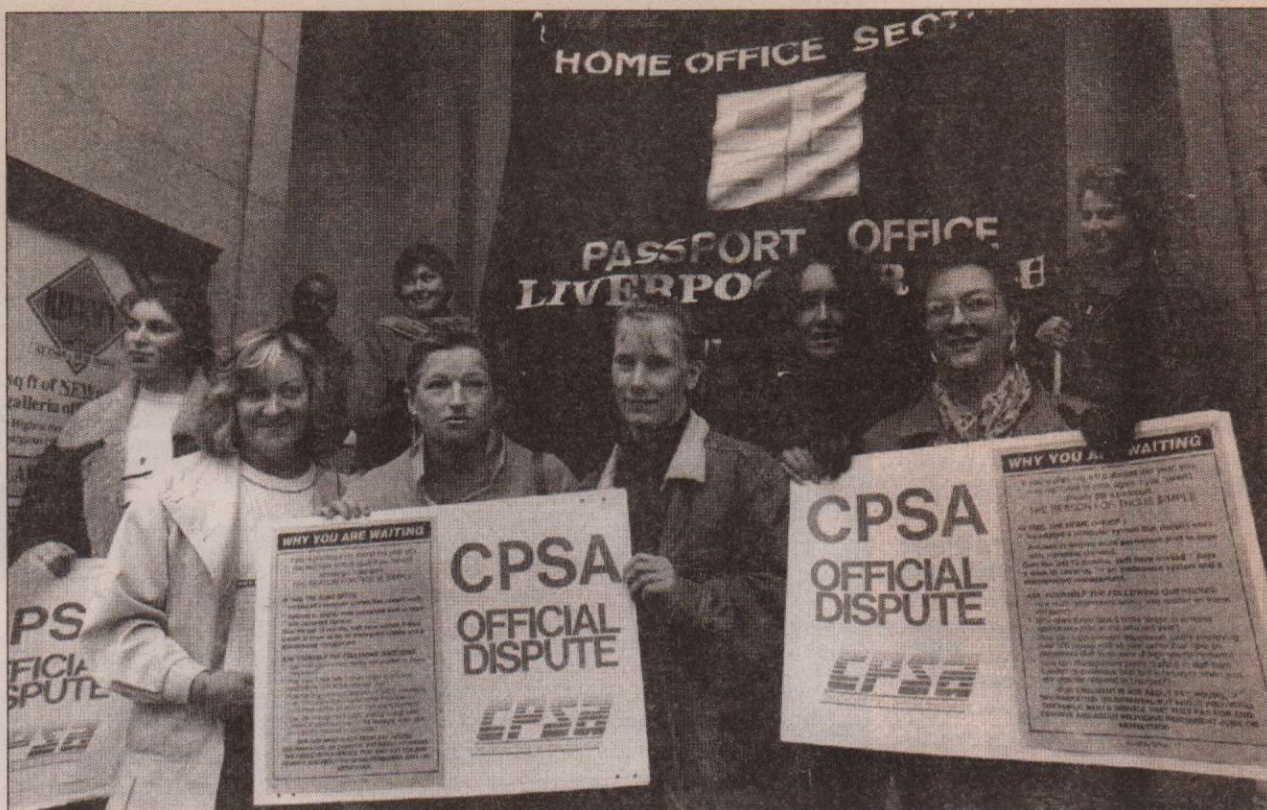
Fullick and the rest of the great majority of the union leaders are so petrified of the anti-union laws being used to take away all of their assets that they are now prepared to accept attacks on their members' jobs, and therefore their own bureaucratic apparatus, which a decade and a half ago even the most right-wing general secretary would not have put up with.

The struggle to change the leadership has to be linked to the fight against the anti-union laws.

This involves another subject which is no longer discussed in polite left wing company: the question of government. New legal rights for the unions require a Labour government committed to them. And that requires a political struggle.

Leadership and some politics would not automatically solve all the problems that our movement faces after a decade and more of defeat and demoralisation. But it would make a damn big difference.

Civil Service How to build



Only nationally co-ordinated strike action will defeat "Market Testing". Photo: John Smith, Profile

Mark Serwotka, of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, the left candidate for CPSA President, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

What do you think is the central issue facing CPSA members?

"MARKET TESTING" — the contracting out of civil service members' jobs to private contractors.

This is without doubt the most serious attacks CPSA members have ever faced.

Tens of thousands of civil service jobs will be lost.

Those of us who keep our jobs will be forced to accept lower pay and worse conditions and will lose our pension rights.

Trade unionism will be turned on its head. Branch officers and union reps will find themselves drawn into the process of "in-house bids" through which the union itself takes responsibility for cutting wages, terms and con-

ditions in order to keep a contract "in-house". This will create cynicism and a big increase in non-unionism in the Civil Service, just as it has done amongst manual workers in the local councils and the NHS.

There are other Tory attacks as well. The pay freeze. The end of national bargaining. Name badges and uniforms.

The Tories are on the war path. We are going to need nationally co-ordinated strike action to force them to retreat.

There is no alternative.

So you're saying we must unite the members to defend their interests, rather than concentrating on getting the Moderates?

DON'T ACCEPT that is a very sensible way of looking at the issues. The only way to beat [right wing president Marion] Chambers and the rest of the Moderates is to mobilise the members around the key issues that matter such as market testing, the pay freeze and the end of national bargaining.

Whenever the members are given a chance to hear the arguments positively in favour of industrial action they are prepared to accept the need for it. So I don't see why this subject

should be taboo. I don't see why we should just say "Chambers out" and then not tell people what we want to do. What our positive policies are.

Unfortunately, some people in the union, mainly associated with the *Morning Star* and the *Militant* newspapers, think that the members will be frightened away by talk of strike action. So they don't raise it. That's why maverick Albert Astbury is their candidate against me for President. One of his few well known interventions was at last year's conference, when, faced with what amounted to a pay cut, he declared: "Don't press the strike button".

This sounds fine, but isn't the problem in CPSA — judging on last year's votes — that even all the non-Moderate forces combined can't get Chambers out?

AGAIN, I WOULDN'T accept that's the right way to look at the issues.

The big question to address in our union is how do we get the message out to the vast majority of members who don't vote. And we're talking here about 80% of the members.

A big part of the problem is obviously the postal ballot system which doesn't exactly encourage membership involvement and participation in elections. That's



workers' unity

why the Tories and the Moderates are so keen on it.

But I don't accept that the postal ballot system is the whole explanation.

Members need to be offered something that they can believe in. They need to be offered a real alternative.

In particular, we need to really beat the drums about the terrible attacks that the Tories have in the pipeline.

That way we will be getting members to raise questions about how we can stop the Tories before it's too late. The Moderates, of course, won't be able to provide any answers.

You've got to look at things from the point of view of the ordinary members — people who might not be that keen on incomprehensible union jargon and endless boring talk about this committee and that sub-commit-

tee. Unfortunately, too many people in the CPSA don't see things this way.

Many so-called left-wingers are already working out their get-out clauses in the face of the Tory attacks. For instance, this week on the committee that supposedly runs the union in the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security, the DHSS Section Executive, *Militant* supporters voted down an amendment I put forward calling for a fight to defend national bargaining. Instead, they voted for a motion which basically accepted the Tories would be successful and talked instead of negotiating local deals to protect existing conditions.

This is the kind of clever tactical thinking that's too clever by half. If the Tories were prepared to accept existing terms and conditions they wouldn't work to abol-

ish national bargaining, would they?

The same thing is happening over Market Testing. In the last analysis *Militant* are prepared to "live with it".

What the people backing my campaign want to do is go out to the ordinary members and build unity in struggle around the issues that matter. We are not interested in factional headcounts or stitched-up electoral pacts which have nothing to offer the members.

The timescale facing CPSA members is very short — either we fight back now or go under. People like *Militant* and the *Morning Star* should be uniting with the forces that are backing my candidature. The basis of unity is straightforward: national strike action to stop the Tories. If we don't fight now, then in a couple of years it will be too late.

21st anniversary of Saltley Gates

THE PICKET of Saltley Gates in February 1972 was an event of historical importance for the British trade union movement.

Like virtually all innovations of working class struggle, the flying mass pickets of the miners' strike, of which Saltley was the most dramatic, came from rank and file initiative.

The major core of the pickets from the Yorkshire Area were under the leadership of Arthur Scargill, at that time a minor local leader.

The first few days brought small numbers of miners from other areas. The determination of the pickets, numbering a few hundred at that time, to stop the lorries taking coke out of the depot, soon captivated the imagination of both the miners and other trade unionists.

But after the first week of the mass picket, it was clear that the police were growing in confidence in dealing with the picket lines. In between the confrontations the police chatted to the pickets and offered them Polos.

The police on the lines were replaced at very frequent intervals so that the convivial atmosphere would not affect their determina-



tion. And it didn't stop the police laying into the pickets when the time came, arresting them by the dozen and snatching their leaders.

If the miners were to be successful it was clear by the weekend that they needed drastic reinforcements. And it was to come in the following week, in an amazing wave of solidarity.

Responding to the call of the Birmingham East District Committee of the AUEW, 40,000 downed tools on the Thursday. On that morning the workers of Birmingham turned up in their thousands on the picket line. It was nothing less

than a festival of solidarity.

The Chief Constable of Birmingham agreed to close the gates. A roar passed down the streets outside as they clanged shut.

Arthur Scargill, addressing the assembled thousands from the roof of a dilapidated toilet outside the gates, claimed the Saltley Gate closure to be a major victory for the working class in this country. He was right. And the Tories knew it too. That's why some of them spent the late seventies planning their revenge.

(See Press Gang page 6).

An open letter to Militant supporters

CPSA: Fight the Tories, not the Left!

Dear Comrade

YOU MAY be surprised to hear that *Militant* supporters in the CPSA are opposing the only serious left-wing candidate in the union's upcoming presidential election.

Instead of supporting Broad Left member Mark Serwotka, a Section Executive Committee member who has led many strikes and still works on the counter at a DSS office, your comrades will be backing a little known maverick right-wing/soft-leftist, Albert Astbury.

Astbury is not a supporter of the CPSA Broad Left. He will not be accountable to anybody. His politics are so vague they are meaningless. His only distinguishing feature is the fact that he is a grade 7 manager who earns around £15,000 a year more than most CPSA members. He has never led a struggle in his life. He has no chance of winning. In fact nearly all the left wingers in his particular section, the LCD, are refusing to vote for him, and are voting for Mark Serwotka.

If that was not bad enough, your comrades are now planning to support a candidate against Mark Serwotka in the DSS Section elections. This is seen as 'punishment' for Mark not 'towing the line'. Inevitably this will let in the right wing. Do you want that?

Unity in struggle

YOUR comrades in CPSA have abandoned the ABC of working-class politics.

Instead of building workers' unity around policies that can defend the members, they are seeking to create a 'democratic alliance' with the discredited soft left-Kinnockite BL '84.

This bureaucratic alliance is bound to fall

apart because it has been constructed by avoiding any clarity on the key questions facing civil service workers.

Market Testing (contracting out) will affect 90% of civil servants. Tens of thousands of jobs are on the line.

Defeating Market Testing is therefore the central task facing CPSA members. Yet, incredibly, your comrades are building an alliance with the people who are opposed to effective national strike action over the issue and are more than willing to take the initiative in cutting civil servants' pay and conditions through in-house bids.

Mark has faced threats, lies and intimidation. Now your supporters are saying that Mark Serwotka will 'be deemed to have resigned from the Broad Left' if he continues to stand for CPSA President.

Mark has defended *Militant's* right to remain in the Labour Party even after you stood candidates against the Party in the general election. For taking such a stance and defending socialist ideas, Mark himself has been expelled from the Labour Party. Your supporters want to drive Mark out of the Broad Left for standing against a candidate who is not even in the Broad Left and who does not agree with Broad Left policies.

Comrades, your supporters in CPSA must be called to order. They are in the process of wrecking any prospects of left unity in the union.

If they do not change their line they will be making it easier for the Tories to attack jobs, pay, conditions and union rights. Militant supporters must withdraw their support for Albert Astbury's candidature and stop witch-hunting socialists.

**Yours for socialism,
Alliance for Workers' Liberty**

GRAFFITI



Castro: "democracy" without opposition candidates

Less law for the rich

GRAFFITI

WIDESPREAD crime? Lots of people on the take? The answer to crime by teenagers is more punishment and a harsher hand, or so the Tories say.

Just the opposite answer comes from the Italian government as hundreds of top Italian politicians and business people are arrested for corruption. The government proposes to change the law so that those guilty can get off without any punishment beyond saying sorry, paying back some money, and quitting public office.

It's like the economic law which says that the rich always need more "incentives" to get them to work, while ordinary workers produce better under the discipline of wage cuts and austerity.

MICHAEL Milken, the foremost among the American financiers convicted of swindling and dishonest dealing at the end of the 1980s, has just been released from US government custody.

He has served two years of a ten year jail sentence, the last part of it under house arrest in his own home. He is reckoned to have maybe \$200 million left of his ill-gotten gains, plus whatever he managed to transfer to his wife and children.

Ivan Boesky, who was Milken's partner in many swindles and then shopped him to the government in return for lenient treatment on his own charges, has been free since December 1989. He spent a bit less than two years at a minimum-security jail in California where he was able to pay other prisoners to wash his underwear.

Now he lives in a luxurious California suburb with time out for many trips across the world. He was officially allowed to keep \$50 million of dishonest profits, but that money is with his ex-wife, from whom he is now separated. No-one knows how much more he may have in his own name in Swiss banks.

THE MOST popular leisure activity outside the home in Britain now is not sport, cinema, or the pub, but shopping.

In the US, trips to the shopping mall, over and above time taken shopping for necessities, have long taken several hours a week of the

average person's leisure.

About church-going in Russia in the age before cinema and TV Trotsky wrote: "the people do not go because they are religious; the church is brilliantly lighted, crowded with men and women in their best clothes, the singing is good — a range of social-aesthetic attractions not provided by the factory, the family or the workaday street". And, he might have added, it was free and available.

Perhaps the same is true for shopping today. People do not go because they are duped by the "religion" of "spend more, consume more, work more", but because the shops provide life and spectacle more cheaply, and more readily to hand, than cinema, sport and other attractions.

WHILE prescription charges are going up yet again, the government is proposing to take a whole range of treatments for the common skin complaint eczema off prescription.

According to a survey done by the National Eczema Society, the average monthly cost of routine treatment for a child with eczema (the complaint is specially common among children) is £32.12. Parents, even those entitled to free prescriptions, would have to pay the whole cost.

The Eczema Society also warns that "research into new eczema treatments may be abandoned... there is almost no possibility of new treatments such as Chinese herbal medicines becoming available on the NHS".

"ALL THE virtues of democracy, without the vices of corruption", claimed Fidel Castro for Cuba's first parliamentary election since 1959, held on 24 February.

No candidate won by recruiting more wealthy backers than a rival, or by well-financed dirty tricks. There were no contests in buying votes.

All such vices of corruption were avoided by having only one candidate for each seat. The candidates were selected by the Communist Party (which means, in fact, by the government: CP congresses have only been slightly more frequent than parliamentary elections).

And the virtues of democracy? No doubt the best candidates won. According to the Cuban government, seven per cent of ballot papers were blank or spoiled.

How old Nick became a truly great Englishman

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

NICHOLAS Ridley, so all the obituaries assured us, was a man who appreciated plain speaking and honesty. So I have no hesitation in stating that the news of his death brightened up my day no end. The press tributes and obituaries over the weekend, however, were quite distressing. Not Margaret Thatcher keening in the *Sunday Times* over her "brave and loyal colleague": that was only to be expected and in its way right and proper.

What was truly nauseating was the coverage in the *Guardian*, the *Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday* — papers that opposed Ridley's particular brand of Toryism and welcomed his enforced resignation from the Thatcher government two years ago. In death, Ridley became a "Truly Great Englishman" (*Guardian* and *Independent*) and "A fearless original who always did it his way" (*Independent on Sunday*). The *Guardian's* political editor Michael White, even turned his hand

to a spot of art criticism, noting that Ridley was "a grandson of Lutyens" and "painted surprisingly tranquil watercolours".

The figure that began to merge from all this moisturising was not altogether unattractive; perhaps Margaret Thatcher was right in her *Sunday Times* tribute: "Tall, languid, aristocratic, droll and charming. With either a cigarette or a joke always on his lips, he could have been a figure from Wilde or Coward".

Surprisingly little was said about the exact circumstances of Ridley's resignation from the Thatcher government. The *Independent* reminded us that "he poured out his heart to the editor of the *Spectator* in 1990 and was forced to resign". But what had Ridley actually said? Again, the *Independent* came up with some information: he'd described the French as "behaving like poodles to the Germans" over Europe, and said: "I'm not against giving up sovereignty in principle, but not to this lot. You might just as well give it up to Adolf Hitler, frankly". The *Independent* (in common with the rest of the press) failed to mention that the same interview also contained some blatantly anti-semitic remarks about Nigel Lawson.

Ridley's long-standing admiration for Enoch Powell was scarcely mentioned either. John Biffen, writing in the *Guardian*, did mention that Ridley's secret "Dining Club" of the early '70s had as one of its objects to "keep in

contact with Enoch Powell, whose views on immigration had taken him beyond the pale".

We were told how Ridley bravely took the rap for the poll tax fiasco (although it wasn't really his idea at all) and made himself unpopular as Environment Minister with his jokes about NIM-BYs. The *Independent* even reminded us of Ridley's best joke of all: a few days after the Zeebrugge disaster he remarked that a junior minister had piloted a Bill through parliament "with his bow doors open". Hilarious stuff, what?

"Ridley's most important political contribution... his unremitting, calculated and entirely consistent anti-unionism."

But Ridley's most important political contribution was strangely overlooked by most of the press: his unremitting, calculated and entirely consistent anti-unionism. Appropriately it was left to Mrs Thatcher herself in the *Sunday Times*, to pay full tribute on this score: "In opposition [in the mid-'70s], when others were resigned to permanent trade union dominance, he was convinced that this was a

transitory and unnatural phenomenon disliked by ordinary union members. He therefore produced a blueprint for defeating a political strike such as that organised by Arthur Scargill a decade later".

Ridley had, in fact, studied the rise of union militancy of the early '70s and the humiliation of the Heath government at the hands of the miners, vowing that it would never happen again. Well before the 1979 general election he had prepared a document — the so-called "Ridley Plan" — that outlined a detailed programme for taking on first the manufacturing unions then the rail unions, the civil service unions and so forth, culminating in a final vengeful showdown with the old enemy, the miners. Victory over the miners would be ensured by systematically building up coal stocks and preparing non-union transportation. The Thatcher government carried out Ridley's plan down to the last detail.

How unfair that Ridley's greatest achievement received so little attention in the obituaries. Ridley the vindictive union basher has been all but forgotten — along with Ridley the anti-semitic and Ridley the friend of Enoch Powell. We're left instead with Ridley the debonair aristocrat, wit and talented water-colourist.

Truly, there's nothing like death to show up the British press (especially the "quality" press) at its obsequious, hypocritical, dishonest worst.

Chaos in bosses' Europe

POLITICAL FRONT

By Colin Foster

THE TORY Government's defeat in Parliament on 8 March, over a minor amendment to its bill on the Maastricht Treaty, signifies two things.

First, that the Tories can be driven from office, or, rather, that they could be driven from office if Labour's leaders would show any spirit and fight. Second, that the West European bosses' plans for their continent are in deep chaos.

All that Labour's John Cunningham could do by way of comment on the Parliamentary vote was to state the obvious: "The Prime Minister has... given himself a bloody nose by staking his credibility on winning this vote".

He gave no call for a continuing campaign — no call for a drive by the labour movement to destroy this Government. Yet the Tories are more seriously split, over Europe and a

series of issues of economic policy inextricably linked to it — interest rates, exchange rates, the Budget deficit, taxes — than they have been for decades. At the same time they are floundering in crisis over health cuts, over the pit closures and over rail privatisation.

"Labour has a big opinion poll lead and does nothing but squander it."

Labour has a big opinion poll lead — and does nothing but squander it by feebly echoing the Tories' vicious and demagogic drive against "teenage villains".

The Parliamentary vote delays Britain's ratification of Maastricht still further. Even if Denmark does vote yes to Maastricht in its second referendum on 18 May, and if Britain does ratify, Maastricht looks like a dead letter.

Far from moving towards a single European currency, the European Exchange Rate Mechanism is scarcely surviving. Both over its deal to rescue the GATT world trade deal, and over its plans for expansion (the 'European Economic Area'), the EC is in deep trouble.

Unemployment is 8% in West Germany, 11% in Britain, France and Italy, 15% in East Germany, and 16% in Spain. Industrial output is down 4% in West Germany, France, and Italy.

The other big capitalist economies are also in trouble. Japan's industrial production is down 8%. In the US, General Motors, Ford and IBM have announced the biggest annual losses for any companies in the whole history of capitalism.

Leading Euro-bosses, surveyed by the *Financial Times* on 1 March, are gloomy. David Herman of Opel says "The trend is on the steepest downward curve since the war... confidence is in free fall".

Jean-Rene Fortou of Rhone-Poulenc says, "The state of the European economy is worse even than during the 1973 oil shock. I don't expect it to improve until 1994 at the earliest". Norbert Walter of Deutsche Bank says that the German economy is heading for a "crash landing". Josef Ackermann of Credit Suisse predicts that "mass unemployment will place the social and political fabric under pressure".

Many powerful bosses reckon that Europe must move faster towards become a single, integrated, capitalist economy. "The roots of our problems lie in the lack of convincing European solutions", says Edzard Reuter of Daimler Benz, and Leonardo Vannotti of Ascom asks, "How can I be optimistic when I do not see any concerted action in Europe to get things moving?"

As capitalism drags Europe into misery and chaos, the need becomes more urgent for the European labour movement to work out and unite around a socialist plan for the continent.



Students need to ally with others fighting cuts

NUS women's campaign under attack

By Alice Sharp
NUS Women's Officer
(personal capacity)



WOMEN'S GROUPS and the women's campaign in NUS are currently under attack — not just from the Tories but also from the leadership of the National Union of Students.

The Tories plan to introduce legislation to smash up student unions. This would mean the end of women's groups and the end of a national women's campaign. But the response of the NUS leadership to the Tory attack would scarcely leave us in a better situation.

The NUS leaders have given in to the Tories' demands. Instead of organising a campaign to

defend the union, they have put forward a series of proposals which will mean an end to any campaigning on the majority of issues which affect women.

If the NUS leader's proposals are accepted then it would mean an end to campaigning:

- on the Child Support Act;
- on the NHS;
- on supporting the Women Against Pit Closure Camps;
- against contraception charges;
- on reproductive rights.

It would only be legitimate for NUS to campaign on issues which affect students as students, not on issues which affect women as women.

In the campaigns organised by women's groups this year it has been essential for us to link up with other sections of society which are also under attack.

In the current campaign against the government's plans to introduce prescription charges for contraception we have to link up with women's groups, with trade unions and with all those campaigning against the general increase in prescription charges, as well as with those particularly concerned with the plans to charge for contraception.

In the Campaign Against the Child Support Act it is obvious that we need to link up with community groups and others to ensure that single parents claiming benefits are not forced to name the father of the child or risk losing part of their benefits.

On the issue of reproductive rights, women students have been building support for organisations campaigning for access to information and choice in the recent referendum in Ireland.

But now our ability to campaign on such issues is under threat — both from the Tories and from the right wing Labour leaders of the NUS.

Women students are affected by issues which affect them as students such as student debt and lack of childcare in college. But the majority of issues which women's groups discuss and organise activity around are not just issues which affect them as students.

Women's campaigns are political because campaigns for equality and equal rights raise many questions about the whole of

society.

Campaigns against cuts in abortion services, for equal opportunities and for an end to discrimination mean that we have to link up with others who are fighting cuts in services and job losses and fighting for an end to oppression in order to build a campaign to win our demands.

We have to campaign against government legislation and fight their ideology which says women should conform and fit into their designated role of wife and mother.

The majority of our campaigns are "political" and if we are to defend our right to organise and run such campaigns then we must lead a campaign to defend ourselves not only from the Tories but from the leadership of our union.



"We have to link up with women's groups, with trade unions..."

Photo: John Harris

We need political campaigns

By Elaine Jones, NUS National Executive (personal capacity)

WHAT'S AT stake at this year's National Union of Students Women's Conference at Blackpool on 15-18 March is not simply the leadership and policy of the Women's Campaign, but its very existence as an autonomous and living campaign in NUS.

Using the threat of Tory attacks on student unions as justification, the Labour-Liberal-Right-Independent leadership of NUS are attempting to turn the NUS into a centralised pressure group with a "respectable" image. The Women's Campaign does not fit into these plans. If they get their way the Women's Campaign has no future.

Over the last few years the Women's Campaign has shown what is best in NUS. By seriously campaigning it has built a national network of women's activists.

The Women's Campaign has supported action like the 6,000 strong Manchester demo against student debt last November and this year's national Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual lobby of Parliament.

The NUS leadership as a whole refused to support either of these events.

Jealous of the success of the Women's Campaign and determined to bring these "rowdy feminists" to heel, the right wing "Labour Students" faction are, for the first time, standing a candidate for National Women's Officer.

Regardless of what the Labour Students candidate, Siobhan Endean says in her manifesto, or at the conference, her real agenda is the Labour Students agenda launched by NUS President Lorna Fitzsimmons under the title "Charter for Student Unions".

This Charter spells the end of liberation campaigns by making NUS no more than a charity. Siobhan is no novice. She has been one of the right wing's leading hatchet women in closing down autonomy for liberation campaigns in NUS Scotland.

With increasing student poverty and the effects of legislation like the Child Support Act, it is vital that women activists defend the NUS Women's Campaign by building on its excellent work so far.

The Women's Conference should give a clear message to the leaders of the NUS that women students will not allow them to close down our campaign. The clearest way to send them that message is the campaign to support National Women's Officer Alice Sharp, who has given fighting and loyal leadership to the Women's Campaign during the last year.

Racist frame-up

Stoke Newington police: guilty!

"There are police officers upon whom suspicion has fallen as to their reliability in any evidence they may have given in court".

Who said that? Kenneth Aylett, lawyer for the State at the Court of Appeal hearing for Ida Oderinde, Dennis Tulloch, Everard Brown and Rennie Kingsley. The four had their convictions for drugs offences quashed by the Court of Appeal on Monday 1 March, after the State explicitly accepted that evidence given by officers from Stoke Newington police station in Hackney, East London was unsafe and unreliable.

This incredible admission, writes Mark Osborn, comes, in part, after a Scotland Yard inquiry — *Operation Jackpot* — into corruption, planting drugs and drug dealing by Stoke Newington police.

HACKNEY COMMUNITY Defence Association (HCDA) believes that there are now up to 25 officers under investigation. HCDA believes that there are serious questions to be asked about at least

13 officers whose names they have published.

So far eight officers have been transferred; five have been suspended; one, Gerrard Carroll, shot himself dead; and Roy Lewandowski is serving 18 months for theft.

Two weeks ago the Court of Appeal quashed the convictions of two men for manslaughter on the grounds that Lewandowski had planted evidence on them which had been stolen from the house of a dead man.

HCDA knows of 76 cases, between December 1988 and the present day, involving allegations of corruption against Stoke Newington police. 64 people have been charged with criminal offences. In 17 cases no evidence was offered by the Crown Prosecution Service, and 17 people have been acquitted.

Of the other cases, four are waiting appeal, and seven have been referred to the Court of Appeal. HCDA believes that a further eight cases need investigation.

HCDA estimates that 90% of those involved in these cases are black people. Many of the cases involve allegations of police officers planting drugs.

HCDA is particularly concerned with three



Stoke Newington police station

drug offence cases now waiting to be referred to the Court of Appeal: Danny Bailey, who is serving three and a half years; Hugh Prince, who has been released after serving one month of a two month sentence for possession; and Winston Thompson, who served 11 months of a 30 month sentence.

HCDA's conclusion is that so many officers have been involved that senior officers must be either utterly incompetent or aware of widespread corruption and willing to condone it.

HCDA knows of four sorts of police involvement in organised crime:

- The seizure of drugs and money from dealers stopped on the streets, and then released without trial;
- The supplying of drugs to street dealers;

- The running of protection for a prostitution racket;
- The planting of drugs and the fabrication of evidence against people who get in their way.

There has been a long history of police violence and racism in Hackney. Colin Roach died in the foyer of Stoke Newington police station on 12 January 1983. On 8 January 1987 Trevor Monerville had to have emergency brain surgery after spending one week in Stoke Newington Station. On 25 June 1987, Tunay Hassan died in custody in nearby Dalston police station. Aseta Sims died in Stoke Newington police station in 1971, as her daughter Pamela describes on the facing page.

It is time for the violence, framings and police racism to stop!

The racist facts of life

- 19,698 people — or 22% — were unemployed in Hackney in April 1992.
- Over half of the people living in Hackney are members of non-white ethnic groups. Unemployment among such

groups is disproportionately high.

- Out of 46,072 council properties in 1988 over one quarter were considered to be in an unsatisfactory state. A 1982 report for the Commission for Racial Equality found that black applicants for housing received poorer accommodation than white people. The Commission served a Non-Discrimination Notice on Hackney Council in 1983.

Rennie Kingsley: innocent!

Rennie Kingsley served two months for possession of cocaine and LSD. The drugs were planted by the police. Rennie says "I am very bitter, angry and disappointed that the system failed us."

I WAS BORN IN Jamaica on 28 January 1947. Like most people from the West Indies, I was brainwashed into believing that England was a marvellous place. The photographs we saw were nice and fancy, we didn't see the bird shit on the Houses of Parliament or anything like that.

In Jamaica we were taught to respect strangers. We were taught to look after them because they didn't know their way around. When we came to England it was the opposite.

I was 15 when I came here in 1962. I went to day school, and to night classes five evenings a week. After my mother found out that I had taken a couple of nights off she sent me to stay with my father.

My father wasn't an educated person and he didn't particularly care for me to receive an education. He thought I should go to work and earn my living the same way as he had to. So I ended up working on the assembly line at Fords for nearly five years.

During the 1976 Notting Hill riots a lot of innocent people who I knew were not involved in

drugs were arrested. The police even conspired to tell lies against my cousin, who I shared a flat with. The man didn't smoke and he only drank indoors, but they arrested him. He was lucky, he got off because he was working and his employers went to court as character witnesses.

I was aware of police corruption, but I thought they only fitted up people who were involved, not the totally innocent. It is like catching sprats in a net for them. It is enough that you are there to be caught, and not many of us have good character witnesses, as my cousin had.

When I first came to England, black people couldn't get council houses, and then we ended up in all the shitty houses and the tower blocks, all the homes white people were not prepared to live in. In the early-eighties, Hackney Council were giving black people hard-to-rent properties. I worked to set up a community project which provided housing for homeless black people, particularly ex-offenders. My reasoning was that there are all sorts of rehabilitation schemes for white people, but none for black people. Quite often we didn't even have a home to go to when released from prison.

In late 1989 one of the project's tenants offered me a partnership in an illegal drinking club. I learned that he was an informer who was paying police officers not to raid the club. On principle I didn't want anything to do with the proposal, and I distanced myself from the man.

He took my decision personally and started to make my position difficult at home and at work. I was concerned that police officers were behind all this and in early 1990 I reported the matter to Scotland Yard. I thought if I made a complaint the situation could be resolved.

I was surprised that Scotland Yard referred me to the Chief Superintendent at Stoke Newington and my next contact with the police was when they raided my home and planted me with cocaine and LSD.

When they knocked down my door I thought: Mafia. Like television, like something that happens in the United States. But this is not a dream, it is real and I am being handcuffed; people are going through my pockets; a piece of paper is produced and I am fitted up. Then a warrant card is produced and they take me to the police station. I complain to the person who is supposed to be in charge and he tells me that he will write it in the book.

In some ways I am glad that they fitted up so many people that the whole thing got out of hand. Otherwise nobody would bother to listen to me, nobody would believe me, I would be just another black criminal.

It hurts that they should have bothered to do this to me, a person who was not doing anything.

Over 50% of the people living in Hackney are "ethnic minorities" but the seven officers who raided my home were white, my prosecutors were

white and even my so-called defence were all white, and, of course, the judge was white.

We are being misled, there will not be any justice. They will put something together which will hide the level of corruption. These people are not trying to find out the truth. They are more concerned about how many people know it is going on, than about how many officers are involved and how far up it goes.

Whether it is the police who are organising the drugs trade, or not, black people are at the bottom. Black people are the users and the street level dealers.

Black people are almost forced to do things to compensate. We cannot afford to maintain our kids and we are looked down on by other people because we are not smart enough, because we are not "making the effort". I think of my kids, will I ever be able to do anything for them? Can I ensure that they don't go through the same shit I've lived through?

Justice is a dream. It seemed that things were going to change at one time. There was Martin Luther King on the one hand, who was a Christian, and there was Malcolm X, who was a rebel. One was saying, "if they kick you, don't fight back, they can't kick you forever, allow them to, they will have to have mercy at some stage." And the other man was saying, "if they kick you, kick his arse back." They killed both of them, they shot them dead.

ops in Hackney

Ida Oderinde: innocent!

ONE DAY I was at my friend's house on The Line [Sandringham Road in Stoke Newington]. She was a drugs dealer. I was sitting in the kitchen talking to her when the door bell rang.

She went to the door and I could hear them talking in the hall. I heard a radio. I thought I was hearing things so I opened the kitchen door a little bit. I was shocked to see two detectives from Stoke Newington. One of them put his hand in his pocket and produced a plastic bag and handed it to my friend. Inside the bag was crack cocaine in half gramme rocks wrapped up in foil. I got frightened at this point. I opened the back door and ran out. And the officers saw me.

It must have been just after six in the evening when I left my house, leaving the children with the baby sitter. A short time later I drove past my house and saw police there.

They had messed up and searched the house. And found nothing.

They told me to go into the sitting room where my two boys, my daughter, who was only five weeks old at the time, and my baby-sitter were, with several police officers. Two of the officers left the room and one of them walked back in with a carrier bag in his hand. We all knew the carrier bag did not belong in my house. My mind went at that moment; I was in a daze.

He opened the carrier bag and produced four self-sealing bags, three of which were empty and one was full to bursting. They asked

me what it was and I told them I did not know, it was not mine. They had planted it.

I was charged with possession of heroin with intent to supply.

I told my solicitor the police statements were all lies and gave him details of the case. Before I had finished he said, "But that is not what they said happened.

"With what they are saying, you are going to get convicted." Well, that put me off him. I decided not to tell him any more, I needed a new solicitor, or he'd be helping the police bury me alive.

The next morning in court the officers were giving their evidence.

"The police kept to their story. One even asked to be cautioned by the judge so that he couldn't say anything that would implicate himself!"

The police basically kept to their story. But under cross examination they contradicted one another. One even asked to be cautioned by the judge so that he couldn't say anything that would implicate himself!

My eldest son and my baby-sitter went into the witness box. My



Dennis Tulloch, Rennie Kingsley, Ida Oderinde — railroaded to jail by Hackney's racist police

drug dealer friend, who was on remand in Holloway at the time, made a statement and wanted to give evidence on my behalf. I told everything as it happened. They didn't believe me, my baby-sitter or my son. I was found guilty.

When the judge sentenced me to four years in prison he said he didn't believe a word I had said and he hoped my guilty conscience would kill me. Well, I was gobs-macked. I opened my mouth to abuse him, but nothing came out. I was in shock.

At the beginning in prison I was still in shock. I wasn't myself, I was full of anger, hate, pain and frustration. I cried a lot. I couldn't eat or drink. I was very depressed and had headaches 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Things kept

going round in my head. I knew I needed help but I didn't know where to start.

I was frightened of blue and white uniforms. I hated them all and was very angry with every one of them.

After three weeks in Holloway a prison officer spoke to me. She said she remembered the day I was sentenced and she believed I was innocent. She told me that I should fight them, that there is corruption everywhere and I should not waste any time. I couldn't believe it coming from her. But it helped me a great deal. At last somebody believed me. There and then I decided I was going to fight the lawmen who had me locked up.

It was early one morning in November 1991 when Scotland Yard came to visit me at Cookham Wood prison. I told them about what I had seen at my friend's house on The Line.

I told them about the time, one December, when Stoke Newington police raided her. Some of the drug squad officers told her about the raid and told her to get out of the country for a while. She had only been gone a couple of hours when they raided. Everybody on The Line was laughing at the police and calling them names. They got so angry they started beating people. up. And of course somebody had to pay for it so some guys got stitched up.

The Scotland Yard people

believed what I told them, mainly because most of the things I told them they already knew. I was asked if I would give evidence against the officers. "You bet your life I will", I replied.

The following day my probation officer phoned me. He told me that Scotland Yard had contacted him to say that they believed me.

Ida Oderinde was cleared by the Court of Appeal on 1 March 1993.

Hackney Community Defence Association

The above information was provided by HCDA.

If you have been a victim of Hackney police phone HCDA on 071-249 0193.

Two HCDA pamphlets are available for £1 plus 50 pence p&p each:

- *Fighting the lawmen;*
- *A crime is a crime is a crime.*

Available from HCDA, The Colin Roach Centre, 10a Bradbury Street, London N16 7JN.

Justice for Aseta Sims!

The brutality of Stoke Newington police has a long history. Pamela Sims spoke to *Socialist Organiser* about the death of her mother, Aseta, on 14 May 1971.

LAST SAW MY MOTHER in the funeral parlour. I was eleven years old. The right side of my mother's face was completely black from bruising. Her mouth was three times its normal size, her right eye was swollen and her temple was deeply discoloured.

The death certificate says that my mother died

of "Acute Alcoholic Intoxication" on Stoke Newington High Street. The coroner's verdict was "Misadventure".

The police doctor said that he could not say what the cause of death was. He said the bruising was consistent with having been beaten.

The police evidence was completely contradictory. It is clear that she died inside the police station. The police say she was alive inside the station.

I think they beat her and she died. Now I want justice.

The 1.5% pay limit and the lessons of the '70s

How to break the

The battle over the last lot of Government wage controls — Labour's in 1974-9 — has lessons for trade unionists facing the Tories' 1.5% public sector limit today. Gerry Bates tells the story.

IN THE MID '70s Britain was suffering from a capitalist economic crisis as we are today, but conditions were different then. Unemployment was rising but still below one million. Inflation was high, averaging over 14% per year over 1971-81, and reaching 20% some years. To maintain real standards of living workers needed large pay increases. The trade union movement was very much stronger and infinitely more confident than now.

The late '60s and early '70s saw strike wave after strike wave. There were 2.3 million working days of strike action in 1966, and nearly 24 million days in 1972! In 1972 the miners and building workers used flying pickets. In 1973/74 there were almost 100 occupations of factories and offices, over everything from jobs to bonus payments. Fortunately for the capitalists, the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracies were only too willing to make a deal to subdue militancy.

The name of that deal was the Social Contract. In return for wage restraint the unions were promised "an entirely new recognition of the aims of social justice... Only practical action by the government to create a much fairer distribution of the national wealth can convince the worker and his (sic) family and his trade union that an 'incomes policy' is not some kind of trick to force him, particularly if he works in the public sector or nationalised industry, to bear the brunt of the national bur-

den." (From the 1974 Labour Party Manifesto).

The Labour Party agreed to dismantle the Pay Board (which was a legal body set up to control wages); to repeal the Industrial Relations Act; and to introduce an Employment Protection Act, an Industrial Democracy Act and a wealth tax. There were plans to extend public ownership. In return the union leaders signed up to the Contract.

In June 1974 the TUC launched its pay curb guidelines. "Although the groundwork is being laid for increasing consumption and living standards in the future, there is no scope at the moment... the objective is to see that real incomes are maintained. Priorities are to negotiate agreements which will have beneficial effects on unit costs and efficiency."

"The Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracies were willing to make a deal to subdue militancy."

Michael Foot was picked as Employment Minister. Together with Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister, he went round the union conferences selling the Contract. It was not all plain sailing. Shortly after the second general election in 1974 there was a massive upsurge of strikes in Scotland.



The Ford workers broke the 5% limit in 1978

Ford workers and then Scottish lorry drivers won large pay increases. Under pressure from Foot, the TUC rushed out proposals to tighten the pay guidelines. Council manual workers, despite intense pressure from full time officials, throw out a 14% pay offer.

Responding to these developments, Foot told the House of Commons using the most overblown rhetoric: "We face a supreme test of our democratic institutions... it is perhaps the supreme test of the century".

After a ballot of miners on a productivity deal had shown them 61.5% to 38.5% against the offer, all the stops were

pulled out. Foot and TUC leader Len Murray pleaded with the miners to accept. Right-wing miners' president Joe Gormley was wheeled from his sick bed to attend an executive meeting and get the decision changed. He did it by reversing a precedent on voting which he himself had created two years earlier.

By February 1975, the TUC was trying to tighten its guidelines evenmore. Aided by the Labour Party, the right wing in the NUM began to whittle down the miners' demands, and the union finally accepted a 30% pay rise.

Other union leaders willingly accepted the Contract. The leader of the shop workers'

union USDAW called for 'total commitment' to the wages guidelines. His executive ignored a conference decision to go for a 35 hour week and large pay increases. Frank Chapple of the EETPU called for the unions to accept even tighter pay guidelines.

But wage rises and strikes were still running high, and profits were down to zero.

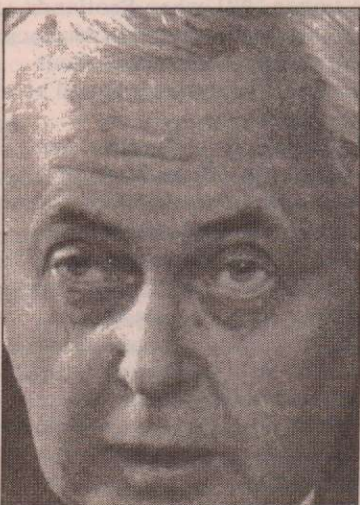
In July 1975, the Chancellor, Denis Healey, told the House of Commons that if the unions and employers didn't come up with a voluntary pay agreement, he would impose a 10% limit on wages increases and place a strict cash limit on public sector pay rises. The TUC translated this into a maximum £6 pay increase across the board. Len Murray said of the deal: "This is a tough policy to deal with a tough problem [i.e. inflation]. When the saucepan is boiling over — you don't turn up the gas, you turn it down."

The £6 limit started in August 1975 with the TUC monitoring pay increases. In new guidelines, the TUC accepted that wage increases lead to inflation. At the same time the government began a propaganda campaign with leaflets and paper and TV ads.

The combination of pressure from the TUC, the Govern-



Michael Foot: the old left winger was Employment Minister



Harold Wilson: promised social reforms in return for wage cuts



Frank Chapple: the right wing electricians' leader called for even tighter controls



Len Murray: the TUC General Secretary policed the £6 wage limit

pay limit

ment and union bureaucrats changed opinions among union memberships. The miners voted 60% to 40% to accept the £6. At the September 1975 Labour Party Conference Foot led the fight for pay restraint.

After the pay limit was imposed, average living standards dropped 3%. This sort of drop had not been seen since 1926-29. Even under the Tories there has never been a period of such rapid fall. Unemployment continued to rise reaching the record level (for then) of 1.43 million by January 1976.

Rising unemployment and the union leaders' compliance with wage restraint cut down strikes. Total days of strike action fell from just under 24 million in 1974 to 3.2 million in 1976.

The TUC and the union bureaucrats were a police force for the Social Contract. One AEUW shop steward described trying to get official backing for a strike over pay as "like hitting your head against a brick wall".

Labour continued to put the screws on. Early in 1976 Denis Healey called for a pay rise norm of 3%. Inflation was 19%. Even the TUC couldn't stomach such a low level. In the best traditions of the British trade union movement they came up with a compromise, 5%.

Len Murray described it as "an honourable agreement". Healey grabbed it with both hands.

"Foot told the House of Commons 'We face a supreme test of our democratic institutions...'"

Of course it was one thing the TUC saying it, another making it stick. Again in the best traditions of the British trade union movement, the bureaucrats resorted to stitch-ups.

The leader of UCATT told his conference after they had voted against any form of pay restraint that the executive would not carry out that decision. Conference after conference the same thing happened. Motions were ruled out of order. At the TUC conference,

motions were forbidden from the floor.

The only major union to allow a vote of its members was the miners. They narrowly accepted the 5% limit by 53.5% to 46.5%.

The union tops were determined to stick to their side of the Social Contract, even though the Labour Party wasn't living up to its side of the bargain. At the grass roots things were different. The shop stewards' structures were still intact and functioning.

In 1976 there was a two week strike over pay parity by tool fitters at the British Leyland factory at Longbridge. The workers were sent back by their union, the AUEW, but organised a rank and file tool-room committee.

When the tool fitters struck in March 1977 over the same grievance, representatives from an unofficial skilled workers' committee at Ford and from other car companies were present at the strike committee meetings. Skilled manual workers — the famous C2 voters who deserted the Labour Party in droves for the Tories in the 1979 election — had seen differentials squeezed by the Social Contract. They were now ready to fight.

When the AUEW told the tool workers to go back for a second time, after British Leyland had issued a return to work ultimatum, spontaneous shop floor meetings took place at many factories. In North London workers voted to come out if the tool fitters were sacked.

There were stoppages at Rolls Royce and Ford Basildon. Messages of support and offers of sympathetic strike action flooded in from over 30 factories across the country, including Lucas, Chrysler and AEI Manchester.

The tool fitters did go back, but it was only a matter of time before the Social Contract was blown sky high.

The Government had kept the lid on wages too long and too tightly. Differentials had narrowed, and living standards had dropped.

In the first two months of 1977, there were a million days of industrial action.

In April, 1,700 shop stewards from a wide range of industries met in Birmingham and voted to reject any form of pay restraint. The TUC, under increasing pressure from the rank and file, couldn't come to a formal agreement with the government over pay, but

maintained tacit support. The government announced that it would keep public sector pay rises to 10% and that was to be the norm for the private sector too.

The only union to fight this officially was the Fire Brigades Union, which came out for 8 weeks before being forced back. The TUC offered no help at all to the firefighters.

"Everywhere the rank and file forced the bureaucrats to fight. It was the Winter of Discontent."

In 1978, Labour announced that it wanted pay rises kept to a maximum of 5%. This was the policy smashed by a nine-week all-out strike at Ford.

Despite the Government's threats that it would apply sanctions against the Ford bosses, the company gave its workers a 17% rise.

From then on the pace of industrial action accelerated as groups of workers, especially in the public sector, fought against the 5% norm.

1,500,000 council manual workers took prolonged industrial action; civil servants took selective action; there were one day strikes by the rail drivers' union ASLEF.

Everywhere the rank and file forced the bureaucrats to fight. It was the Winter of Discontent.

What are the lessons for us today?

That union bureaucrats, no matter how secure they may appear, can be forced to act.

That the working class cannot be infinitely beaten down, without a backlash at some point.

That strong rank-and-file organisations and shop steward structures are crucial.

Above all, that we need politics in the union movement.

All the magnificent militancy of the late 1970s counted for little against the determined attacks from the Tories in the '80s. If there had been a real, viable Marxist movement in the Labour Party and the unions, events would not have turned out as they did. Such a movement could have married the industrial struggle to the political one in the Labour Party and the wider world.

The sins of the fathers

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

ONCE AGAIN the Government has, in the person of "Golden" Virginia Bottomley, refused to ban cigarette advertising.

The lobbying of the tobacco companies, large contributors to Tory Party funds, has outweighed scientific advice. This has led Britain's top scientist, Michael Atiyah, president of the Royal Society, to say: "If this were an academic argument with no practical consequences, such a policy would be acceptable. But, when thousands of lives are at stake, it is difficult to justify".

Evidence is coming to light that smoking by fathers may have a detrimental effect on their offspring - and not just through "passive" smoking.

It is already known that babies of smoking mothers are at a risk of damaged health but eminent American biochemist Bruce Ames has recently reported on evidence that the children of men who smoked heavily in the year before the children's birth have a greater risk of cancer and birth defects.

Ames was speaking at an international conference on mutagens * in Melbourne. He cited two studies on the children of smokers. In one, epidemiologists from the University of North Carolina looked at the histories of 15,000 children born between 1959 and 1966. They found that children of men who had smoked more than 20 cigarettes a day were twice as likely to suffer harelip and heart defects, and more than twice as likely to be born with an abnormal narrowing of the urethra (the tube that takes out the urine).

In a second study in North Carolina, this time by the National Institute of Environmental Health, 220 children under 14 with cancer were investigated. Here it was found that among children of fathers who had smoked in the year before their birth leukemia and cancer of the lymph nodes were twice as common and brain cancers were 10% more common. Intriguingly, no such links were found with mothers that smoked.

Ames, personally, is convinced that "a good proportion of the birth defects and child cancers" comes from

male smokers. Cigarette smoke contains many mutagens, often oxidising agents. These attack various biochemicals in the body's cells, including the genetic material DNA. Normally the damage is repaired by the cell's DNA repair enzymes. There are perhaps 10,000 such repairs carried out per DNA molecule per day, according to Ames.

The problem arises when the degree of oxidative attack rises above that with which the enzymes can cope. Then, errors or mutations can persist in the DNA and, if in the sperm cells, be passed on to offspring. It is not clear why this does not seem to be a factor in the production of egg cells.

The diet contains many anti-oxidants such as Vitamins C and E. According to Ames, when circulating in the blood these should help to counteract the harmful effects of the oxidising components in cigarette smoke. This sounds rather like the theory behind Linus Pauling's claim that Vitamin C can protect against cancer.

Ames wants to see urgent research into how much of such substances is necessary to protect the sperm from genetic damage. He says that a diet rich in Vitamin C can reduce oxidative damage in sperm cells by over 20%.

More to the point would be reducing the amount smoked by prospective fathers (and everyone else too! Readers note!)

* Mutagens are chemicals that cause mutations or changes to the DNA. These may cause cancers, though often several other steps are necessary to trigger the disease. Because DNA is passed on to our offspring through sperms and eggs, mutations can affect their health or development, too.

Bruce Ames is an expert on detecting mutagens, having developed the "Ames test" some 20 years ago. This involves feeding the chemical to be tested to bacteria which are prone to an easily detected mutation. Bacteria are used because they go through many cycles of cell division (and hence DNA copying) in a short period of time. The test, though not infallible (there are lots of differences between humans and bacteria), detects a high proportion of mutagens and is now routine.

Why labour produces profit

How Marx solved the riddle of the labour theory of value part 2

Last week's "Elements of Marxism" was Frederick Engels' explanation of how before Karl Marx all attempts to develop a labour theory of value had floundered on the question "What is the value of labour?"

Either the theory became an exercise in circular reasoning — "the value of an hour of labour is an hour of labour" — or the economist confused the cost of production of the worker with the cost of production of labour and ended up with the absurd conclusion that labour has two values: one equivalent to the worker's wage, the other to the new value the worker produces.

Marx's solution to this riddle is outlined in this week's excerpt from Engels: it was to distinguish between labour and labour power, and to show that workers sell to capitalists not their labour but their labour power — their basic human capacity to transform nature.



The wage paid to workers is less than the value they add. Above: quarry workers in South Africa

WHAT THE ECONOMISTS had regarded as the cost of production of "labour" was the cost of production not of labour but of the living worker himself. And what this worker sold to the capitalist was not his labour. "As soon as his labour actually begins," says Marx, "it has already ceased to belong to him; it can therefore no longer be sold by him."

At the most, he might sell his future labour, that is, undertake to perform a certain amount of work in a definite time. In so doing, however, he does not sell labour (which would first have to be performed) but puts his labour power at the disposal of the capitalist for a definite time (in the case of time-work) or for the purpose of a definite output (in the case of piece-work) in return for a definite payment: he hires out, or sells, his labour power. But this labour power is intergrown with his person and inseparable from it. Its cost of production, therefore, coincides with his cost of production; *what the economists called the cost of production of labour is really the cost of production of the worker and therewith of his labour power.*

And so we can go back from the cost of production of labour power to the value of labour power and determine the amount of socially necessary labour requisite for the production of labour power of a particular quality, as Marx has done in the chapter on the buying and selling of labour power [Capital, Chapter 6].

Now what happens after the worker has sold his labour power to the capitalist, that is, placed it at the disposal of the latter in return for a wage — day wage or piece wage — agreed upon beforehand? The capitalist takes the worker into his workshop or factory, where all the things necessary for work — raw materials, auxiliary materials (coal, dyes, etc.), tools, machines — are already to be found. Here the worker begins to drudge.

His daily wage may be, as above, three marks — and in this connection it does not make any difference whether he earns it as day wage or piece wage. Here also we again assume that in twelve hours the worker by his labour adds a new value of six marks to the raw materials used up, which new value the capitalist realises on the sale of the finished piece of work. Out of this he pays the worker his three marks; the other three marks he keeps for himself. If, now, the worker creates a value of six marks in twelve hours, then

in six hours he creates a value of three marks. He has, therefore, already repaid the capitalist the counter-value of the three marks contained in his wages when he has worked six hours for him. After six hours' labour they are both quits, neither owes the other a pfennig.

"Hold on there!" the capitalist now cries. "I have hired the worker for a whole day, for twelve hours. Six hours, however, are only half a day. So go right on working until the other six hours are up — only then shall we be quits!" And, in fact, the worker has to comply with his contract "voluntarily" entered into, according to which he has pledged himself to work twelve whole hours for a labour product which costs six hours of labour.

It is just the same with piece wages. Let us assume that our worker makes twelve items of a commodity in twelve hours. Each of these costs two marks in raw materials and depreciation and is sold at two and a half marks. Then the capitalist, on the same assumptions as before, will give the worker twenty-five pfennigs per item; that makes three marks for twelve items, to earn which the worker needs twelve hours. The capitalist receives thirty marks for the twelve items; deduct twenty-four marks for raw materials and depreciation and there remain six marks, of which he pays three marks to the worker in wages and pockets three marks. It is just as above. Here, too, the worker works six hours for himself, that is, for replacement of his wages (half an hour in each of the twelve hours) and six hours for the capitalist.

THE DIFFICULTY OVER which the best economists came to grief, so long as they started out from the value of "labour," vanishes as soon as we start out from the value of "labour power" instead. In our present-day capitalist society, labour power is a commodity, a commodity like any other, and yet quite a peculiar commodity. It has, namely, the peculiar property of being a value-creating power, a source of value, and, indeed, with suitable treatment, a source of more value than it itself possesses. With the present state of production, human labour power not only produces in one day a greater value than it itself possesses and costs, with every new technical discovery, with every new technical invention, this surplus of its daily product over its daily cost increases, and

therefore that portion of the labour day in which the worker works to produce the replacement of his day's wage decreases; consequently, on the other hand, that portion of the labour day in which he has to make a present of his labour to the capitalist without being paid for it increases.

And this is the economic constitution of the whole of our present-day society: it is the working class alone which produces all values. For value is only another expression for labour, that expression whereby in our present-day capitalist society is designated the amount of socially necessary labour contained in a particular commodity. These values produced by the workers do not, however, belong to the workers. They belong to the owners of the raw materials, machines, tools and the reserve funds which allow these owners to buy the labour power of the working class. From the whole mass of products produced by it, the working class, therefore, receives back only a part for itself. And as we have just seen, the other part, which the capitalist class keeps for itself and at most has to divide with the class of landowners, becomes larger with every new discovery and invention, while the part falling to the share of the working class (reckoned per head) either increases only very slowly and inconsiderably or not at all, and under certain circumstances may even fall.

BUT THESE DISCOVERIES and inventions which supersede each other at an ever-increasing rate, this productivity of human labour which rises day by day to an extent previously unheard of, finally give rise to a conflict in which the present-day capitalist economy must perish. On the one hand are immeasurable riches and a superfluity of products which the purchasers cannot cope with; on the other hand, the great mass of society proletarianised, turned into wageworkers, and precisely for that reason made incapable of appropriating for themselves this superfluity of products. The division of society into a small, excessively rich class and a large, propertyless class of wage-workers results in a society suffocating from its own superfluity, while the great majority of its members is scarcely, or even not at all, protected from extreme want.

THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS becomes daily more absurd and — more unnecessary. It must be abolished, it can be abolished. A new social order is possible in which the present class differences will have disappeared and in which — perhaps after a short transitional period involving some privation, but at any rate of great value morally — through the planned utilisation and extension of the already existing enormous productive forces of all members of society, and with uniform obligation to work, the means for existence, for enjoying life, for the development and employment of all bodily and mental faculties will be available in an equal measure and in ever-increasing fullness.

And that the workers are becoming more and more determined to win this new social order will be demonstrated on both sides of the ocean by May the First, tomorrow, and by Sunday, May 3.

Appendix: Value theory and class struggle

MARX SAID THAT "the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns" is the dual nature of the labour embodied in commodities.

Every different commodity is produced by a particular concrete labour which produces a particular kind of useful thing, a use value. For instance tailors produce the use value, suits.

At the same time every commodity embodies a part of the overall social labour. It can be exchanged with other commodities to the extent that they embody the same quantity of abstract labour, that is labour considered without reference to its specific material form but purely as the expenditure of human labour power.

It was this distinction which allowed Marx to understand the purchase and sale of labour power.

"In order to extract value out of the consumption of a commodity, our friend the money-owner must be lucky enough to find within the sphere of circulation, on the market, a commodity whose use-value possesses the peculiar property of being a source of value, whose actual consumption is therefore itself an objectification of labour, hence a creation of value. The possessor of money does find such a special commodity on the market: the capacity for labour in other words labour-power.

We mean by labour-power, or labour-capacity, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the physical form, the living personality, of a human being, capabilities which he sets in motion whenever he produces a use-value of any kind.

But in order that the owner of money may find labour-power on the market as a commodity, various conditions must first be fulfilled. This worker must be free in the double sense that as a free individual he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that, on the other hand, he has no other commodity for sale, i.e. he is rid of them, he is free of all the objects needed for the realisation of his labour power."

[Capital Vol I, Chapter 6]

The approach of the political economists before Marx came down to failing to distinguish between the system of petty commodity production — in which independent producers, who own their own means of production, take the specific products of their labour to market — and capitalist production, in which the owner of the means of production, the capitalist, purchases the labour power of the workers.

Marx was able to make the distinction because he did not treat the capitalist market as the only possible way in which human beings could regulate the supply of labour.

He, therefore, refused to take any of the categories of political economy for granted, not even value:

"Political economy has indeed analysed value and its magnitude and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say why labour is represented in value"

[Capital Vol I, Chapter 1]

*"For value is only
another expression
for labour."*

LABOUR IS A natural necessity for human beings, it must exist in all societies, but its social form can change.

Marx saw the form under which social labour takes place under capitalism, the production of commodities, as "fetishistic". That is, the products of human labour and the relationship between human beings in production take on a life of their own, separate from that of living human beings and governed by 'laws' and 'regulations' outside human control.

"The definite social relation between men themselves... assumes here the fantastic form of a relationship between things... To find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of man's hands... the categories of bourgeois economics consist precisely of forms of this [absurd] kind... These formulas, which bear the unmistakable stamp of belonging to a social formation in which the process of production has mastery over man, instead of the opposite, appear to the political economists' bourgeois consciousness to be as much a self-evidential nature-imposed necessity as productive labour itself."

This is the link between Marx's theory of value — based on the dual nature of labour under capitalism, and his theory of history in which the class struggle is rooted in the contradiction between the development of human productive forces and the class relations of production.

The workers must fight for conscious control over production so as to satisfy human needs. The capitalists subordinate humanity to the drive for profit.



Malcolm X: powerful and inspiring speeches

Spike Lee's new film

Malcolm without anti-capitalism

Cinema

Dion D'Silva reviews *Malcolm X*

Does the movie live up to the hype? In short, not quite. It is, nevertheless, an epic film in the true Hollywood tradition. It was a bit like a modern-day *Ben Hur*, complete with religious conversions.

Denzel Washington gives a possibly Oscar-winning performance

which holds your attention for the three hours and 21 minutes of the film.

However, there were times when the story seemed to drift, especially in the first half.

Spike Lee has based the film on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley. Quite surprisingly, it is very true to the book. The book gives an overview of Malcolm X's life as seen from the 1960s, when it was written. Spike Lee takes us through Malcolm's life from the early days, complete with period music Dennis Potter style.

It is probably in the early parts that Spike Lee most fully expresses himself. As usual, he gives himself a funny part, that of Shorty. Malcolm, then known as Red, and Shorty are hustlers together, out for a good time in the early '40s. It is wickedly funny to see Malcolm and Shorty strutting around in their zoot suits.

The bulk of the film is taken up with Malcolm in the Nation of Islam (the "Black Muslims"). He is converted to this rather strange version of Islam while in prison, although I did find it rather uncon-

vincing as he dramatically changed his appearance and lifestyle. Once out of prison Malcolm X quickly rises as a preacher.

Throughout, one gets from Lee's film the feeling of that raw, militant, justified anger within Malcolm which comes out in his powerful and inspiring speeches. Indeed, he was so charismatic that many in the Nation were jealous, and saw him as a threat to their 'honourable' leader, Elijah Muhammed.

One of the weaknesses of the film is that it does not really attempt to

confront the ideas of the Nation. They, and Malcolm at the time, believed that "whites are a degenerate offspring"! They also believed in black separatism, and talked to the American Nazi Party and KKK who, in their own way, did too. Yet these ideas are sketched, not analysed.

Spike does show the bad side of the Nation, including them fire-bombing Malcolm's home, and in the end assassinating him — although the CIA is also said to have been involved.

Curiously though, the Nation's leader, Elijah Muhammed is sympathetically portrayed as a rather mild-mannered old man. This doesn't square with the fact that he built up an organisation of many thousands of devoted followers. Malcolm X almost worshipped him.

One of the film's most dramatic scenes is the demonstration organised by Malcolm outside a police station and then a hospital to get the release of a Muslim arrested and beaten up by the police.

He commanded an army of disciplined Muslims, and with just one signal he dispersed the crowd. As the police officer comments, "That's too much power for one person to have".

Unfortunately, though, while in the Nation, Malcolm was trapped. He was left watching the Civil Rights struggle on television. The film gives you little sense that the real action was elsewhere, far away from Malcolm and the Muslims, in the great marches and rallies of Martin Luther King's Civil Rights Movement.

After Malcolm's split with the Nation of Islam he had another conversion, this time to orthodox Islam. His ideas about alliances and white people also changed. However, this part of the film is weak.

No hint is given of his growing revolutionary anti-capitalism, nor of his speaking on socialist platforms. Instead, there is a mounting tension in the build up to his assassination.

It is a very moving end to a striking movie made by a rather clever but manipulative director. As ever, Spike Lee leaves many questions unanswered — but you just know that you can't miss it. Don't!

"Anything I do, I regard as urgent"

Book

Martin Thomas looks at *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Penguin, £5.99)

The *Autobiography* was written by Alex Haley, from interviews he did with Malcolm right up to the time of his death in February 1965.

It gives an account of Malcolm's ideas, in what seems to be a faithful transcription of Malcolm's own words, and, more important, Malcolm's own picture of how those ideas developed.

"I have less patience with someone who doesn't wear a watch than with anyone else", Malcolm told Haley, "for this type is not time-conscious. In all our deeds, the proper value and respect for time determines success or failure.

"Anything I do today, I regard as urgent. No man is given but so much time to accomplish whatever is his life's work". Malcolm was driven by a sense of hectic urgency, to escape ignorance, to find truth, and to communicate truth once he had found it.

"My life", he continued, "never has stayed fixed in one position for very long". Once Malcolm had found what he reckoned was truth, he would proclaim it as harshly and boldly as he could. He would seem utterly dogmatic; but he was not.

"One of the characteristics I don't like about myself", he also told Haley, was that "if I meet a problem I feel I can't solve, I shut it out. I make believe that it doesn't exist. But it exists". He would shut away problems, then suddenly, sharply, face up to them and change his ideas accordingly.

Malcolm's father was murdered by racists when he was six, and his mother suffered a mental collapse when he was 12. After reform school, he made his way to the big cities — Boston, then New York — at the age of 15.

He drifted into petty crime, and then, at age 21, into seven years in jail. There he became political. His brothers and sister, outside jail, told him about the "Black Muslim" movement they had joined, dedicated to enhancing black pride and denouncing the "white devil".

Malcolm plunged into reading everything he could get from the prison library, and found in Black Muslim doctrine both a way to win self-respect and a framework to understand what he read.

"Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation."

Going to a Black Muslim temple after he left jail clinched his commitment. "The men were quietly, tastefully dressed. The women wore ankle-length gowns, no makeup, and scarves covered their heads. The neat children were mannerly not only to adults but to other children as well.

"I had never dreamed of anything like that atmosphere among black people..."

Immediately he "thought it was outrageous that our small temple still had some empty seats". Preaching for the Black Muslims, he transformed them from a stagnant sect into a powerful movement.

In the *Autobiography*, Malcolm explains his break from the Black Muslims in 1963 as due mostly to personal disillusion with the vices of the cult leader Elijah Muhammed. He indicates, however, a basic political issue: "I was convinced that our Nation of Islam could be an even greater force... if we engaged in more action... I thought... we should have amended, or relaxed, our general non-engagement policy" towards the civil rights struggles then emerging.

Despite, or in some ways because of, his radical denunciation of America, Malcolm remained very much moulded by America's particular political culture. "US politics is ruled by special-interest blocs and lobbies", he reasoned. "What group has a more urgent special interest, what group needs a bloc, a lobby, more than the black man? ... 22 million black people should tomorrow give a dollar apiece to build a skyscraper lobby building in Washington DC".

In the last year of his life he started looking outside American politics. In 1964 he went to Mecca as a Muslim pilgrim. The lavish welcome he got from Saudi Arabia's government, and the sense of brotherhood he felt among the pilgrims of all

countries and colours, changed him.

He became an orthodox Muslim. A pale-skinned Arab member of the Saudi elite, a diplomat, changed his mind about the white man being "the devil". Conversations with the elite in African countries which he visited on his way back to America started him thinking about socialism (which was their word for their bureaucratic state-capitalist systems) as an alternative to American capitalism.

His prison reading had not taught him about the Arab trade in black African slaves — older, and probably larger, than the European-American slave trade — and his tour did not introduce him to the black slaves then still numerous in Saudi Arabia.

The new Malcolm was still no orthodox left-winger. He considered the position of women in Saudi Arabia to be a merit, not a fault, of its society. In denouncing rapacious small business people who operated in America's black ghettos, or phony white liberals, he would still stress how many of them were Jews.

Yet he was rethinking. Despite his religious conversion, on his return to America he tried to build a secular organisation, the Organisation for Afro-American Unity. He was still trying to learn more, to broaden his perception of the truth. In the last pages of the *Autobiography*, he says that the white people he respected most were those who "kept their minds open and objective... [and] would invite my opinion on subjects off the race issue".

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.

A GAINST 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.

Press for left unity

PLATFORM

By Dave Osler

WITH THE political allegiance of the *Daily Mirror* — and the very survival of *New Statesman* and *Society* — now in jeopardy, we could soon see only two publications in Britain with a five figure-plus circulation and a 'vote Labour' editorial line: *Socialist Worker* and *The Financial Times*.

If we had a thriving, diverse and widely read left press, then the *Morning Star* could go to hell. But, because we don't, Al Richardson's diatribe against its murky past (*SO* 549) is absolutely irrelevant. The question is not what the *Daily Worker* wrote about Trotsky fifty years ago, but the urgent need for a left wing daily newspaper today.

Richardson's argument is on a par with branding old copies of *Workers Fight*, forerunner of *Socialist Organiser*, and pointing to the 'victory to the IRA!' banner headlines, or digging up International Marxist Group publications calling for physical disruption of Labour Party meetings. Salutary history lessons, of course, but not eternal damnation.

Those who live in 1993 rather than 1943 can see that *Morning Star* contributors are drawn from a far wider spectrum than in the past. OK, so there's no Sean Matgamna poetry column just yet, but John Lister, Leonora Lloyd, John Ross and Keith Flett regularly appear alongside sundry veteran tankies and the ghost-written musings of the labour movement establishment.

As both the on-going debates on the paper's letters page and its recent review of Ernest Mandel's book *Power and Money* indicate, the failings of the former Stalinist states and even Trotskyism itself are no longer taboo subjects for discussion.

The reporting generally provides an accurate summary of

the day's main political and industrial developments, although objectivity is still notably lacking where this would entail criticism of the trade union bureaucracy, on grounds of not biting the hand that feeds. Yet the information it contains is frequently useful to activists.

The infrastructure is already in place for a project that would cost millions to start from scratch. Rather than gloat at the paper's current difficulties, socialists should help it survive and expand, while arguing for its transformation into a broadbased daily open to the full range of left viewpoints.

"Rather than gloat at the Morning Star's difficulties, socialists should help it survive and expand."

In the words of John Pilger (*Morning Star*, 7 September 1992) the paper must stop "defending indefensible episodes in communist history" and become "politically free and confident... prepared to change, knowing that if it changes, it could become essential reading for many".

The left needs many publications for many purposes. We need classic Marxist agitational papers arguing basic socialist ideas to as wide an audience as possible, and heavyweight reviews examining theoretical questions in great depth.

We need vehicles to debate our differences and opportunities to promote our common projects. We need workplace bulletins, journals for autonomous organisations of the oppressed and — why not — socialist comics for our kids. Comparatively cheap desk top publishing theoretically puts much of this within our grasp.

Of course, political line is all

important. However, there are other considerations too. From a technical viewpoint, left periodicals in Britain range from the merely competent to the utterly piss-poor. Lay-out and design are frequently amateurish. Writing often consists of the most abysmal rants; rehash *Guardian* coverage, tack half the *Transitional Programme* on the end and, hey presto!, instant lefty journalism.

Yes, I know all the quotes about making left papers smell of the workers' whisky. I know I'll be accused of looking at the question from the viewpoint of a professional journalist, and told that nothing else matters so long as the line is right.

But good design and good writing are important. Do we want people to read our stuff or not? Even die-hard politicians find chunks of unbroken and ungrammatical text heavy going, no matter how correct the content. For many products of Britain's third-rate state education system, much of our material is unreadable, full stop. Small wonder that left publications reach such miniscule audiences.

Only the Socialist Workers Party has the resources to produce anything that stands up to a good trade press magazine, making *Socialist Worker* arguable the best-produced left paper in Britain, with a claimed circulation of over 40,000.

Yet unless Paul Foot is on form in any given week, the paper produces few columns that really hit home, and none of the scoops and exposés that characterise the best socialist journalism.

While industrial reporting remains a strong suit, the unending stream of quotes from (always anonymous) workers who just happen to talk in SWP-friendly soundbites frequently beggars belief. Moreover, the information contained is not always dependably accurate.

Tribune is nicely turned out, and after long years of Kinlockite domination, more open

to the hard left than for some time. But it cannot transcend its basic function as an intra-Labour Party talking shop and will never set the world on fire.

What of the failure of socialist? The generally accepted "Socialist Society conspiracy" theory is nonsense; the supposed protagonists couldn't organise a conspiracy in a masonic lodge. The prime reason for the paper's collapse was its deliberate failure to reflect the politics of the Socialist Movement, realistically the only way to ensure a dependable base of sellers and financial supporters.

This behaviour was motivated by an almost excessive desire to differentiate socialist from the far left press and to prove to the world that it was not, repeat not, a Trot front. In the editorial offices, the word "sectarian" became interchangeable with the word "Trotskyist". Explicitly Trotskyist articles — as opposed to articles written by Trotskyists — were *ipso facto* sectarian and therefore unpublishable.

As it rapidly became evident that the far left was not wanted on board, backers deserted in droves. The failure to put a clear "vote Labour" line at the 1992 general election proved the last straw.

But there is no reason why publications built on collaboration between different left groups are doomed in advance, as *Coal Not Dole*, a high-quality bulletin put out by the National Miners' Support Network, hopefully demonstrates.

Coal Not Dole is produced professionally, cheaply and quickly using facilities provided by a number of left papers and individual socialist journalists. There are no arguments over the line; the paper says what the National Union of Mineworkers wants it to say, right or wrong.

The result is a readership of 25,000, proving that when we get our act together, we can begin to get our message across. Any takers for relaunching *Socialist Challenge*?

Alliance for Workers' Liberty public meetings

Thur 11 March

"Labour Must Fight".

Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street.

"The legacy of Malcolm X".

Canterbury AWL meeting. 7.30, Sidney Cooper Centre.

"Malcolm X and black politics".

Goldsmiths College AWL meeting. 2.30, student union.

"Labour Must Fight".

Brighton AWL meeting. 7.30, Unemployed Centre, Tilbury Place.

Thur 17 March

"Public sector cuts — how to fight back".

Glasgow AWL meeting. 7.30, Room 4, City Halls.

Wed 24 March

"Where now for the trade union left?"

AWL London Forum. 8.00, Florence Nightingale pub, cnr. Lambeth Palace Rd./Westminster Bridge Rd., Waterloo. Speakers include Mark Serwotka.

Thur 25 March

"Labour Must Fight".

Manchester AWL meeting. 7.30, Town Hall.

Anti-deportation

Sat 3 April

Defend the Rahman Family demonstration. Assemble: 12.30, Sunninghill School, Bolton.

Details: 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1 1DY.

India

Thur 11 March

Alliance Against Communalism in India meeting. 7.30, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

Yugoslavia

Fri 25 March

END meeting. Speakers from Bosnian and Croatian peace campaigns. 7.00, Friends' Meeting House, Euston Road, London.

Labour Party

Sat 17 April

Socialist Campaign Group Conference. 11.00-5.00, Sheffield Hallam University. Details: Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

INDUSTRIAL

Tory anti-union laws help dock company sack stevedores

By Anne Field

13 STEVEDORES IN Liverpool's Huskisson Dock are fighting for reinstatement after being sacked for rejecting their company's pay-offer.

The stevedores were offered a pay-rise of 3% on their basic pay of £156, the lowest rate of pay anywhere on the docks in Liverpool. They voted to reject the offer and implement a ban on overtime.

At the end of the first week of the ban on overtime in mid-February the employers transferred a ship to Brom-

borough, on the Wirral side of the Mersey, for unloading.

Two days later, on 16 February, without any advance warning, the stevedores were handed an envelope containing their P45s and their redundancy notices.

The same day local newspapers and Job Centres advertised for stevedores to replace the sacked workers. Two scabs have been taken on at £193 per week, nearly 25% higher than the stevedores' rate of pay.

Meanwhile ships are still being transferred to Bromborough for unloading by casual labour.

The parent company involved in the dispute is the Cardiff-based Charles Willies. Until their sacking the stevedores worked for its subsidiary, Huskisson Dock Company.

But after the sackings took place the latter company was dissolved and replaced by North West Cargo Terminal Ltd — the same employers, the same line of business, the same customers, and different in name only.

Under the Tories' anti-union legislation, the stevedores, who are picketing the dock on 24 hour basis, are technically not in dispute with their (now non-existent) employer but a "third

party". Their picketing is "illegal".

The dispute has been declared official by the stevedores' union, the TGWU, and Liverpool dockers are preparing to collect money for the sacked workers. Appeals over the sackings have also been lodged with an industrial tribunal.

The dispute sums up what working on the docks is like in the aftermath of the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989.

The Huskisson dock stevedores have no alternative but to push for solidarity strike action from other Liverpool dockers.

Spillers dispute Postal workers show the value of solidarity

THE LONG-RUNNING Spillers dispute in the Wirral received a boost last week when Post Office workers walked out on strike in protest at attempts to force them to cross the Spillers picket line.

The dispute began last December. Halls Cleaning lost the cleaning contract at Spillers' Seacombe factory.

The ten part-time women cleaners employed by Halls were told that they would not be re-employed by Hygiene Services. A day before the change of contract took effect the women went out on strike, and they have been picketing ever since.

Postal workers have refused to cross picket lines from day one. Last week Spillers put pressure on the Post Office, and four postmen were suspended. Postal delivery workers throughout the Wirral immediately walked out.

The strikers returned to work on the following day, 4 March, held a strike ballot, and walked out again on 5 March.

Post Office bosses promptly backed down. The suspensions were lifted, and postal delivery workers continue to refuse to cross the Spillers picket line.

Trade union and Labour Party activists can support the strikers by raising donations, supporting the picket lines, inviting strikers to their branch meetings, and spreading the boycott of Spillers-Dalgety products

Public Sector Alliance: good idea, bad conference

LAST WEEKEND'S Public Sector Alliance Conference (6 March in Stoke) was a missed opportunity.

The *Militant* tendency have created yet another hollow and undemocratic front for themselves. Through adopting 'novel' democratic procedures they ensured that their narrow numerical majority at the conference was translated into monopoly control of the PSA.

Hundreds of trade union bodies have affiliated to the PSA — including two national unions, UCATT and NAPO — yet no officer or member of the PSA steering committee will be accountable to any of them. Officers were elected by a

conference which may never meet against, and committee members were elected by regional 'caucuses' which cannot possibly have any status, and will never meet again.

By using their 50% + 1 majority to exclude all other political forces *Militant* have simply isolated themselves.

Militant's sectarian arrogance was shown most clearly on the debate on the Labour Party and Labour councils. Incredibly, they opposed the inclusion into the PSA's statement of aims of a clause calling on the Labour councils to stop implementing Tory cuts.

Even the SWP spoke for this position, but *Militant*, who are standing the policeman's friend Steve "I'll shop

poll tax rioters" Nally against Labour in the Lambeth council elections, did not.

So now when right wingers oppose support for the PSA

on the grounds that is a *Militant* 'front' it will be very difficult to find concrete evidence to disprove them.

Despite the negative outcome of the conference all is

not lost. Serious activists should do everything they can to build representative and broad based local PSAs rooted in the official structures of the movement.

Support the Hilliers strike

THE STRIKE at Hilliers engineering in Reading is now entering its fourth month.

Before Christmas management announced wage cuts of up to 60%, the abolition of tea breaks, as and when shift working and compulsory overtime.

In response the workers organised a one day strike. Management then sacked

the strikers and started bus-ing in scabs. Pickets have been reasonably successful in disrupting production but, as one striker explained: "management have told the scabs that they will be paid for doing nothing, for as long as it takes to defeat the strikers". The only way to beat this kind of determination is to be more determined and to remember that

no employer has limited resources.

So help the strikers and support their picket. AEEU c/o Nick Murtagh, 1 Rustington Close, Lower Early, Reading, Berkshire. RG6 4DQ

Busworkers must win!

From back page

THE VOTE WAS not massively in favour. Bus workers have lost too much over the last few years to feel that confident. The fact that it was in favour shows that, despite all, there is a willingness to put up a fight in the face of such a blatant attack. Work will have to be done to build on that willingness.

Workers reading management's letter, isolated, at home, will be tempted to think that, if the pay off was a bit bigger, maybe it would be worth it, especially if the alternative is losing your job. The union must counteract this. If management get away with this attack there will be more to follow. And you don't save jobs by signing the contract. At one garage in South London a new manager has sacked 90 people in one year. If busworkers don't fight this contract management will feel confident to do more.

Some workers will think that if their wages in their unit go down, they'll move to another one, or to another company. The grass is always greener...

This is not true. The other companies will be waiting to see how much London Buses will get away with. They are all wanting to cut pay and lengthen hours to make the workers foot the bill for the crisis. It is better to stand and fight now rather than run and have to fight under even less favourable conditions later. Single days of action may be important to build up the confidence of the membership to fight, but they will not be enough to win the battle. For a long time, on the buses, it has been getting closer and closer to the point where fighting or going under are the only two alternatives. Workers should not think that by accepting one beat of the stick they can persuade the beater to

leave off. Accepting the beating will only encourage them, make them feel strong. The fight back must be in earnest in order to win.

Bus workers should take courage from the fact that so many other groups of workers, who have also taken a battering in the past and who are facing exactly the same sort of attacks, are beginning to fight back. The mineworkers and the rail workers have recognised that it is important that they fight together. The bus workers must join in.

It is an old saying, but there is strength in unity. The government's attacks go across industries and affect us all. The attacks on the bus workers are being conducted by the same government which is trying to close 31 pits, privatise the rail service, attack the public sector, destroy our health service and close our schools.

Don't let them get away with it! Support the days of action. Build for London wide all-out strike action. Link the action up with other workers. Fight together. Win together.

Yarrows go back

THE strike at Yarrows is over. At a mass meeting last Friday the workers voted 3-1 to return to work. The week before management threatened to sack all 1,3000 strikers if they did not return to work immediately. Chair of the Clydeside Confed Hohn Carty and the Yarrows stewards recommended acceptance of a slightly improved offer made at the same time as the mass sacking threat.

Burnsall hopes

WORKERS AT Burnsall, Smethwick, are growing increasingly confident of a successful outcome to their strike against sweat-shop pay and conditions and for union recognition.

Their union, the GMB, has succeeded in persuading Jaguar (the major recipient of Burnsall products) to look elsewhere for metal coating. There are encouraging signs that Land Rover and at least one other major Burnsall customer will soon follow suit.

Meanwhile the first industrial tribunal case brought by the GMB against Burnsall is about to begin. The hope is that a series of tribunal decisions against the company, combined with the loss of business will force the management to negotiate — or go out of business. Donations to Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen.

Lecturers: unity needed

By an FE college lecturer

COLLEGE LECTURERS across Birmingham have voted for a two day strike on Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 March. This follows a highly successful one day strike.

They are resisting a management offensive against our conditions of service (called the "Silver Book"). The Further Education sector is being turned into competing businesses in a process called "Incorporation". New "model contracts" have been circulated to Principals by the College Employers Forum. These include more work, less holidays, local and performance related pay, and a "confidentiality" clause.

Leaked minutes of a CEF meeting show clearly that the bosses have a national strategy. They intend to "break the monopoly" of NATFHE and to bully and bribe lecturers to

defeat.

Unfortunately, our union Executive do not show the same urgency as the membership. Despite a lobby of 200 on 27 February at NATFHE headquarters they seem determined to isolate the Birmingham region, at least until April when "incorporation" takes place.

But some college Principals are advertising and appointing posts on the new contracts now.

Rank and file members have in some colleges responded to

Birmingham's call for solidarity action on 10 March.

Southwark college appears to have voted for an unofficial one day strike. Other London colleges have balloted for action.

NATFHE badly needs an active and co-ordinated Broad Left. Now is the time to build one.

The Socialist Lecturers Alliance (SLA) meeting in Birmingham on 13 March will be given over to discussing tactics. 1pm Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane,

Timex strikers stand firm

24 hour pickets continue outside the Timex plant in Dundee.

300 workers have been sacked after striking in protest at management's attempt to push through a pay freeze and selective buy-offs.

Now a demonstration has been called by the Scottish TUC on Saturday 20 March in Dundee.

Send donations and messages of support to: AEEU, 2 Union Street, Dundee. Phone 0382 22406

Industrial Front

The plant level leadership at Peugeot are doing their level best to wreck any chance of building a fight against the latest pay deal, which includes the introduction of "total flexibility".

Originally the workers voted for protest strikes, but under pressure from management convenors cancelled any action and are now 're-balloting' because of an 'improved' offer which amounts to little more than a vague promise of job security.

Such poor leadership is likely to make a

strike much more difficult to organise.

Health workers at UCH are preparing for action to stop ward closures which are due to start next month.

Send message of support to UCH Unions, UCH Gower Street, London W1. Phone 071-387 9300 x 5479.

'Left' union MSF has just signed a no-strike deal with Japanese multi-national Toray Textiles for a greenfield site in Mansfield. Many 'left wingers' on the executive backed the deal. It seems Ken Gill's nationalistic opposition to 'alien' industrial relations is to be replaced by class collaboration.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Busworkers must win!



Pit closures betray our future. Photo John Harris

Arthur Scargill says

Not one pit must close!

By Arthur Scargill

THERE ARE two things that have happened during the course of our campaign to save the pits that have caused great anger, frustration and indignation.

The first was the decision itself — the callous announcement to close 31 pits and to consign 31,000 miners and their families to the indignity of the dole queue.

That decision was taken by just seven men behind closed doors. There was no ballot and no consultation, but these same people attacked our union for not holding a ballot during the 1984-5 strike.

The second, and perhaps in the long term more important, result of the closure announcements was that various inquiries have been set up into the future of the coal industry.

Only the European Commission's report says that all 31 pits should remain open.

The report from the Department of Trade and Industry Select Committee gives me no pleasure.

There were four Labour MPs on that committee but it is one of the worst assessments of our industry I have had to read in my life.

They have come to one conclusion which would make me hang my head in shame if I were a Labour MP.

They've recommended "changes in work-

ing practices", or put in simple language: a ten hour day and a seven day working week.

With current productivity levels that would mean an increase in coal production of 40% and the closure of 26 pits. This is absolute nonsense.

Instead of talking about an extended working week we ought to be talking about the implementation of the Sankey Commission report from 1949. They recommended a six hour day and we should be talking in similar terms.

It baffles me that MPs can sit down on their green benches and talk about introducing a four day week for themselves and at the same time recommend a 6 or 7 day week and 10 hour day for miners!

It's not on. Our campaign is about resisting the 10 hour day and the 7 day week.

All of us need to see that it's really the rigged machine at work. If we got the same assistance as British Nuclear Fuels we could give our coal away free!

The Coal Board and government didn't pull back in October because they felt like being good. They pulled back because the NUM led a campaign.

We are going to keep open all 31 pits. If people tell us we are demanding too much, remember these words from one of the finest socialists that ever lived, James Connolly:

'Some men, faint hearted, ever seek
Our programme to re-touch,
And will insist whene'er they speak, That we
demand too much.
'Tis passing strange, yet I declare
Such statements cause me mirth,
For our demands most moderate are.
We only want the earth.'

Arthur Scargill was speaking at Maltby Miner's Welfare on 4 March 1993.

ALL LONDON'S BUS garages will be out on strike on Wednesdays 10 and 17 March in response to new contracts that are being forced upon the workers. The new contracts would mean an average drop in pay of £30 a week and a lengthening of the day to about nine and a half hours.

Over the last few years bus workers have had their conditions whittled away, with the threat of privatisation or closure being used as a stick with which to beat them down. The London Bus Company has been split up into 12 smaller units and the routes have been shortened in order to make it easier for new companies to put up tenders. A new company could not run an operation the size of all London's red buses, so the government has been making it easier for them.

But the split into units had another purpose as well: to divide and rule the bus workers. Each unit has been offered different contracts and different deadlines by which to accept them in a thinly veiled attempt to split the workers up. The attacks across the whole of London, however, amount to the same thing in every unit and the union has quite rightly given a London-wide response.

The method used by management in introducing the new contracts are blatantly an attack, not just on the workforce, but also on the right of the union to represent its members. All workers were written to individually, over the head of the union, and were told that if they accepted the wage cut they would be given a compensatory one-off payment. The size of the compensation was also to differ from one unit to the next, so that in one garage they were being offered £2000 to sell their livelihoods, whereas the garage one mile down the road would be being offered £6000. The letters threatened that if the contract was not signed by a certain deadline then the offer would be off and the new contract would be enforced.

The union, the Transport and General Workers Union, sent a letter to everyone as well, telling them that they rejected management's threats, advising them to sign the new contracts and write 'under duress' under their signatures, and telling them to attend mass meetings to be held in the garages. Many of those meetings were well attended and a ballot held since then has resulted in a vote for strike action, the first day being this Wednesday 10th.

Continued on page 15

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