


# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Inside this week 

**What the left  
in South Africa  
is saying**

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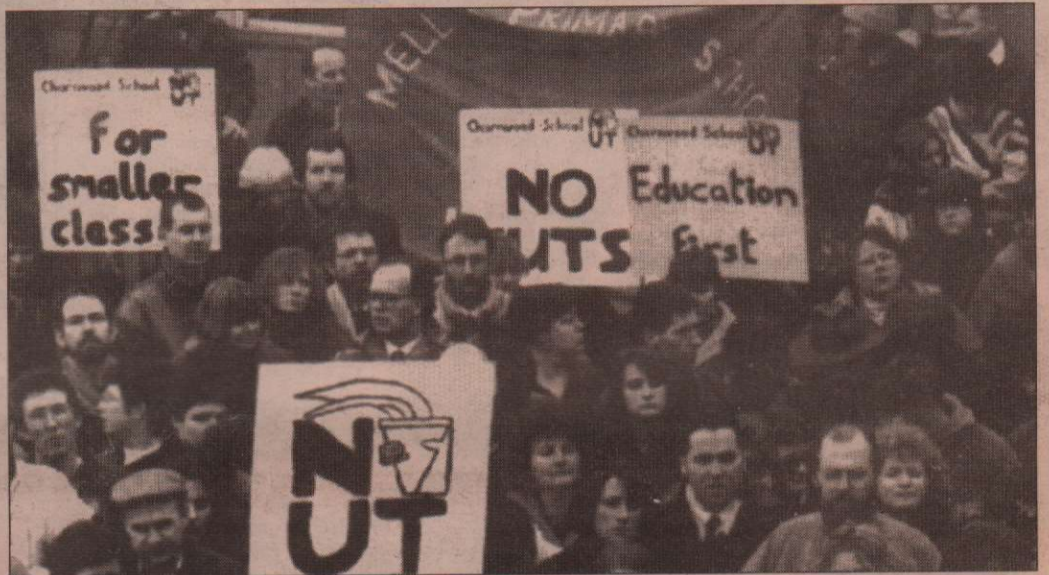
**Solidarity for  
the**



**Timex  
strikers**

## Tories to ban public sector protest

# YOUR



The Tories will outlaw action by teachers to defend education standards and teachers' conditions

# RIGHTS

**U**P TO 5 MILLION public sector workers now face the threat of a state ban on strike action. Such a ban has long been a dream for Tory right wingers, but no government in the advanced capitalist countries has yet dared to try it out. Now we know for a fact that key ministers are discussing the possibility.

It was one of several options in a letter from Employment Secretary Gillian Shepherd to Education Secretary John Patten, written in the wake of

the overwhelming popular decision of the teachers' unions to boycott the new Tory tests. The ban would put new shackles on a trade union movement which now has its main base in the public sector. Something like two thirds of all trade unionists — including healthworkers, postalworkers, railworkers, firefighters, teachers, local government workers and civil servants — would lose the most basic trade union right, the right to strike.

Continued on page 2

# ON THE LINE

# US air strikes won't save Bosnia

By Chris Reynolds

**R**EMEMBER WACO! Remember Lebanon! Remember Somalia! Throwing massive US government firepower at a problem does more harm than good. It is not necessary to have any illusions about Waco cult leader David Koresh, or the warlords of Lebanon and Somalia, to see that. And without having any illusions about Serb imperialism in Bosnia we should condemn the plans for US bomber attacks.

The big powers have made many threats of military intervention in ex-Yugoslavia before, but this one looks more serious. The economic sanctions have made life miserable for ordinary Serbs, increased the plausibility of the Serb chauvinists' lying story that they are only defending Serb rights against alien persecution, and not harmed their political or military ability to wage war one bit. But the big powers have wanted not justice but a quick end to the war and a quick return to normal conditions for trade and

investment. For them, a quick victory by the Serbs over the Muslims would be a lesser evil than a drawn-out struggle - whatever the horrors going with that victory. Now they seem to have been driven to bolder measures not by sympathy with the Muslims - if that were the motive they would have acted long ago - but by impatience with the Bosnian Serbs' unwillingness to settle for the conquests they already have. "Western diplomats" in Belgrade are still willing to be quoted in the *Guardian*

(23 April), saying that the bomber attacks will not succeed in ending the war. "The border between the two states is too long to shut down; the Serbs would quickly rebuild the bridges; and air attacks could cause many civilian casualties". And top US general Colin Powell has let it be known that he "doubts that air power alone will stop the Serbs. And he has used the word quagmire so often and so effectively that even some of the most ardent supporters [in US ruling circles] of intervention shy away from introduc-

ing American ground troops" (*Observer*, 25 April). Powell and the diplomats are probably right in their assessment. Massive big-power intervention might stop the war, for the moment, or at least reduce it to guerrilla battles - but at huge cost, and it would not bring the consistent democracy necessary for any stable peace. Only the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia themselves can win peace, by uniting across national lines and throwing out all their tinpot warlords.

## Russia faces break-up

By Steven Holt

**T**HE RESULTS of Sunday's referendum in the Russian Federation (25 April) suggest that president Boris Yeltsin has — at least for the time being — strengthened his position in relation to the parliamentary majority which is led by Russian Khasbulatov. About two-thirds of the electorate turned out to vote and of these about 60% supported Yeltsin and over 50% supported his economic policies. A majority of those who voted wanted new elections to parliament, but, since they amounted

to only about 43% of the electorate, the decision is not constitutionally binding. 18 months of Yeltsin's reforms have halved what workers can buy with their wages, without creating anything resembling a viable market economy. Western investment on a scale able to prop up Russian industry is unlikely. As the economy collapses, the wealthier regions will try to break away, exactly like the secession of Croatia and Slovenia that started the Yugoslav wars. Oil rich Sakha has already declared independence and another area with

oil reserves, Bashkortostan, voted 76% in favour of economic autonomy from Moscow on Sunday. The Muslim Chechens in the Caucasus have de facto independence, and if Russian nationalism and fascism grow other ethnic groups will be forced along the same road, leading to a bloodbath far worse than that in Bosnia Hercegovian. Workers in the Russian Federation must unite, without illusions in Yeltsin or his Stalinist and nationalist opponents. The alternative is catastrophe.

## Your rights on the line

From front page

Shephard told Patten: "As you know I have been considering a possible amendment to the law to make it clear beyond doubt that industrial action is unlawful if — as in the case of the threatened teachers' boycott of English tests — it is clearly designed to frustrate the carrying out of a specific statutory duty. In addition, changes to the law could be made while the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill is still before Parliament. "The advice I have received indicates that it would be possible to introduce a provision to remove immunity where the principal or sole demand is that workers should not be required to do work which is necessary in order to carry out a specific statutory duty on the employer. The aim would be to make industrial action such as that presently

contemplated by the teachers' union unlawful, even where it could be argued that the dispute came within the current definition of the trade dispute". Such a change to the law would make illegal industrial action to stop contracting out, privatisation, market testing or any other attack on public sector workers' conditions which could be interpreted as "the will of parliament". Not just the school test boycott would be targeted. The tax union IRSF's strike ballot to stop the sell-off of Inland Revenue computer assets would almost certainly be illegal too. Public sector workers would be banned by law from protesting against any measure by their employer (the government) which that employer reckoned important enough to put through Parliament. Such a partial ban on protest could easily be the prelude to full

scale clampdown on any action by public sector workers. The Tories are determined to push through their policies despite the most widespread opposition. This minority government doesn't care that the overwhelming majority of teachers, pupils and parents oppose the school tests. The Labour and trade union movement should show the same level of bloody mindedness and determination. If the Tories do push ahead with strike ban, then the first day it is discussed in Parliament the workers movement should make its position clear. We should answer the Tories with a nationwide day of strikes and protest action. And we should raise the call for the scrapping of all the anti-union laws and for a Workers' Charter of positive rights for workers and trade unionists.

**USDAW victory for link campaign**  
**T**HE CAMPAIGN to defend the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party has scored its first important victory at this year's round of union conferences. Delegates at the USDAW shop-workers union conference in Blackpool voted to reject the position of their Executive Committee and instead backed a resolution to maintain the involvement of trade union branches in the selection of parliamentary candidates. USDAW is the sixth biggest Labour Party affiliate. Its decision to oppose the Party leadership comes as a very pleasant surprise as the Executive were tipped to win the day. If you want a draft response to the NEC's question on party union links or a speaker for your party or union meeting then write to 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB or phone 071 277 7217.

**Benefits snarl-up**  
**T**HE HOUSING Benefit (HB) system is forcing people into homelessness, according to a recent report. HB was set up by the Tory Government to replace rent rebates, and it is supposed to help unwaged or low-waged people pay their rent. It has always been an administrative nightmare, and it is getting worse as councils wrestle with budget cuts. Councils are supposed to process HB claims within 14 days or make an interim payment. In many areas this is a joke. Delays of several months, even after repeated phone calls and visits to council offices, are routine. To be told that the office has lost your claim form is also routine. If you're lucky, you borrow from friends or run up rent arrears. If not, you get evicted. The answer is simple: decent jobs for all, decent benefits for those unable to work, and decent low-cost housing for all.

**London transport nightmare**  
**P**UBLIC TRANSPORT deregulation in London will be an even worse nightmare than in other big cities. Everywhere it leads to duplication of services on busy routes and loss of services on less busy routes. In London, Tory Minister Steven Norris has announced that "I am happy to say that I will not guarantee the Travelcard in its present form". Travelcards allow unlimited travel on buses, Tube, and rail for a day, a week, or a month, and one million people buy them regularly.



Last weekend lesbians and gays marched in Washington DC in possibly the biggest ever peacetime protest demonstration in the USA. Press estimates range between 300,000 and a million. They demanded progress on equal rights and more money for the fight against AIDS.

## Save student unions!

**A**CCORDING to rumour, the government will announce their plans for wrecking student unionism on 6 May. The response from the leaders of the National Union of Students (NUS) has been a dash to register NUS as a charity and to set up a "board" with Tory MPs and other unpleasant characters. But only action can stop the government. Support the national lobby of parliament on 13 May. As soon as the Tories make their announcement, get your

student union to call an Extraordinary General Meeting.  
 • Organise a protest at your college.  
 • Set up a "Save Our Unions" activist group in your college.  
 • Make sure your union organises free transport to the lobby of Parliament.  
 • Hold regular stalls and campaign meetings to get people involved in the campaign and down to the lobby.  
 • Contact all union societies and go to their meetings to explain the threat.

**Save our Student Unions**  
**Lobby Parliament against Voluntary membership**  
**From 12 noon, Thursday 13 May**  
**Contact Elaine Jones: 071 272 8900**

**Alliance for Workers' Liberty student dayschool**  
**The fight for a better world**  
 11.30 — 5.30  
**Saturday 8th May**  
**Manchester Met University Union, Oxford Road, Manchester**

The dayschool will be discussing the struggle for socialism in the 1990s and the role students can play.  
 \* fighting for a better world — the industrial upturn and the fight to save jobs.  
 \* the Russian revolution — can it happen again?  
 \* the case for socialist feminism  
 \* socialists and black nationalism  
 \* the Yugoslav crisis  
 \* why students should be socialists  
 Registration: £2 for students with a grant, 50p without grant.  
 Transport will be available from many areas. Contact AWL PO Box 823 London SE15 4NA or phone 071-639 7967 for more details.

*France and Germany show we can't be complacent*

# Unite to fight the fascists!

**I**T IS HIGH TIME THAT the Left pulled itself together and united to campaign against fascism and racism.

A demonstration last Sunday (25 April) in London highlighted the problems. Over 1,000 anti-fascists turned out to oppose a march by the fascist British National Party (BNP). The turnout was successful, to the extent that the BNP's plans for a march (on the slogan "hang the IRA!") were disrupted and the 200 fascists and Orange allies had to be content with a short walk through the backstreets behind Victoria Station.

Small scale confrontations followed as the main anti-fascist contingent dispersed, looking for the Nazis.

Yet the anti-fascists were much less effective than we could have been.

The main problem on the day, and the issue the left has still to solve, is the lack of anti-fascist unity. In part the disunity reflects political differences, but the main problem is the chronic short-sighted sect building politics of some of the left organisations.

The Socialist Workers' Party — operating through its front organisation, the Anti-Nazi League — is playing a particularly stupid role. Not only do they not want to merge their "front" into any wider organisation or coalition, they also appear hostile to any collaboration with other groups and campaigns and to immediate agreements to stop the Nazis.

For the SWP — with a couple of hundred members present — Sunday's demonstration was not about stopping the BNP. It was a publicity stunt for the national press and a recruiting operation for the SWP — that's all.

The SWP opposed and obstructed any confrontation with the fascists, not on grounds of a realistic assessment of the balance of forces, but from preconceived dogma.

Rahul Patel, the SWP's ANL organiser, went as far as shouting down a member of the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe (CAFE) who was trying to tell the crowd about what the fascists were doing.

The SWP appears paranoid about "squadism" (an approach geared to organising small anti-fascist streetfighting squads rather than mobilising the labour movement).

When the SWP first launched the ANL in the late 1970s it was much broader, much less tightly controlled, much more active, and much less an SWP monopoly. Making the ANL its main activity for a while, the SWP recruited a number of people whose main interest in poli-

tics was street-fights with fascists, and when it turned to other activities it had to go through a small but bitter faction-fight to purge these "squadists".

On the other side of the argument, some of the left do have an unhealthy obsession with small-scale violent confrontation rather than dealing with the whole spectrum of anti-racist issues, and aiming for mass mobilisation.

Neither "squadism" nor bureaucratically-controlled publicity-stunt activity offer a way forward.

**The question is: what should the left do now?**

If the anti-fascists are strong enough in a given situation, we should try physically to stop the fascists. Our various organisations can and should unite to do this.

*"The SWP obstructed any confrontation with the fascists, not on grounds of a realistic assessment of the balance of forces, but from preconceived dogma."*

But this is only the surface of the issue. The Nazis and, more broadly, racism are growing because, despite a failing Tory government, the Labour Party and trade unions have provided no answers.

Any anti-Nazi campaign must provide some political answers to these questions; that means a labour movement orientation and a minimum social programme. The ANL discourages confrontation and encourages anyone — even Tories — to join, which means it is not able to touch the real issues.

If the fascist threat were likely to stay at the level of marches of 200 or so people, this might not matter too much. But the threat is *not* likely to stay at that level.

**M**ASS unemployment and social decay. All established politics deeply discredited. The mass labour movement weak, timid, ineffective. These are the conditions in Britain and many other countries now, and they are the model conditions for fascism to grow.

The classic pattern for a fascist movement is to recruit among middle-class people ruined by the economic crises of capitalism, and partly also among jobless



200 fascists and Orange allies marched on Sunday (25 April). Unfortunately, the counter-demonstration by anti-fascists was much less effective than it could have been

youth, on a programme aimed in words against big money and big business and in reality (and words too) against scapegoat minorities and against the labour movement. It gains strength, and welds its demoralised, disoriented recruits into a confident movement by violent shows of force against selected targets — black people, Jews, leftists. If the fascists come to power, they will smash the whole labour movement and destroy all democracy.

We are far from that yet in Britain. But in France and in Germany the first stages of the rise of fascism are already well under way. In France, Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front has kept between 10 and 15 per cent of the vote since 1983. (Hitler got only 18% in September 1930, yet won power by January 1933). In Germany the far right is growing fast. The same basic conditions exist in Britain as in France and Germany. No-one should be complacent.

The central task for the left is to transform and revive the labour movement. The change in mood in the working class since the big marches against pit closures last October shows that the condi-

tions are here to bring about that transformation and revival. It is being blocked by the weak, do-nothing leadership of the labour movement, and the left should work together to build rank-and-file networks in the trade unions and Labour Party capable of challenging that leadership.

*"Racism is growing because, despite a failing Tory government, the Labour Party and trade unions have provided no answers."*

Organising among youth, in the Further Education colleges, where most can now be found, and elsewhere, is also vital. Youth will not join the labour movement unless and until they are convinced of the reasons why they should. If the fascists are the only people offering bold-sound-

ing answers to youth, then the fascists will gain.

But we also need special anti-fascist movements and committees. At present we have a range of anti-fascist and anti-racist groups — Anti-Racist Alliance, Anti-Nazi League, Anti-Fascist Action — all doing some valuable work, but all tending to claim a monopoly, and none geared to mass involvement. What we need instead is a united-front campaign, open, active, and based on the labour movement.

*"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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## BEHIND THE NEWS

*Socialists discuss the violence, elections, and the*

# The truth behind the Burnsall dispute

**T**HE BURNSALL dispute in Smethwick, West Midlands, is now entering its eleventh month.

The 19 strikers — mainly Asian and the majority women — are demanding the recognition of their union, the GMB, and improvements in their appalling pay and working conditions.

From the start it has been clear that this would be a tough fight: the owners of the factory, the O'Neil brothers, are strongly anti-union and closed down a previous business rather than recognise a union. However, there have been some encouraging developments, notably the loss of a Jaguar contract, which accounts for a large proportion of Burnsall's business.

Unfortunately, an increasingly bitter fight has developed between the GMB officers with responsibility for the dispute and some local activists grouped around the "Birmingham Burnsall Support Committee".

Some local supporters of the *Socialist Outlook* newspaper, in particular, seem to have worked themselves into a completely unnecessary state of near-hysteria against the GMB officials. This row is clearly damaging the strike and it needs to be cleared up.

Initially, the officials were surprisingly receptive to the involvement of left-wing activists: when, for instance, *Socialist Worker* published an article criticising the officials' handling of the dispute, SWP members were invited to put their arguments to a strike meeting — an offer that the SWP failed to take up! In recent months, however, the officials have hardened their attitude towards the left-wing activists in the Support Committee and relations are now poisoned by mutual suspicion and contempt.

The root cause of this seems to have been the role of the Indian Workers' Association, a fairly small Stalinist organisation based in Birmingham. The IWA provided interpreters for the union in the early months of the dispute (many of the strikers speak little or no English) and were invited by the GMB to jointly sponsor a support march and rally on 28 November. However, the officials became increasingly convinced that the IWA was playing a duplicitous game, misrepresenting the union's position to the strikers, spreading false rumours (for instance, claiming that full strike pay wasn't being paid for some reason) and failing to mobilise for the 28 November march that they themselves had been involved in calling.

The situation was not helped by the arrival of a Channel 4 film crew whose main "researcher" was only too keen to take all the IWA's criticisms of the GMB as good coin. And, of course, *Socialist Outlook* supporters had no hesitation in siding with the IWA against the hated white bureaucrats.

The most damning indictment of the IWA (and their *Outlook* bag-carriers) is that when the bluster, lies and half-truths are swept away, they have no coherent alternative strategy for winning the dispute. Leading IWA members have made fine speeches about the need to break the law in order to secure victory. But what do they mean by this? Secondary action at factories that use Burnsall's products? Most factories that use Burnsall are not themselves unionised. At the one big plant that is — Jaguar — the stewards have said they can't deliver (although, in fact, Jaguar management have decided to take their custom away from Burnsall anyway). The other main "illegal" proposal is for a mass picket outside the plant: for this to have any effect it would need to involve hundreds of pickets for days on end. No-one seriously believes this is possible.

The GMB made it clear from day one that they would not countenance illegal activity at Burnsall. We may not like that, but it is exactly what any other union would have said in the same situation, including of course the IWA's beloved TGWU.

More to the point, it is difficult to see how any conceivable form of illegal activity would actually progress the dispute. What it would do, of course, would be to provide the GMB regional leadership with an ideal excuse to disown the strike.

But does the GMB have a strategy for the dispute? Yes, they do, and it's been spelt out many times: to clobber the employer at a series of industrial tribunals and to persuade Burnsall's customers to take their business elsewhere. Some success has been achieved on both these fronts.

However, it has been a long and sometimes demoralising battle. There is no guarantee of success. But at least it is a strategy with a realistic possibility of winning. No-one else has been able to come up with a realistic alternative.

Of course, there are occasions when we must advocate open defiance of the Tories' anti-union laws. But it shouldn't be a mindless, knee-jerk response in every situation: and why should we expect 20 Asian workers in Smethwick to do what the entire British trade union movement has so far failed to do?

Donations, messages of support, requests for speakers to: Burnsall's Strike Fund, GMB, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, West Midlands.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# Towards a mass

**The largest far left grouping in South Africa, the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), held its third National Conference from 9 April in Cape Town.**

**The conference was opened by an official representative of the Workers' Party of Brazil (PT), Eti Burigo, as well as WOSA's chairperson Neville Alexander.**

**Some 800 people were present at the opening.**

**Executive members from the ANC, AZAPO, SACP and many trade unions read out messages of support.**

**Key resolutions included:**

#### On violence

**T**HE "deracialisation" of the apartheid-capitalist system will not take place peacefully. More blood has flowed in South Africa during this so-called transition to democracy than in almost any other period of our history. WOSA condemned the continued use of mercenaries, third-force action and hit squads on the part of right wing and other ruling class forces. This violence against the oppressed has included the systematic elimination of popular community, labour and political leaders. It is a war against the urban and rural poor by the ruling class. The aim is to ensure

the weakening of mass organisations. An interim period of severe repression could occur to manage the transition from overtly racist rule to a limited bourgeois democratic order.

WOSA therefore calls on all affected and vulnerable communities to form disciplined, democratically organised and accountable self-defence units controlled by the community as a whole and not by any particular political organisation.

Attempts are being made to entrap the organised working class into social contracts in order to rescue capitalism from its crisis. This will be done at the expense of the vast majority of our people. WOSA calls on trade unions to be independent of the state, employers and political parties. WOSA supports and encourages the organised workers' struggle for a living wage, for affordable housing, for a moratorium on retrenchments, against VAT, against wage cuts and against limitations on strike activity.

#### On negotiations, the Constituent Assembly and the economy

WOSA reaffirmed its view that negotiation for power sharing is a ruling class strategy for the co-optation of the black middle class. The political reform programme of the regime has as its goal the replacement of apartheid-capitalism with new forms of capitalist accumulation. Power sharing or a government of National Unity which represents different class forces will not be able to resolve the many social and eco-

nomie problems facing the working class. The majority of our population will still be imprisoned in the shackles of poverty, unemployment and inflation, bearing the brunt of the social crisis in education, health, housing until such time as the working class appropriates the commanding heights of the economy. In the interim we will continue to assist the struggle for reforms which bring temporary relief to the working class, and the rural poor.

*"Attempts are being made to entrap the organised working class into social contracts in order to rescue capitalism from its crisis."*

WOSA does not believe that the policies of the IMF/World Bank will bring relief to the suffering of our people. Instead their intention, through the dreaded structural adjustment programmes, is to strengthen capitalism by pressurising the government to spend less on social services. The net effect of these IMF/World Bank initiatives will be a deliberate further impoverishment of our people and the weakening of mass organisations.

WOSA stands opposed to joint management or co-responsibility between the

racist state and the oppressed. Until a formal and democratic system has been instituted through a democratically elected Constituent Assembly such mechanisms are no less than old-style Native Advisory Boards which add a veneer of legitimacy to the brutalities of the racist regime. Rather, WOSA calls on all organisations to unite in increasing mass action and class struggle in all social spheres and to focus our political struggle on the attainment of a democratically elected Constituent Assembly. Specifically, WOSA commits itself to the building of democratic, independent organs of workers' power such as civics, trade unions, PTASAs and other mass organisations.

#### On elections

The significance of the possible general elections in 1994 does not lie in what can be achieved by the vote. In many ways, the deals between the ANC and the NP will limit the power of those who gain a majority in the elections. Full majority rule will not be achieved. More importantly, the fact that the economic power of the white minority, concentrated in the big monopoly corporations, is protected by these agreements means that the limited political power won in the elections will be useless in satisfying the demands of the exploited people.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of our people look to the negotiations process and the elections to deliver freedom. The Conference therefore allowed all structures of WOSA a three month period of intense discussion around the elections. The incoming Central Committee has been mandated to meet all organisations of the people to discuss the possibility of a common approach.

#### On unity

The WOSA Conference sent out a call to all socialists to realise the urgency of the hour by putting aside differences in order to establish as soon as possible a left block of organisations and individuals rooted in the mass organisation of the working class.

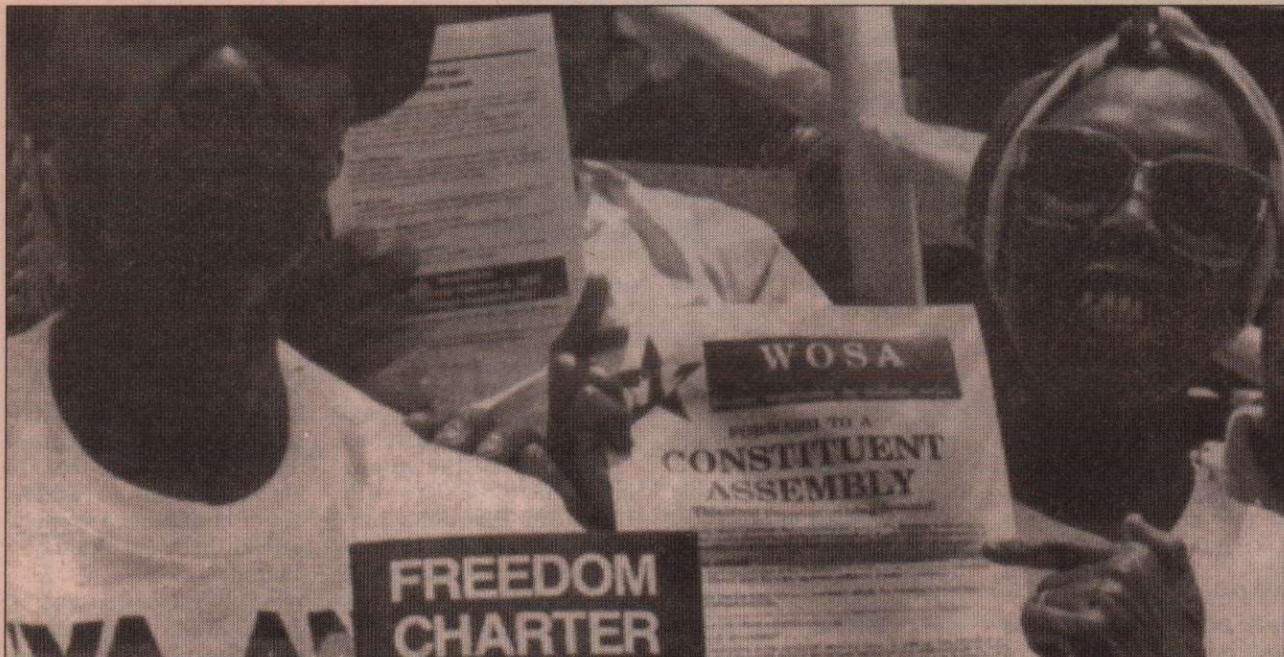
Such an initiative must be capable of generating a mass socialist movement toward the possible creation of a mass democratic workers' party. •



WOSA calls for a struggle for a Constituent Assembly

*future of the workers' movement in South Africa*

# workers' party



WOSA: "a left block must be established as soon as possible"

## The strategy of assassination

**The assassination of Chris Hani, leader of the South African Communist Party, last month has fuelled fears of further polarisation and violence in South Africa.**

**Neville Alexander, chairperson of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) and former Robben Island political prisoner, believes that Hani was killed by clandestine state or right wing forces intent on wrecking the negotiations process.**

**These forces, he says, will stop at nothing to prevent a transition to majority rule.**

**How do you view Hani's assassination?**

First of all, I think that the government is either directly involved or they are clandestinely encouraging the assassination of top officials in the liberation movement.

The state has tolerated acts of violence on political trade union and civic leaders for decades. There is an ongoing, systematic policy to eliminate influential people in the liberation movement.

The right wing element is totally opposed to any concessions to black people.

They will go for anybody who has influence among blacks and tries to bring about change in the country. They are not prepared to relinquish even a little bit of power. There is no question that these people are involved in violence against our people.

I think we must expect the worst from the right wing in the months and years to come. There will be an attempt on their part to destabilise the negotiations process and to prevent any power sharing deal and certainly to prevent any takeover of power by blacks.

And then there are people, either outside government or close to it, who want to weaken the entire liberation movement and the ANC in particular because it is such a major player.

One of their strategies to weaken the movement is by using assassinations of key leaders and officials. They also aim to cause confusion in the ranks of the movement by using propaganda to try and set the leadership against each other.

Winnie Mandela against Nelson Mandela. Harry Gwala against the national leadership and so on. That is the transparent propaganda that you read and which does not reflect what is going on in the ANC. It is quite evident to people like myself outside the ANC that this type of propaganda

is being orchestrated against the movement.

In the case of Hani, my suspicion is that he was eliminated because he had a lot of influence among the youth of the country.

Some elements in government were getting concerned that Hani was beginning to defuse the militants in the townships. Because of his influence, charisma and heroic status, he was able to defuse that militancy. I think that is not what some people in government wanted. They actually want the youth to continue being rebellious to cause divisions within the ANC and weaken its position in the negotiations process.

Since Hani seemed to be the only person capable of bringing the ANC youth into line, he had to be disposed of.

**There has been a resurgence of violence in certain parts of the country during the past few months. What is the source of this violence?**

There are different sources but the fundamental source of violence is still apartheid. Increasing numbers of people in the metropolitan areas are competing for limited jobs, housing, education and health facilities. This pressure causes immense social conflict.

The way in which this social conflict is politicised and expressed depends on

different circumstances in particular regions. In Natal, the state funding of Inkatha to compete with the ANC was a government strategy to cause divisions among the people.

We have got a similar situation in areas like Khayelitsha and Crossroads where various groups are competing to control civic life.

But we in the leadership also have to blame ourselves for falling into apartheid's 'divide and rule' trap.

In the Cape we have a situation where the ANC and the PAC are fighting one another. This is a situation that must not be allowed to continue. The liberation movement must work together in unity.

**Do you think Hani's assassination was a deliberate attempt to spark off a popular uprising?**

I think certain people in government and on the right want to see an uprising which they can then put down with military force. They want to demoralise the people so that they can negotiate from a position of strength. They want to cause divisions within the ANC and isolate the radicals from the mainstream to boost their chances of negotiating a settlement.

Reprinted from  
*Face the Nation*

### Living in the cities

## London and Belfast

By Belinda Weaver

**T**HE IRA'S LATEST BOMB RATTLED my windows. At first I thought it was thunder. But it was louder than thunder, it made the windows shake, and the sky was cloudless.

As soon as I realised the noise was a bomb, I rushed out on to my balcony. I saw the big black smoke plume rising in the sky. It looked very, very close. Maybe Moorgate Tube station had gone up in smoke.

People on the ground outside were excited. There were lots of boys pointing and yelling out. After a minute or two, I heard the first sirens. Definitely a bomb.

The bomb went off outside the NatWest Tower in the City of London at 10.25 on Saturday morning, but I didn't know anything but the time. The TV was full of inane sports stuff; not a news flash in sight. The radio was no better.

People in our block of flats all had their theories. "Moorgate," said one. "NatWest Tower," said another. "Both," said a third.

I wasn't frightened at first. I didn't feel like a target. But no-one does, do they? You think it can't happen to you.

When they blew up the Baltic Exchange a year ago, we heard the blast at about 9.30 pm on a Friday night. It was loud, but the windows didn't rattle. The bombers got closer this time.

I've got a two-year old daughter. We live on the edge of the City. We can't move. Do I have to worry about bombs every time I go for a walk, visit the library, take her for a swing?

I travel through the City four days a week on my way to work. Do I have to worry about bombs every time I take a train?

They took the casualties to Bart's. There were thirty or forty of them, and they all went there, to this hospital the Tories say we don't need, to an Accident and Emergency department the Tories want to close. If they close it, what about the next bomb, and the one after that? Where will people go?

And what about the bombers? Who drives these vans and trucks filled with explosives? Who plants them, and why do they take the enormous risks they do?

I find it hard to understand, but I didn't grow up Catholic in Northern Ireland with armed soldiers and police everywhere, with plastic bullets and shoot-to-kill and funerals all the time of people you know.

Kids grow up in those conditions and want to do something, and they think blowing up the NatWest Tower or bombing shoppers in Warrington is the way to go.

They're wrong. It's no answer for them; it doesn't change anything; it doesn't win them anything but hatred and more repression.

I worry about what will happen. I'm as frightened as anybody of being blown up or maimed, or worse, of seeing something happen to my child.

But I don't want a bloodbath. I don't want the IRA stopped by wholesale murder. There has to be another way, a settlement that meets the needs of both communities in Northern Ireland, so that the bitterness can dissolve within a federal, united Ireland.

Anything less, and I'll just have to get used to the fear.

GRAFFITI

# Showing our esteem

GRAFFITI

**T**HE PUBLIC sympathy for the Queen's sad loss of part of one of her favourite castles in the Windsor fire was shown last week as the Queen's bank, Coutts and Co, announced the results of the public appeal. Funds raised to help restoration came to £25,000, or roughly 0.05p per head of the population. This clearly shows the esteem that the world's richest woman is held in by the British public.

Since the public have found difficulty meeting the full £40 million renovation costs, the government has had to turn to a mysterious individual known as "the taxpayer". Experts are not sure as to the identity of "the taxpayer", but do not believe it is the Queen or any member of her immediate family.

**N**O-ONE WAS singing Auld Lang Syne in Manchester last week — an old friend failed to turn up to a scheduled reunion. The friend in question was Rupert Murdoch, and the reception committee was 36 of the TNT lorry drivers who crossed the picket lines of sacked print workers at Murdoch's Wapping printing plant in 1986.

Surely Murdoch would be only too pleased to meet up with some of the people who helped him smash the unions at News International? No, Murdoch, playing the role of bastard newspaper baron to perfection, doesn't give a toss about them.

The drivers have attempted to force him to appear at a tribunal for unfair dismissal. All lost their jobs when Murdoch and the boss of TNT, Alan Jones, re-negotiated the contract five years after the dispute, leaving the drivers jobless.

**Y**OU HAVE TO have a little sympathy for the woman featured in Channel Four's "Street Legal". She felt that she had lost money due to the negligence of her solicitor in divorce proceedings. So she took the case to the Solicitors' Complaints Bureau, the self-regulation body for solicitors, who didn't help on the grounds that solicitors usually side with other solicitors. So she then went to another solicitor, and paid £3,400 to take the Bureau to court. She won the case.

Unfortunately, the second solicitor had failed to tell that the maximum compensation the Bureau can order a solicitor to pay is £1,000. She decided not to proceed against the second solicitor. Rich solicitors, 2, Justice, 0.

**W**HY SHOULD a thriving young entrepreneur like the 30-year old Julian

Davidson be putting it all on the line to win the Newbury by-election? After all, as his campaign literature points out, he is the candidate "with experience of running a business". And things must be pretty good for Davidson at the moment, since, as Davidson said in a speech last week, there are "not just green shoots, but green branches" popping up in the economic spring of the long frozen tundra of the British economy.

Surely Britain will be great again if such successful young men are willing to sacrifice their glittering futures to serve Queen and country? No, of course not.

Davidson's business has run into a little difficulty. It is now run from a spare room in his parents' home, and doesn't employ anybody.

Davidson admits that "We have pulled ourselves into a controlled minimum level" — presumably in the same way that putting a pillow over someone's face adjusts breathing to a controlled minimum level.

The clever money in Tory circles has already earmarked Davidson as a future chancellor.

**J**UST IN case you felt an inexplicable urge to tell John Patten to go to Hell, don't worry, it has already been done by the specialists. The ultimate judgement was pronounced by Richard Wilkins, general secretary of the Association of Christian Teachers.

Speaking of Patten's branding of all test boycotters as "trendy lefties", and other porkies about tests and the campaign against them, Wilkins invoked the commandment that "Thou shalt not bear false witness", stating "Christian teachers will regard such misrepresentation as breach of the commandment". The fate of such sinners? "They shall meet a terrible day of judgement".

Patten is a devout Catholic, so it's off to the fancy dress shop for those demon's outfits and a late night visit to the Patten residence.



John Patten: destined to fry

# The Observer: does it matter?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**I**n the memorable words of the late Mitchell Parish, sometimes I wonder. Specifically, sometimes I wonder whether the doings of the bourgeois press matter very much and whether it is worth devoting space to the never-ending intrigues of the Fourth Estate. I suppose, on balance, that it is — if only because most of the people we work with, meet down the pub and indeed meet on picket lines, read the damned rags.

But it does matter that the *Daily Mirror's* Labour cre-

dentials might possibly be under threat. And that the *Observer* seems likely to perish in the very near future.

Leaving aside Johnny-come-lately's like *Today* and the *Independent*, there are three non-Tory national papers: the right wing Labourite *Mirror*, the gutless liberal *Guardian* and the sanctimonious *Observer*. All three are certainly capable of producing paroxysms of rage — quite beyond anything the *Sun*, *Mail* or *Telegraph* can induce — in any good lefty.

But it would be sad if the *Observer* disappeared. I can't comment on the whole of its 202 years of existence, but it has had its moments: opposing the Suez adventure in 1956, for instance, and publishing that photo of the dead Iraqi soldier during the Gulf War. Unfortunately, there have also been some pretty shameful episodes in recent years — most of them relating to Mr Tiny Rowland's

business interests. Who can forget the "Harrods Special" produced as part of Mr Rowland's obsessive battle with the Fayed brothers over ownership of the House of Fraser? Or the way the *Observer* was regularly used to suck up to various East African dictators with whom Rowland was trading? This sad state of affairs has not been helped by an editor — Donald Trelford — who, frankly doesn't seem very interested in the newspaper business.

Last year Trelford wasted millions on a disastrous "relaunch" of the colour magazine (complete with soft-porn Madonna pictures) but still the circulation continued its inexorable decline. Sales are presently hovering around the 500,000 mark — compared to the *Sunday Times'* 1,200,000.

Now we hear that the *Independent's* Andreas Whittam-Smith is deep in negotiations with Tiny

Rowland for the purchase of the *Observer*. There is no love lost between Trelford and Whittam-Smith: an *Independent* take-over would certainly signal the end of the *Observer* and the end of Trelford's dilettantish career as editor. Not surprisingly, Trelford is desperately casting about for an alternative buyer and seems to have set his hopes upon the *Guardian*, who might just be persuaded to keep the *Observer* name and himself as editor. This possibility has the additional attraction (for Trelford) of threatening to drive the ailing *Independent on Sunday* out of business and severely wound the hated Whittam-Smith.

Should any of us give a damn? Well, the demise of the *Observer* would mean one less "quality" paper on Sunday and one less non-Tory mainstream publication. I suppose we should be concerned. But sometimes I wonder.

# "Pro-life" — honest but wrong

WOMEN'S EYE



By Jean Lane

**F**OR THE FIRST time last week I witnessed a debate with an anti-abortionist — a member of SPUC — who didn't rant, foam or moralise too much, who was not a Catholic or religious nut of any description. She had guts, being prepared to debate a roomful of pro-choice people and socialists without anyone there to support her side of the argument — at least, that is, until she walked out before the other speaker's summing up. I thought she did alright and could not envisage myself going unsupported into, say, a Catholic seminary to put my case.

The woman was not like your average SPUC member. She was for better sex education, better contraception and better

support for women facing the most important decision of their lives. She was against the cuts in the health service.

Most of us are used to the anti-abortionist with the hidden agenda: who fulminates about 'life' whilst supporting the death penalty; who, as well as being against abortions, is against the things that prevent many of them happening, sex education, contraception, etc.; who say they are against abortion when what they are really against is the rights of women, and indeed, women themselves.

I don't believe the woman at our debate had a hidden agenda. I think she was genuinely 'pro-life', believing that the foetus has equal rights to everyone else and that abortion therefore equals murder. I think she was honest, but I also think she was wrong.

**A**T WHAT POINT, for instance, does a pile of dividing cells become a person — a living being? SPUC will say, and I assume our debater too, at the point of conception. But cells die all the time. We don't hold funerals for them, do we? Their assertion is not based on medical fact but on pure belief. Therefore, though she described herself as non-religious, the woman's method is a religious one.

She asked, what kind of a world is this that develops technology for the destruction of life all around the world and for us to watch it on our TV

screens? Why do we criticise the slaughter we see, e.g. in Yugoslavia, and yet let the 'unseen slaughter' of abortion pass without comment? But she did not ask why technology and research goes into mass destruction like in the Gulf War and not into developing safe and effective contracep-

*"Banning abortions does not stop them happening. It drives them underground"*

tion, or why when it is developed, the system does not allow its proper use.

The drug RU486, for example, which has been licensed for use in this country since 1991 and which can terminate unwanted pregnancies at less than 63 days without any kind of surgery, is not offered to more than a tiny proportion of women. Although women ask for help well within time, the NHS referral system is so slow, and often hostile, that by the time the abortion is agreed it is too late for the use of the drug.

All it takes in resources is a pleasant room where women can sit for a few hours under observation after the taking of

the drug and an out-patients' clinic for follow-up screening. But the hospitals do not have the resources to lay this on. Women have to have a surgical abortion, taking up a bed unnecessarily, and usually in the gynae-ward where other women are desperately unhappy, who are trying to overcome infertility or are having hysterectomies.

But the main thing that the SPUC speaker did not, and could not, answer is that banning abortions does not stop them happening. It drives them underground. It does not save lives, but puts more lives at risk. According to a survey carried out by *Cosmopolitan*, of 300 women, 284 agreed that women have the right to terminate a pregnancy, 235 said they would have one, and 155 said they have had one. Its findings corresponded well with those of the National Abortion Campaign. Women will do this whether abortions are legal or not, either in a determination to control their own lives or because they are desperate.

So, although the debater said she was pro-life, her policy in fact endangers life, sending women into the backstreets or to the knitting needles. And, although she said she was in favour of women's rights, in fact, as long as she strives to prevent a woman from controlling her own fertility and therefore her own life, she cannot be in favour of equality for women.

## INJUSTICE

# Not angels, just innocent

Raphael Rowe: "I'm no angel! I'm just an innocent man fighting for justice"

On the night of 15-16 December 1988, three unmasked men conducted a series of violent attacks just off the M25, including a murder.

In March 1990, Raphael Rowe, Michael Davis and Randolph Johnson were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Joanne Rowe of the M25 Three Campaign spoke to Mark Sandell about the case.

THE MAIN THING is the black and white issue. The victims, who were attacked separately, all reported two white and one black attacker. Now three black men are in prison for the crime.

The three prosecution witnesses, who were white, had the property stolen in the attacks, and their finger prints were found in a stolen car at the scene of the crime. It is because of those contradictions that we are getting leave to appeal.

We are trying to establish the timing of the crime. Originally the first attack was said to have been committed at 11pm, then



Raphael Rowe

three weeks later the first victim changed his story. This is very important because on the original time scale neither Michael or Raphael could possibly have done it. They have witnesses until early the next morning.

Raphael and Michael had committed crimes in the past and had done community service, so they already had marks against their names. That is why the police focussed on them. That's the way the police work. Black people are targeted as criminals. Even if the victim's description is of a white person, a black person will do anyway.

All colours, creeds, and voices should come together. We have to stand up and fight.

On one level crime is down to each individual. It's their deci-

## M25 fundraiser banned

A benefit dance organised by the M25 Three Campaign and the Winston Silcott Defence Campaign on Saturday 24 April was shut down by Stoke Newington police. Halkevi Community Centre has regularly been used for events before but once the police heard about this benefit they registered a complaint with Hackney Council and got the event stopped. Stoke Newington Police seem determined to do all they can to harass any campaign that fights police corruption.

sion whether to commit a crime. But society shows the way. Children are brought up in a violent society where crime is seen as the way to get what you want.

More police will make no difference to crime. The police are taking innocent people and putting them inside, because they cannot be bothered to run around and find out who really committed crimes.

Being fitted up can happen to anyone, no matter what colour you are. It is a community struggle against the police and against the judicial system that allows this to happen.

Paul Condon, the new Commissioner [chief] of the Met [London's police] is saying they have a new strategy. It's bullshit. They are still doing whitewashes. The police officers who framed the Tottenham Three are not being prosecuted — they are just

shuffling the case around until interest dies down.

We can only change this situation if all the campaigns and all the organisations that believe in justice come together to show we are not taking it any longer.

On 5 May we are holding a mass picket of the Home Office, involving all the different organisations and all the families of innocent prisoners. We are demanding an independent body to investigate all these cases, because there are thousands of prisoners who have no organisations taking up their cases.

Warwick University have already offered to lend us six law students, and Liberty [NCCL] have offered their legal help to go through the papers of cases and organise appeals. 66 people have sent us their case work already. We need to unite all the struggles for justice.



"That's the way the police work. Black people are targeted." Photo: Andrew Moore

# Stop the racist murders!

ON THURSDAY 22 April Stephen Lawrence was murdered by racists in Greenwich, South-East London.

Stephen was the third black teenager to be stabbed to death in Greenwich during the last two years. All the killings were carried out by gangs of white youth.

Stephen Lawrence had been involved in the Rolan Adams Campaign. Rolan had been killed by racists in Thamesmead in February 1991.

In July 1992 Rohit Duggal, a sixteen year old, was murdered in Well Hall Road — the same street where Stephen Lawrence was stabbed.

Dev Barraah, coordinator of the

Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks, said bad housing and high unemployment had made the area a breeding ground for racism.

Benjamin Whyte, a worker for the committee, told *Socialist Organiser* that his organisation had recorded 241 racist attacks in the borough during the first half of 1992. Also the number

and seriousness of the attacks is sharply increasing. Attacks now regularly involve offensive weapons, including firearms.

Local activists believe that the Nazi British National Party's headquarters in nearby Welling is a factor in the increasing number of racist attacks.

Contact GACARA on 081-855 4343.

## A new fund drive

THE ALLIANCE for Workers' Liberty has set new fund-raising targets to finance further expansion plans.

We aim to raise £4,000 from donations, from fundraising and from our raffle by Workers' Liberty '93 at the beginning of July.

There are three reasons for needing extra money:

- We want to buy £1,000 worth of computer software. It will make our paper and publications better produced.

- We have a number of expanding areas of work — a black fraction and a Youth Fightback youth wing — which need more support.

- We have new opportunities to build our organisation and influence in Ireland.

All this requires money.

We need your help to grow.

If you can raise money or make a donation please send cheques (payable to "WL Publications") to us at PO Box 823 London SE15 4NA.

To kick off the drive we have received a £150 donation from a comrade in North London and £37 from Sheffield AWL, and £55 from Glasgow AWL.

Thanks to all comrades involved.

## Grand Summer Draw

The AWL is running a fundraising raffle to be drawn at our Workers' Liberty '93 event on Sunday 4 July.

- First prize: a weekend for two in Paris.

- Second prize: a colour television.

- Third prize: a case of wine.

Raffle ticket books will be out this week. For books to be sold at work or your labour movement meetings contact Mark on 071-639 7965.

## Sales weekend

THE ALLIANCE for Workers' Liberty is organising a Socialist Organiser sales weekend for Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 May.

Activists and sympathisers will be out selling the paper on estates and streets, aiming to increase our circulation.

New estate sales are being started in various parts of London, Sheffield, Luton and Nottingham. Extra pub sales are starting up in Manchester and Nottingham. During the following week new workplace sales are set to take place in Newcastle, Sheffield, and Middlesbrough.

We aim to increase the regular sales of the paper as part of our drive to encourage readers to become sellers of Socialist Organiser.

Why not help us fight for socialist ideas by taking a few copies of the paper to sell at work, in your union or college, or at school?

Phone Jill, our sales manager, on 071-639 7965 for details.

## Timex dispute

# "We will win because of solidarity"

Timex steward Charlie Malone has made this appeal:

**“W**HAT'S HAPPENING AT TIMEX can happen in every single workplace the length and breadth of the country, and is happening in every workplace the length and breadth of this country.

The employers' offensive which is taking place against our members is nothing new, and goes across the broad spectrum of the trade union movement. I've sometimes been embarrassed going into a workplace to look for support and finding worse conditions of employment than those asked of us at Timex.

What we see in Timex is not a case where workers have taken industrial action against an employer, but an employer taking industrial action against employees: the employers were hell-bent on taking on the union and destroying trade union organisation at Timex.

It's appropriate that two weeks into the dispute the *Financial Times* said that Timex is the key industrial dispute for employers because of its history of militancy and organisation. If Timex in Dundee can be cracked, then effectively every engineering firm in Scotland can be cracked. This campaign has been conducted by the Engineering Employers' Federation. It's a national offensive, but unfortunately there is no national response.

There has been no response nationally from the AEEU but to congratulate themselves at their National Committee this week on their outstanding support for the Timex workers. That outstanding support has been to threaten every single one of our members with expulsion from the AEEU, to withdraw strike benefit from every single member for allegedly being involved in unlawful acts — having a picket line of more than six individuals.

We've made it quite clear from day one that six people were not sacked in Timex, 343 people were sacked. 343 people have a democratic right to approach those factory gates and demonstrate against the way they have been treated. Nobody is going to take away that right from those individuals, and we make that quite clear without apology to the Executive Council. We're prepared to suffer the consequences if the Executive Council goes ahead with its threat to expel us.

The company has also used the courts. It's probably the first time that an employer has really gone after a trade union using the courts. The company is quite open in wanting to see the convenors of Timex jailed.

But the establishment is looking at Timex, and they are actually scared at this time to take the Timex workers on and to jail the convenors, given the rumblings which are taking place in the country through the firemen, the railwaymen, and the miners. The rumblings are there and I think the establishment is terrified of creating a couple of martyrs for the trade union movement which would lead to a co-ordinated response.

We've been told by the Executive Council that at every stage we must comply with the civil and criminal law. But if anyone thinks they are going to win this dispute by six people shouting "scab" at two double-decker buses, then they're kidding themselves. We cannot win the dispute that way, and it's up to the trade union movement to recognise that. This dispute will not be won by sympathy, it won't be won by generous financial donations. It's got to be won by a physical presence at that factory which prevents Timex operating in a normal situation.

We will win this dispute because of the solidarity we have received and the actions which we have taken. People all over Europe know about Timex and that is the kind of pressure which will force the company back to the negotiating table."

Charlie Malone was speaking in a personal capacity at a Socialist Movement fringe meeting at the Scottish TUC congress.

# All out for the mass picket!

By Stan Crooke

**T**HE FIRST HALF of May sees three important dates for the fight by the 340 Timex workers in Dundee for reinstatement. Saturday 1 May: May Day demonstration in support of the Timex workers. Assemble 11.00am, Baxter Park, Dundee. Saturday 15 May: demonstration in Dundee in support of the Timex workers, called by the AEEU and supported by the Scottish TUC. Details still to be announced. Monday 17 May: Expiry of 90 day redundancy notices served on the Timex workers. Mass picket of the Timex factory, 7.00am.

Activists need to work to ensure the biggest possible turnout for the forthcoming demonstrations in support of the Timex workers, and especially for the mass picket on the morning of 17 May, as well as the regular Monday morning mass pickets.

Members of the MSF and AEEU must maintain pressure and step up the pressure on their own union leaderships, in order to get MSF members at the factory out on strike and to end the AEEU leadership's treatment of the strikers as pariahs.

The AEEU leadership is running scared of any escalation of the dispute. At last week's STUC congress Jimmy Airlie even condemned heckling, taunts and chants as "counter-productive". At this rate Airlie will soon be arguing that farting on the picket line merits expulsion from the union.

The Timex strikers themselves recognise the need to escalate the dispute if they are to achieve victory. The rest of the labour and trade union movement must rally to their appeal.

Last week's AEEU conference voted to start weekly cash collections amongst AEEU members in support of the Timex workers. Union President Bill Jordan accepted an invitation from the Timex strikers to join them on the picket line in Dundee. Let's hope that Bill does not breach his own union's instructions by finding himself to be the seventh picket outside the factory!

Miners' president Arthur Scargill has also accepted an invitation from the Timex shop stewards' committee to join the mass picket being held on 17 May. There is no sign of the "Democratic Left" leadership of the Scottish miners joining him in this act of solidarity.

# Why we all 35-hour w

**M**AKE A 35 HOUR week standard — or cut Britain's working hours to the level of Belgium's — and everyone could have a job.

Full-time workers in Britain do an average of 43.6 hours a week. It is the longest average work-week in Western Europe.

Cut the hours, and the work could be shared out to employ everyone who wants a job. If the average work-week were cut by 14 per cent, to 37.5 hours (or just slightly less than Belgium's average, 38.1 hours), then the same total amount of work would employ 14 per cent more workers (assuming that the proportion of part timers stayed the same).

14 per cent is the real unemployment rate. (According to the government's rigged figures, it is about 10 per cent, or three million).

*"Make a 35 hour week standard and everyone could have a job."*

It is crazy to have some people exhausted, working long hours, while others rot in idleness. But that is the logic of capitalism. As Karl Marx explained, "If the accumulation of capital increases the demand for labour, it also increases the supply of labourers by the 'setting free' of them, whilst at the same time the pressure of the unemployed compels those that are employed to furnish more labour, and therefore makes the supply of labour, to a certain extent, independent of the supply of labourers.

"This action of the law of supply and demand of labour on this basis completes the despotism of capital".

The bosses argue that Britain "cannot afford" a cut in the working week.

A 14 per cent cut in the work week would go with an increase in the total wages bill of up to 14 per cent. Impossible! Disastrous! Ruinous! say the bosses.

Yet those bosses routinely pay themselves increases of well over 14 per cent, without any worries about ruining anything.

14 per cent of the total wages bill would be about £50 billion a year. The real cost of paying 14 per cent extra wages is not as



In 1989 the engineers' union AEU campaigned for a 35-hour week. Photo:

much as that, because a great deal would be saved when unemployed workers got jobs, stopped getting state benefits, and started paying taxes. It could be as low as £14 billion,

even without counting the probable savings from lower rates of crime and illness.

Spending another £14 billion is not a problem — except that the rich people who hold that

## Difficult progress

**O**VER THE LAST ten years, annual work hours for full-timers have practically stopped falling — or sometimes increased — in the Western countries, with the notable exception of West Germany...

The bosses have declared opposition on principle to any generalised and uniform reduction of working hours, and especially in the form of a reduction of the working week; on the other hand, they are open to decentralised negotiations as long as they include a small or zero wage rise with greater flexibility of working

hours...

Things have shifted only when negotiations have been opened on the basis of a relation of forces allowing the trade unions to get substantial gains. There are only two major examples.

The main one is in West Germany where, thanks to widespread strikes followed by credible strike threats, the metalworkers' union IG Metall and, following it, other unions, have won a schedule for moving to a 35 hour week... The second comes from the UK where, after failure in industry-wide negotiations, the engineering unions won, through a

## Freedom vs. work

**C**apitalism creates a frantic work-spend-work cycle. Individuals are ratcheted round the work-spend-work cycle, and often come to accept its values and priorities as their own.

For some part of history that capitalist work-spend-work cycle played a progressive role, raising the productivity of labour and broadening people's horizons. It was progressive compared to the sluggish poverty of the medieval peasant. But now, when technology has advanced enough to enable everyone to have a comfortable life without long labour, it is destructive.

It is time for a new way of organising society, where people control



# I need a work week



John Smith  
£14 billion do not want to spend it on employing the unemployed. They want to keep it instead to increase their own wealth.  
No! Wages and "social wages"

(social security and so on) get about 58 per cent of output in Britain; the wealth-owning class and the state get the other 42 per cent. Adding another £14 billion to wages would change the split from 58:42 to 61:39. Such a change would be resisted fiercely by the rich who would lose out — but it is not impossible or unimaginable or contrary to any law of nature.

Besides, to cut the working week and employ the unemployed would certainly lead to an increase in total output and thus in the resources available. Many workers, being fresher and less tired, would produce as much in 37.5 hours as they did before in 43.6 hours; increased productivity has been the result of every cut in working hours since the first trade unions started to bring them down from 14 hours a day.

A move which started by dividing a fixed total of production among the workers available would end by increasing production, employment and leisure, all together.

## ess in Europe

series of strikes in selected enterprises, agreements on a 37 hour week which have been progressively spread to the majority of the enterprises in the sector...

Everywhere else, the results have been mediocre. In Italy the unions proposed negotiations in each sector on cutting annual work hours. They accepted a link with measures to increase labour flexibility and productivity, on conditions of trade union participation in their implementation. The agreement signed in 1986 has had little concrete impact... In Belgium, the government

imposed, in 1983, the so-called "5-3-3" policy: a 5 per cent cut in work hours with 3 per cent new hirings to compensate and a 3 per cent reduction of wages. The feebleness of the results led it thereafter to stress only flexibility of labour.

In France, the experience of 1982 [when the Socialist Party government, then new, legislated for a 39 hour week] has fixed the situation durably [and there has been little movement since].

Abridged and translated from an article by Jacques Freyssinet in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1993.

## ork-spend-work

and limit their economic affairs rather than being controlled and limited by the economy.

As Marx put it, "The realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production.

"Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis.

"The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite".

## USA Unions are decisive

OVER THE LAST 20 years, American workers have lost nearly half their leisure time.

Between 1973 and 1988, their free time was cut from 26 hours a week to sixteen and a half.

Workers have been doing longer hours, getting fewer holidays, working more overtime, and more often holding two or three jobs at the same time. Time spent on travelling to work has also increased.

Faster and slicker technology has led to a faster pace of work, rather than shorter hours.

The majority of Americans sleep an hour or more less per day than they should, a fact reflected in the exhausted faces of the commuters in American cities' trains and subways.

59% of them report "high stress" at least once a week, and the most stressed are assembly-line workers.

The amount of time spent by the average American father in playing or talking directly with his children is measured in minutes per week. Between 1960 and 1986, the average time American parents had free to spend with their children went down by 10 hours a week.

Exhaustion and stress also gut even the remaining hours of leisure time. Americans spend more hours watching television — which is generally the lowest-energy, more inert form of leisure — than people in any other industrial country except Japan and the ex-USSR, countries with longer work hours than the USA.

The average American manufacturing worker now does 320 hours — or two months! — more work per year than the average worker in West Germany or France. The difference is due to the greater strength of trade unions in Western Europe than in the USA.

Stronger unions mean shorter hours, more time for life, and more chance of winning jobs for the jobless. Weaker unions mean longer hours. No god-given economic law decides the outcome. It depends on class struggle.

Figures from *The Overworked American*, by Juliet Schor.

## Workers' Liberty '93

Workers' Liberty '93 is three days of socialist debate from **Friday 2 to Sunday 4 July at Caxton House**, 129 St John's Way, Archway, North London.

This year one feature will be a six-part **Black History course** to be held on Saturday 3 July.

### ABOUT AMERICA:

The roots of Black nationalism from slavery through reconstruction to Garvey.

The "integrationist" tradition from Du Bois to Martin Luther King.

Revolutionary Black nationalism — Malcolm X and the Black Panthers.

### ABOUT BRITAIN:

How modern British racism began — slavery, colonialism and pseudo-scientific racism.

A forum on Black oppression in Britain today — where now?

The history of Black workers' struggle in Britain — lessons from Imperial Typewriters and Grunwick's to Burnsall's.

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American athletes give the Black Power salute at the Mexico Olympic games, 1968. Workers' Liberty '93 will debate the issues of Black Power.

## A debate with Socialist Worker

## Bosnia: arms for

**Socialist Organiser has backed arming the Muslims in Bosnia, but opposed sending Western troops to impose a solution. Socialist Worker argues that socialists should not support the Muslims; we should denounce all sides of the war equally; we should not support lifting the United Nations embargo on arms for the Muslims.**

**Martin Thomas reviews the arguments.**

**“THE ARMS embargo”,** wrote *Socialist Worker* (24 April), **“has not stopped the descent into barbarism. But neither would providing arms to the Bosnian government. It might lead to the Bosnian Muslims winning battles rather than the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. But it would not bring ‘ethnic cleansing’ to an end, since the Muslim armies would try to secure captured land by driving out members of the other groups just as the Serb and Croat armies have...**

**Victory for any group in Bosnia is going to be at the expense of the mass of people... In such a situation it is a betrayal of socialist principles to take sides with Thatcher.”**

*Socialist Worker’s* polemic blurs together the issues of arms for the Muslims and of sending in Western troops or bombs. Those options are more *opposite* than *identical*: if Western forces went in, they would probably *disarm* the Muslims, as UN troops have already done in Srebrenica.

*Socialist Worker* also confuses *siding with the Muslims* with *siding with Thatcher*. *Socialist Organiser* backs the Muslims for our own reasons, as socialists and democrats: because they are an oppressed nation fighting against a drive to annihilate and disperse them by the imperialism of the local big power, the Serbs. What Thatcher says is secondary. In fact, *Socialist Worker* is much closer to “siding with” Douglas Hurd and the dominant trend of Western policy than we are to “siding with” Thatcher.

But what is the *core* of *Socialist Worker’s* argument? What is their *basic* reason for rejecting the obvious case that we should side with an oppressed nation against imperialism?

*Socialist Worker’s* thinking is revealed in

an outrageous conclusion to their main article. “Very few people anywhere were prepared to stand against the nationalist current and say the whole process was absurd — that Serbs, Croats and Muslims were virtually identical in language and lifestyle and only differed in religions which few practised”.

So if the Serbs, Croats and Muslims were more different in language and lifestyle, would the process then not be absurd? If we find a group markedly different in language and culture from the majority — like Asians in Britain, say — is “ethnic cleansing” then quite reasonable? Why does *SW* not also mention that the Serbs, Croats and Muslims are identical in skin-colour? Only, I guess, because the implication that war is all right against those of different skin-colour would be so clear.

Obviously *Socialist Worker* does not intend to imply that. But it does imply it. It gives a nod to the idea that people ought to stick together in groups with the same language and lifestyle, and that hostility towards people of different languages and lifestyle is normal and natural.

What vile rubbish! For a democrat, mixing of peoples with different languages and cultures is positively desirable. For a socialist, workers of different languages and cultures have much more in common than any of them have with bosses of the same language and culture.

And, for a Marxist, national conflicts are *not* caused by peoples being of different language, culture, or skin-colour.

They are rooted not in human nature but in the *economic structure* of imperialism and capitalism.

*Socialist Worker* gets into this mess because it wants to argue that the whole conflict in ex-Yugoslavia is artificial, whipped up out of nothing by politicians who “played the nationalist card” after they were threatened by the strike wave of 1988.

Why did those politicians *succeed*? If established politicians could *always* convert class struggle into nationalism by a bit of demagogy,

then there would be no hope for socialism.

Part of the reason was the weakness of the socialist movement, both in Yugoslavia and in the world. But the essential underpinning for the success of Milosevic, Tudjman, and the rest, is that the Serbs, Croats and Muslims are *real nations*, with real histories of conflict and dispute.

The wars in ex-Yugoslavia are as “absurd” as *all* national conflicts are — *but not more so*.

In principle and in general, *Socialist Worker’s* editors share with *Socialist Organiser* the classic Marxist view: that we can resolve national conflicts only by a positive programme of equal rights for all nations, which includes supporting oppressed nations in struggle against

oppressors, and not just by condemning the conflicts as “absurd” and hoping that everyone will see sense and stop being nationalist.

In this case, however, *Socialist Worker* does want to deal with the conflict just by labelling it “absurd”. It implies or assumes that there are no real national questions at stake, only pseudo-divisions invented by cynical politicians.

*Socialist Worker* calls the Serbs, Croats and Muslims not *nations*, but only “groups”. It denies any real historical content to the national conflicts. “In the 1950s and 1960s the old antagonisms between Serbs and Croats seemed a distant memory inside Yugoslavia, and no one talked of the Muslims as a nationality facing hostility from the others”.

In fact the old Stalinist dictator of Yugoslavia, Tito, who had a more realistic assessment of these issues than *Socialist Worker*, had the description of the Muslims as a nation written into the constitution.

As for “distant memory” — during World War 2 Croat and Serb chauvinist gangs roamed the country, slaughtering hundreds of thousands. Was that “distant memory” in the 1950s?

Before that the Croats and Serbs lived for centuries in different economies and different empires, the Croats in the Austrian/Hungarian, the Serbs in the Turkish. The Serbs won effective independence early in the 19th century. In the Balkan

Wars of 1912-13, they conquered the non-Serb areas of Kosovo and Macedonia, leading such Marxists as Leon Trotsky to write of “Serb imperialism”.

After World War , representatives of the Sloven, Croat and Serb ruling classes agreed freely to unite into a single state, but this “Yugoslavia” turned out to be a “Greater Serbia”.

The Serb army and the Serb tax-collectors went into Croatia like conquerors.

In World War 2 Yugoslavia was conquered and carved up by the Nazis. Serbia was put under direct German rule; Croatia and Bosnia were ruled by a Croat fascist puppet regime.

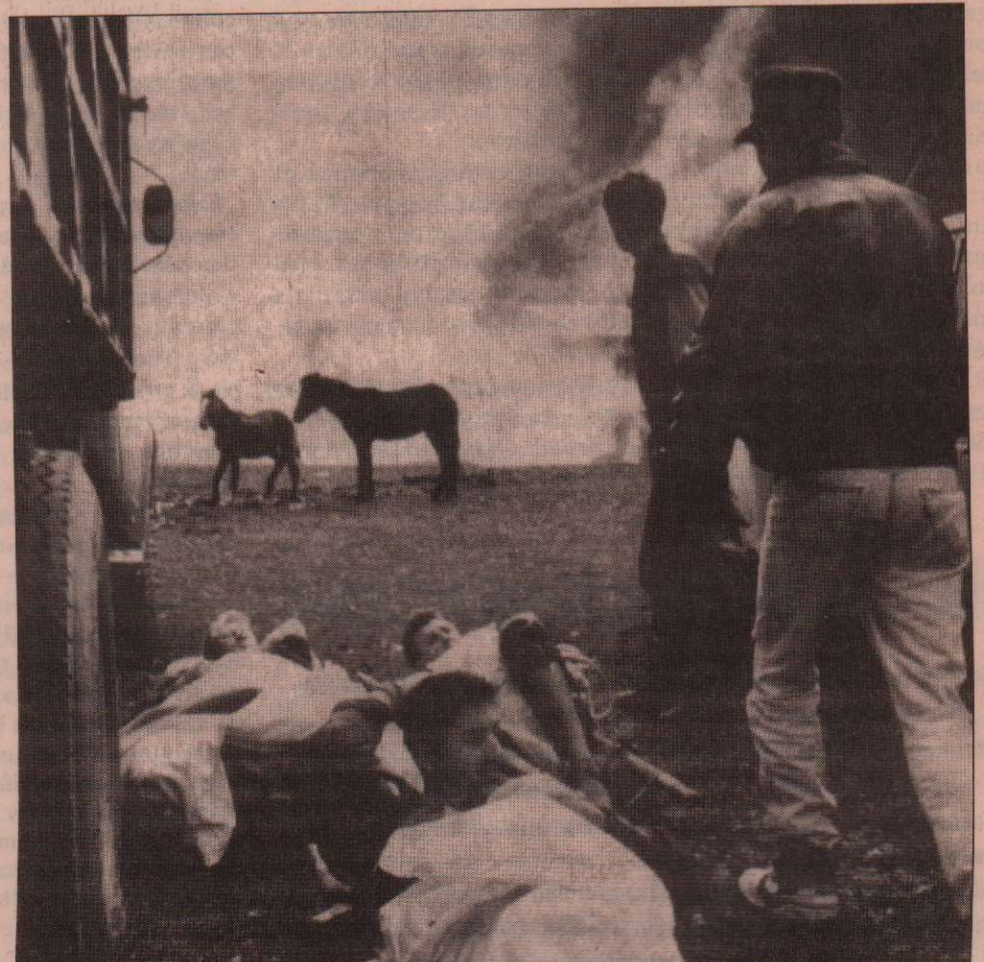
Tito’s Yugoslavia, after 1944, had careful bureaucratic checks and balances

to try to keep peace and approximate fair dealing between the nations, but, as we now see, they did not work.

The distinct history of the Bosnian Muslim people goes back to an independent Bosnian state in the Middle Ages. The Bosnians became Christian heretics, and then converted to Islam under Turkish rule. Like other Muslim Slavs, they were massacred when the Christian Slavs rose up against Turkish rule. They are an unusual nation, being a minority in their national territory, and it would be stupid to talk about a “right to self-determination” of the Muslims; nevertheless they are a people with a history, an identity, and rights.

*Socialist Worker’s* attitude here is chau-

*“The Muslims are an oppressed nation fighting against a drive to annihilate and disperse them by the imperialism of the local big power, the Serbs”.*



Srebrenica

# the Muslims!



Bosnian Muslim among the devastation wrought in Serbs' drive to annihilate

vinist and arrogant. For them, these small far-away peoples, with their obscure local quarrels, just do not merit the dignity of being called nations. The "groups" are "virtually identical in language and lifestyle" — looked at from London, they all seem much the same — so what are they worried about?

But — think about it, *Socialist Worker!* — looked at from Srebrenica, the Irish and the English must also seem "virtually identical in language and lifestyle".

Marxists approaching the national question in ex-Yugoslavia do not aim to settle the scores for past wrongs and injuries. Those wrongs and injuries have been done and cannot be undone; we must look to the future, and to a democratic arrangement giving maximum guarantees to all nations against future wrongs and injuries. This principle applies also to other national conflicts, in Israel/Palestine and Ireland, for example: democracy, not revenge!

All the history is irrelevant on *that* level, just as all national conflicts are absurd on a certain level. But we have to understand reality as it is, including the "absurd" aspects of it which have been shaped by "irrelevant" past history. To work out democratic arrangements between nations for the future, we have to understand national grievances as they are now — including the grievances of small, disregarded nations.

Otherwise we end up like certain 19th century socialists, the Proudhonists. They

declared that "all nationalities were antiquated prejudices", and Marx commented "that by the negation of nationalities [they] appeared... to understand their absorption into the model French nation". In ex-Yugoslavia the same shallow "internationalism" means the subordination of all other nations to the model Serb nation.

*Socialist Worker* is not influenced by the ghost of Proudhon, but its view of the national question has been twisted out of shape by its politics on Israel/Palestine.

Its answer to the national question has become, not consistent democracy and equal rights for all nations, but support for "good" nations against "bad" nations. And, in that framework, they define themselves as *revolutionaries* rather than mere bourgeois nationalists by how ferocious, militant, and uncompromising their support for the "good" nation against the "bad" is.

For classic, clear-cut struggles of an oppressed colonial people against a far-away imperialist, *Socialist Worker's* version produces much the same politics as the Marxist version. For more complex national questions it produces nonsense.

In Israel/Palestine *Socialist Worker* identifies the Palestinian Arabs as the "good", oppressed, anti-imperialist people — and ends up with a programme demanding the destruction of Israel and the reduction of the Israeli Jews to the status, at best, of a semi-tolerated minority in an Arab state.

In ex-Yugoslavia *Socialist Worker* can

find no "good" nations! All the nations are "bad"! All have histories of allying with big imperialist powers and of persecuting the other nationalities.

*Socialist Worker's* argument that the Bosnian Muslims, facing annihilation and dispersal, should be denied the means of self-defence, makes this clear. No, they say: if the Muslims were well-armed, then "the Muslim armies would try to secure captured land by driving out members of the other groups". The Muslims are a "bad" nation.

It is likely — indeed, *certain*, unless a united working-class and democratic movement were built in the meantime — that the Muslims would use any military superiority they won in an atrocious way. But military superiority for the Muslims over the Serbs (who are much more numerous, and have a big established military machine at their disposal) is a very far-fetched possibility.

More fundamentally, it is wrong to justify, or passively tolerate, the horrors of today by reference to the possible horrors of tomorrow.

In any such national conflict between neighbouring or intermeshed peoples, there is *always* a risk of revenge-seeking. If the Palestinian Arabs were to gain military superiority over the Israeli Jews, would there not be a risk of massacres? But should we then support an embargo on arms for the Palestinians?

Such national conflicts can only be solved by uniting the working classes so that they can lead the nations to democratic reconciliation. To unite the working classes requires a programme addressing their national grievances, and not just dismissing those grievances as "absurd". Lenin's principle should guide us here, as in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere:

"We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and do not in any way condone the strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation".

## 'Red Aid' for Bosnia

A labour movement campaign has been launched to mobilise support for Bosnian refugees.

'Red Aid' aims to:

- Campaign for the opening of the asylum doors to all victims of ethnic cleansing and those facing political persecution.
- To help provide assistance to the refugees in Britain: housing, jobs, employment, food, clothing, welfare advice, etc.
- To take direct action to stop any deportations threatened.
- To expose the hypocrisy of the present Conservative Government in their relation to refugees; and how western governments are supporting right-wing nationalist (and even fascist) forces in ex-Yugoslavia.
- To urge trade unions and Labour Parties at all levels to take a fighting stance on the defence of and aid to Bosnian refugees.
- Forge links with left-wing, trade union and workers' organisations in ex-Yugoslavia to assist in our aims. To support democratic forces genuinely fighting for democratic rights against dictatorial rule and imperialist intervention.
- To build links throughout Europe with those of a similar outlook with view towards co-ordinated action in an International Red Aid.
- To support other campaigns to open asylum doors and stop deportations, and to oppose racism and fascism.

'Red Aid' meets every Wednesday, 7.30pm; Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre, 12-14 Thornton Street, London SW9

Contact the campaign: 'Red Aid', PO Box 3104, London SE13 6EU.

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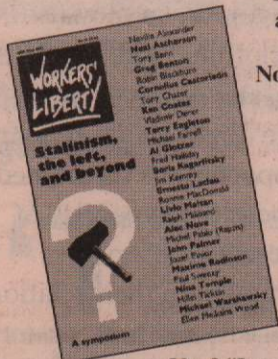
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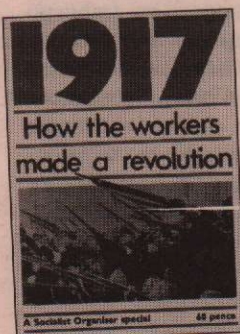
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# Class rule and the state

The second extract from Lenin's "Lecture on the State" explains how the state was changed between different economic forms of society — slavery, feudalism, capitalism — while always remaining a machinery for class rule.

THIS [SLAVE-OWNING] form [of society] was followed in history by another — feudalism. In the great majority of countries slavery in the course of its development evolved into serfdom. The fundamental division of society was now into feudal lords and peasant serfs. The form of relations between people changed. The slave-owners had regarded the slaves as their property; the law had confirmed this view and regarded the slave as a chattel completely owned by the slave-owner. As far as the peasant serf was concerned, class oppression and dependence remained, but it was not considered that the feudal lord owned the peasants as chattels, but that he was only entitled to their labour, to the obligatory performance of certain services. In practice, as you know, serfdom, especially in Russia where it survived longest of all and assumed the crudest forms, in no way differed from slavery.

Further, with the development of trade, the appearance of the world market and the development of money circulation, a new class arose within feudal society — the capitalist class. From the commodity, the exchange of commodities and the rise of the power of money, there derived the power of capital. During the eighteenth century, or rather, from the end of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, revolutions took place all over the world. Feudalism was abolished in all the countries of Western Europe. Russia was the last country in which this took place. In 1861 a radical change took place in Russia as well; as a consequence of this one form of society was replaced by another — feudalism was replaced by capitalism, under which division into classes remained, as well as various traces and remnants of serfdom, but fundamentally the division into classes assumed a different form.

The owners of capital, the owners of the land and the owners of the factories in all capitalist countries constituted and still constitute an insignificant minority of the population who have complete command of the labour of the whole people, and, consequently, command, oppress and exploit the whole mass of labourers, the majority of whom are proletarians, wage-workers, who procure their



The Tsar's subjects in Russia: the last European country to go from serfdom to capitalism, altering the nature of class exploitation

livelihood in the process of production only by the sale of their own worker's hands, their labour-power. With the transition to capitalism, the peasants, who had been disunited and downtrodden in feudal times, were converted partly (the majority) into proletarians, and partly (the minority) into wealthy peasants who themselves hired labourers and who constituted a rural bourgeoisie.

This fundamental fact — the transition of society from the Middle Ages, or, finally to capitalism — you must always bear in mind, for only by remembering this fundamental fact, only by examining all political doctrines placed in this fundamental scheme, will you be able properly to appraise these doctrines and understand what they refer to; for each of these great periods in the history of mankind, slave-owning, feudal and capitalist, embraces scores and hundreds of centuries and presents such a mass of political forms, such a variety of political doctrines, opinions and revolutions, that this extreme diversity and immense variety (especially in connection with the political, philosophical and other doctrines of bourgeois scholars and politicians) can be understood only by firmly holding, as to a guiding thread, to this division of society into classes, this change in the forms of class rule, and from this standpoint examining all social questions — economic, political, spiritual, religious, etc

If you examine the state from the standpoint of this fundamental division, you will find that before the division of society into classes, as I have already said, no state existed. But as the social division into classes arose and took firm root, as class society arose, the state also arose and took firm root. The history of mankind knows scores and hundreds of countries that have passed or are still passing

through slavery, feudalism and capitalism. In each of these countries, despite the immense historical changes that have taken place, despite all the political vicissitudes and all the revolutions due to this development of mankind, to the transition from slavery through feudalism to capitalism and to the present world-wide struggle against capitalism, you will always discern the emergence of the state. It has always been a certain apparatus which stood outside society and consisted of a group of people engaged solely, or almost solely, or mainly, in ruling. People are divided into the ruled, and into specialists in ruling, those who rise above society and are called rulers, statesmen. This apparatus, this group of people who rule others, always possesses certain means of coercion, of physical force, irrespective of whether this violence over people is expressed in the primitive club, or in more perfected types of weapons in the epoch of slavery, or in the fire-arms which appeared in the Middle Ages, or, finally, in modern weapons, which in the twentieth century are technical marvels and are based entirely on the latest achievements of modern technology. The methods of violence changed, but whenever there was a state there existed in every society a group of persons who ruled, who commanded, who dominated and who in order to maintain their power possessed an apparatus of physical coercion, an apparatus of violence with those weapons which corresponded to the technical level of the given epoch. And by examining these general phenomena, by asking ourselves why no state existed when there were no classes, when there were no exploiters and exploited, and why it appeared when classes appeared — only in this way shall we find a definite answer to the question of what is the nature and significance of the state.

# Accidental failures

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews  
*Accidental hero*

**A**CCIDENTAL HERO is not a hit, yet it's much better than I expected. It doesn't start well, but about half way through, it gets into gear and flies.

It's about a petty crook, Bernie LaPlante, who does something heroic — rescuing people from a crashed plane — but who's rooked of his reward by a holier-than-thou impostor, John Bubber.

Bubber, like Bernie, is on the skids. He's not totally homeless — he lives in his car — but he's enough of a down-and-out to cause consternation when he claims to be the "Angel of Flight 101".

He doesn't seem to fit the hero "profile", but he soon hits his stride. It turns out he was a Vietnam hero (despite looking at least ten years too young). He performs at least one miracle, and he has an endless supply of self-effacing, Christ-like speeches that have people swooning over him, including the reporter, Gale Gayley, who was on the doomed flight. Gale, with her station bosses' blessing, initiates the media search for the hero.

The comedy comes from Bubber's twitchiness about his new found (and undeserved) fame, from the studio bosses' cynical exploitation of heroism, and from Bernie's outrage at being robbed of the hero's million dollar reward.

If the film hasn't been the hit it deserves to be, there are reasons.

Hoffman's performance is all wrong at first. He's too one-note, too mean and crabby and sour for a comedy, even for a comedy about an unlikely hero. His style and the movie's clash until the plane crash scene when he suddenly loosens up.

As he makes his way through mud and water, cursing, towards the stricken plane, he's angry at himself for what he's doing. His snarling "What's your problem, pal?" as the desperate passengers hammer on the door is pure comedy. From then on,



If it's accidental becoming a hero, then it's accidental beoming a failure

you want Bernie to get something, and the film needs that to work.

The film overturns the kind of tabloid certainties and pigeonholing that most comedies rest on, the idea that what you're labelled is what you are. In this film, people change, they do unlikely things, they're contradictory. Bubber is a con artist and a bit of a saint; Bernie is both bum and hero. With everyone from the government to the media telling you that people are one-dimensional — "Monster!" "Hero!" — that can be

hard for people to grasp.

So can the film's implicit send up of the public itself, for its endless desire for, and gullibility about heroes, for its knack of choosing the false over the real. No-one likes being patronised. Yet the film isn't jeering at people; it's sympathetic to people's desire to believe in something better, greater, finer.

The film's seeming corniness, embodied in Bubber's "Everyone can be a hero if you catch them at the right moment", is really its

strength. It's nothing less than the truth, but it's an uncomfortable truth, and one that people don't like to face.

If people aren't what they seem, if bums and losers can be heroes, and people in positions of power jerks and cynics, then it can be hard to get your bearings.

*"In this film people are contradictory. Bubber is a con artist and a bit of a saint; both bum and hero."*

It's hard to accept that people are born equal — equally capable of both good and bad — and that what they become is determined by what happens to them, not by chance, not by innate goodness or evil. Bubber is "good" when he has a chance to be. It wasn't that he was bad before, but that he didn't have the chance to help people.

Bubber is proof that people can live up as well as down to expectations. People who are told repeatedly that they're worthless become worthless. Bubber tries to think the best of people; that's why he brings out the best in them.

The film isn't 100% comfortable with its message. The TV boss listens incredulously to Bubber and says: "Have you ever heard anyone talk that much drivel and bullshit — who wasn't the President?"

Yet if a Bernie LaPlante can be a hero, anyone can. *Accidental hero* is a film that says labels are wrong, that pigeonholing is wrong. And it's a laugh as well. What more could you want on a Saturday night?

## Forty years of the double helix

### SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

**A**NY LIST OF THE SEVEN scientific wonders of the world would surely include the discovery, 40 years ago, of the structure of the genetic material DNA which underlies all living things on our world. This discovery answered many crucial questions about life and pointed the way to many other questions and answers. This is an astounding achievement. We are the first living things on this planet (and perhaps anywhere) to understand the basic organisation of life.

Darwin's theory of evolution, though undoubtedly true, lacked a foundation in the then knowledge of the structure of living cells. Mendel's proof of the existence of inheritable genes for particular characters still suffered from an ignorance of the nature of those genes. Observation of cells as they divided, and of sex cells as they united, suggested a role for

the chromosomes. These were known to be composed of proteins and deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

Now, proteins were known to have a wide range of structures and properties. They are the doing molecules as well as the carrying and supporting molecules. On the other hand, DNA seemed a rather dull compound, being made up of phosphate groups, a sugar called deoxyribose and four types of base (things which react with acids). It seemed to have a supporting role in holding the chromosomes together. The proteins, made up of various combinations of 20 amino acid subunits, seemed more likely to be able to store information of the type needed to specify a living being.

A crucial experiment in the solution of this conundrum took place in 1928. It was known that the lethal pneumococcus bacterium sometimes mutated into a harmless form. Fred Griffith showed that, whereas live mutants and dead harmful bacteria were separately incapable of killing mice, a mixture of the two gave rise to lethal bacteria. Something had been picked up by the mutants from

the dead bacteria, something which had permanently converted them into the lethal form. By 1944, Avery, MacLeod and McCarty had shown that this something was DNA. Other findings over the next few years confirmed the genetic role of DNA.

In the late 1940s, James Watson was a research student working on a type of virus for his PhD. He was part of Max Delbruck's team studying bacteriophages, viruses that infect bacteria. This team was laying the foundations of the new science of molecular biology. He had been much impressed by the ideas of the physicist Erwin Schrodinger who had published a book called *What is life?* in 1945. Schrodinger had suggested that information could be inherited as a one-dimensional genetic code, rather like a book of instructions. But how could DNA fit the bill? A clue came with the discovery by Chargaff that the four DNA bases, adenine, guanine, thymine and cytosine (A, G, T and C) occurred in fixed ratios: A and T came in identical amounts as did G and C.

Part 2 next week

## Kath Crosby

I would like to offer condolences to the family and friends of Kath Crosby. Although I knew her a relatively short time I considered her a friend and comrade.

I first met Kath at a Labour Party meeting where she bought a *Socialist Organiser* for 'old times' sake. I know she read the paper because she would often tell me which articles were wrong or 'crap'.

Kath liked to cut through the 'crap' whether it be as Chair of Norwood Labour Party or when organising the left. Kath led by example. Just a few weeks before she died, whilst obviously in pain, she was still talking about stopping the yuppie right taking over the Labour Party. Once in a fight, she wouldn't give up. It was ironic that she admitted that she "had to be dragged kicking into the Labour Party" in the seventies.

As Fran Brodie explained in last week's *SO*, Kath was no stranger to witch-hunts. Nevertheless you could always rely on Kath. She helped in the 'End the Ban' campaign when *Socialist Organiser* was banned. Between us we wrote the only eligible emergency motion to Labour Party conference opposing the suspension of Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, and she spoke as Labour Party delegate.

There was more to Kath than the 'determined working class woman'. One of the complaints she often made was that the left didn't read anymore. For she wasn't just an activist, she also took history and ideas seriously. She was quite proud of herself when she gave a Labour Party presentation at the House of Commons and quoted big chunks of James P Cannon.

She still considered herself a revolutionary and a Marxist. She had been a member of *Workers' Fight* together with some people now involved in *Socialist Organiser*. Kath left the organisation and was somewhat sceptical about all revolutionary organisations — but I have a sneaking feeling that she considered us the best of a bad lot!

I will miss Kath a lot — especially our occasional chats when she would tell me about fighting the fascists in the early seventies or about what went wrong with the women's movement, or what the left has got to do now etc. I am sure that everyone who counted on her support whether in the Labour Party or trade union or in the advice centre, will miss her also.

Dion D'Silva, London

## Stalin vs. Trotsky

### Periscope

Tom Rigby previews *Red Empire*, Channel 4, Sunday 1 May, 10.50pm

**E**PISODE THREE OF Robert Conquest's *Red Empire* will deal with the battle in the USSR in the 1920s between the emerging bureaucratic ruling class represented by Stalin and the Left Opposition led by Leon Trotsky.

So far, this series has hardly been a classic example of objective and rigorous scholarship, but as programmes on the ex-USSR go it isn't bad.

Conquest is right wing, but at least he realises that good bourgeois history is not the same as propaganda. He attempts to present the whole picture.

If only the leader writers and news editors of the quality papers and on TV programmes like *Newsnight* had the same standards!

## ORGANISING

# Why you should be a socialist

**W**E 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 to productivity and profitability.

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

**F**ROM THAT COMES the cultural blight and barbarism of our society force-fed on profitable pap. From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" in 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 principle of profitable 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 produce societies like Britain's 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 this society of ours where the rich, who — through their servants and agents — hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a mental condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and prevent real democratic self-control developing within the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence — whatever they need to use. They have used fascist gangs when they needed to, and they 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 full 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 and should 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; we back 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. We are deep in the worse capitalist slump for 60 years.

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.

# Dayschool planned for 15 May AWL discusses the politics of black liberation

**T**HE Alliance for Workers' Liberty will be holding a political school to debate the issues of anti-racism and black liberation, on Saturday 15 May in London.

The school will look at two main areas: lessons from America, and the issues that face us in Britain today.

We will look at the period of American history which began with the struggles against the slave system and ended with mass action against racism during the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

We will examine the way the slaves were freed during the Civil War and the period of Reconstruction for the explanation of

deep-running white racism.

We will look at the politics of Garvey, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and the Black Panthers.

We ask the question: were these fighters right?

And we examine the socialist tradition of CLR James and Leon Trotsky.

We want to use the lessons from America in the struggle against racism in Britain, and so we will examine the differences and similarities between the two societies.

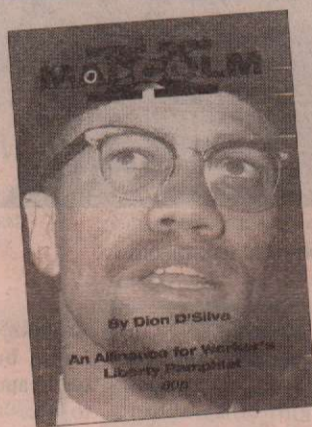
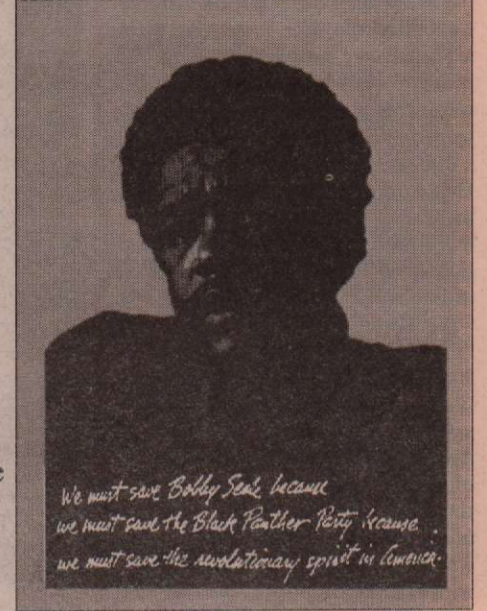
This dayschool is open, in particular, to interested black youth

and workers, but also to white AWL members and sympathisers.

Phone Mark on 071-639 7965 for more details.

A reading pack is available for £1.50 plus 45 pence p&p, available from: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. (Cheques to "WL Publications").

HERE AND NOW FOR BOBBY SEALE



## Who was the real Malcolm X?

*A new pamphlet from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty*

80 pence plus 32 pence p&p

# Alliance for Workers' Liberty public meetings

### Thurs 29 April

#### "History of American Socialism"

Luton AWL meeting. 5pm, Brewery Tap. Speaker: Mark Sandell.

#### "South Africa — stop the killings!"

Goldsmiths College AWL meeting. 12.30, student union building.

### Weds 5 May

#### "The politics of education"

London AWL forum. A debate between Ian Hollingworth and the

Campaign for Real Education.

### Thurs 6 May

#### "Crisis in South Africa"

Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street.

#### "South Africa in Crisis"

York University AWL meeting. 8.00, Goodericke College G120. Speaker: Richard Bayley.

#### "Youth for Justice"

Newcastle Youth Fightback meeting. 1pm, Newcastle Tech college.

### Thurs 13 May

#### "Ireland — the socialist solution"

Manchester AWL meeting. 8.00, Unicorn pub. Speaker: Sean Matgamna.

#### Miners

### Sat 1 May

#### NUM benefit show

8.00, Hackney Empire, East London.

#### May Day

### Sat 1 May

March from Finsbury Park,

North London for a rally at Alexandra Palace. Assemble: 11.30; move off at 1.00.

#### Students & Youth

### Thurs 13 May

#### Lobby of Parliament Against Voluntary Membership

12 noon. Organised by Save our Student Unions Campaign. Details: Elaine Jones, 071-272 8900.

# Rail: Magnificent Seven ride to Major's rescue

By a railworker

**N**EXT WEEK members of the railworkers' union RMT are to ballot for more strikes in defence of jobs.

After two solid one-day strikes the action should be escalating, but instead — thanks to the brave stand of a small but dedicated band of RMT executive members dubbed "the Magnificent

Seven" — the union is to put a revised "offer" to the members before any more action.

BR's offer is meaningless. All they have said is that they cannot "foresee" any compulsory redundancies. They would say that, wouldn't they?

They will continue not to "foresee" compulsory redundancies until they announce them.

RMT members should reject

this hopeless offer and push for the escalation and widening of the dispute.

Last week's shenanigans also serve to underline the need for a decent rank and file movement on the railways.

A hard-right minority on the RMT National Executive have bent the union's constitution to sabotage the action, by declaring that a two-thirds majority on the executive is needed for action to be called.

This is true, but irrelevant. The executive has already

voted unanimously for action. What was under discussion

was calling off the action, not calling it.

## Rail vote crucial to pits fight

**D**ESPITE increased pressure from the Coal Board and the Tories, egged on by an "I'm all right, Jack" chorus from the UDM leaders who have signed their own rotten sectional deal in Notts, the NUM leadership has stressed that the union's pro-

gramme of one-day strikes will continue.

Right now, the best thing that can be done to help the miners is to fight against the treachery of the rail union leaders, Fullick and Knapp. And winning a resounding vote for action in RMT's ballot next week is the

key task not just for railworkers but for every socialist and trade union activist. The miners must not fight alone!

AWL railworkers will be producing a special leaflet to argue the case for action. If you want to help us circulate it, contact Tom on 071-639 7965.

## Scottish post workers defy anti-union laws

**T**HE SITUATION in the Dunfermline office is that the kettle is still boiling away. If any union officials are disciplined as a result of the strike, then the result of a ballot on industrial action will be in management's hands within a matter of days. "What management don't realise is that what they have achieved is to make the union stronger — a lot of members now realise that, despite the union legislation, they can still take action." This is how one local UCW official summed up the mood amongst union members in Dunfermline in the aftermath of their recent strike which forced management to carry out a complete climbdown.

The strike began on Thursday, 6 April, when a postal worker in the Dunfermline sorting office was suspended for refusing to accept a shift changeover which management was attempting to impose in breach of agreed procedures.

The bulk of the rest of the workforce immediately walked out on strike in support of their victimised colleague. Despite management attempts at intimidation and threats of sacking, only 8 out of a total staff of 140 were at work the following day.

When news of the suspension and walkout reached the Mechanised Letters Office in Edinburgh two hours later, all 500 staff there immediately went on strike as well.

Dunfermline management initially took a hard line in response to the strike. When the Dunfermlin strikers voted at a mass meeting to return to work, hold a ballot, and then come out on strike again, management's response was to refuse to allow them back into work, thus effectively transforming the dispute into a lock-out.

Management also took steps to have court summons issued against union officials in both Dunfermline and Edinburgh, given that the strike action in both towns was in breach of the Tories' anti-union laws.

By the Saturday (8 April), however, management had caved in completely. "It was going to escalate. If we had not got back to work on the Saturday it was within two hours of becoming a national dispute. All the mechanised offices throughout the country were ready to take action," explained the UCW official.

The suspension was lifted and a pledge given that there would not be any victimisation.

Management's mini-offensive in Dunfermline was no isolated incident. As the union official put it: "This kind of thing is happening to union officials all through the country. They're out to chop heads, there's no doubt about that. It's all building up to try to destroy the union".

The Dunfermline/Edinburgh strike and victory followed on less than a month after a similar strike and victory by postal workers in the Wirral. Maybe spontaneous strikes are starting to come back into fashion again.

## London buses: all out to win!

**A** LOT OF people are asking where the dispute goes from here? The trouble is I don't think the union knows."

That is how one TGWU rep at a north London garage described the state of the London busworkers' dispute after the latest of a series of days of action.

"The next strike will not be until 10 May," he added "and after that nobody seems to know."

It is certainly true that the dispute, which is over massive wage cuts, increased hours and attacks on pension rights, is at a crucial stage.

Unfortunately, those busworkers that do have a strategy for winning the dispute: escalation through all-out action are still weak and lack any mechanism through which they can push the union into calling the action that is needed.

Control of the dispute needs to be taken out of the hands of the narrow group of full-time officials and senior officers who seem determined to keep the

broader membership in the dark.

Immediately, activists in the TGWU should push for garage meetings and pass resolutions demanding a new ballot for all-out action and that those areas, East London and West Central, that have not been called out are re-balloted.

It's a miracle that the incompetence of the TGWU leadership on the London buses did not wreck the dispute before it got started. They allowed people to be isolated and forced into signing new contracts, only the massive scale of management's attacks, and the anger it aroused, forced them into giv-

ing any kind of lead at all.

The task is once again to turn that rank and file anger into action, but this time action that can win.

All-out action will not make it more difficult to "persuade" and "convince" the government, it will make it easier. After all the Tories are more likely to be attentive if we are putting pressure on their friends, London's boss class, who rely on the bus service to get their workers to work.

An all-out strike which could partially paralyse London is much more likely to get the Tories listening than a few protest marches and lobbies.

## Why did Shepherds Bush fight alone?

**T**HE longest running single bus garage strike in London's history ended earlier this month.

For well over a fortnight workers at Shepherds Bush stood firm but alone in the face of a hostile management.

Their action in protest at terrible new rosters had management worried. They offered minor

concessions after a week or so, but in the end, with no second front opening up they were forced back to work.

The question remains: why did Shepherd's Bush have to fight alone?

Was it pure coincidence that no more days of action were called while they were still out?

## Manchester housing strike

By Tony Dale (Nalگو Convener, Manchester City Council Housing Department)

**T**HE STRIKE on Wednesday 21 April was very successful. Only a couple of housing offices opened and nearly all Town Hall sections were at a standstill. The vast majority of Nalگو members supported the strike call. Other trade unionists, especially NUPE members, supported the action and respected picket lines. This level of unity bodes well for UNISON and the sooner we get one united UNISON branch covering all housing workers the stronger we will be.

The strike was even more impressive given the level of management intimidation. Redeployed staff from Direct Works were told that support for the strike 'could affect their probation period'. Team leaders were told their 'future in the department would be damaged' if they joined the strike. One Nalگو member initially had his interview for Housing Officer terminated because he was on

strike. A woman who recently returned from maternity leave was informed that taking action would lead to her being required to repay maternity pay.

This day of strike action was called to oppose the suspension and gross misconduct disciplinary action against one member and to oppose written warnings against over 80 Nalگو members who joined an unofficial strike in February.

Housing Department management, backed by the Labour Council, have taken a very hard-line stance against the workers. Disciplinary, suspensions from the sickness procedure, name badges, offices

without screens, a proposed dress code and harassment of trade union activists are all part of a management offensive.

Despite their anti-trade union campaign Wednesday's strike proves that the union is still alive and kicking.

The key to the strike's success was that it was sanctioned by an official ballot. Unofficial action in February was supported by 80 workers. The official strike had over 80% support.

A Housing Department Nalگو meeting is set for 29 April. The pressure on management should be kept up. A ballot for another one-day strike is the way forward.

## Industrial Front

The leadership of NUPE is preparing the ballot the union's Health Service members over the Tories' 1.5% pay freeze. Members will be asked to "reluctantly" accept the cut in real wages. NUPE leaders Poole and Sawyer think "the issue" is jobs, not wages, but they also say that national action on jobs is impossible.

The traditionally conservative tax workers' union IRSF has voted for a strike over plans to sell the Inland Revenue's computer centres to IBM. The IRSF leaders are also on the verge of pushing through acceptance of the Tories' 1.5% pay freeze.

Print and media workers at Morgan Grampian started protest sit-ins this week after management revealed their plans for union de-recognition.

## Alliance for Workers' Liberty

### Industrial cadre school

London Sunday 23 May

#### Agenda

10.15: The state of the movement today and our tasks.

12-1.00 Lunch

1.00 A. The political economy of the Tory offensive against the public sector and public sector workers  
B. Connolly and the sympathetic

strike

2.30: Break

2.45: A. Solidarity, the law and unofficial action

B. Classical Marxism and the unions

4.15: Summing up and conclusion

4.30: Ends

If you have any queries about the school contact Tom on: 071 639 7965.

Reading: "New Problems, New Struggles" plus photocopies available for £5 from PO Box, 823, London SE15 4NA.

## Derrick Fullick — good riddance to bad rubbish

**D**ERRICK FULLICK leader of ASLEF, is retiring later this year. He will not be remembered for his willingness to fight for the members against management and government.

His role in his last year has been particularly bad: failure to lead a fight over the end to the 1956 Machinery of Negotiation, failure to show necessary unity with the RMT over the threats contained in the Company Plan on the underground and failure to support unequivocally requests for solidarity from the NUM.

The latest blunders include a three week silence after the RMT announced its intention to ballot, followed by circulars making sure RMT pickets lines were crossed on 2 April.

Most of ASLEF's members then unexpectedly received ballot papers through the post asking for a "yes" vote for a series of one-day strikes over changes to Promotion, Transfer and Redundancy agreements after privatisation.

In the absence of any campaign for a "yes" vote over an issue that had to be explained to the membership, the narrow vote in favour of strike action was testament to the rank and file's willingness to fight, and another example of maneuvering by the executive to try to take pressure off themselves, while simultaneously avoiding confrontation.

The "yes" vote led to a one-day strike on 16 April alongside the RMT. The joint action was a tremendous success.

However the giveaway that the leadership were not involved in a serious battle but were, in fact,

determined to sell out came the following week when ASLEF settled. Rumours had reached pickets lines on the day of the strike that this was about to happen. By all accounts Fullick seemed determined to settle in spite of protests even from others on the executive.

So it is back to square one. Privatisation, a 1.5% pay cut looming and still the threat of redundancies and loss of conditions of service when BR is sold off.

ASLEF branches must organise now to outmaneuver this unaccountable, undemocratic, incompetent misleadership. We should learn from the RMT's rank and file initiative, the Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic Union, and set up a similar campaign inside ASLEF. This could incorporate demands for all full-time officials to be on the average earnings of a driver, as well as making them subject to immediate recall if they are not being accountable to the branches.

Right now we feel powerless on the ground at the same time as the executive feel all powerful in relation to us but fear and are paralysed by the anti-trade union laws.

The situation will only change if we organise at an LDC level.

Branches should protest at the sell out. We should demand that the executive fight over the 1.5% pay limit and turn the fight into a crusade against privatisation.

We must also show maximum unity with other railworkers. Only the management and Tories gain from our own divisions. The Tories' plans can be defeated. But waiting for those 'above us' will not work.

## Journalists fight derecognition

By Steven Holt (chair, NUJ Book Branch)

This year's ADM (conference) of the National Union of Journalists met at a time when the union is facing increasingly fierce attacks on its ability to defend the conditions of media workers.

Mass sackings at the Mirror and derecognition drives at Reed Elsevier and Morgan Grampian forced the delegates to put aside much of the factional backbiting that has dogged recent ADMs, and instead to concentrate on organisational and industrial matters. Being rid of former General Secretaries Steve Turner and Jake Ecclestone has improved matters at

the top, but the real resistance has to come from the members in the workplaces.

Hopeful signs include the possibility that the well-organised Morgan Grampian chapel will be able to fight off derecognition. The NUJ Left met for a discussion of strategy at which a policy of recruitment to the left in the regions was agreed, as opposed to the previous limitation to the London area.

The situation would be massively improved by the increased possibilities of solidarity that we would have with a merged media union with the GPMU and BECTU. ADM passed overwhelmingly motions urging the leadership to press ahead with negotiations leading to merger.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The tradition is more relevant than ever

## Why May Day is the workers' day

Rosa Luxemburg wrote this account of the origins of May Day in 1894

THE HAPPY IDEA OF USING a proletarian holiday celebration as a means to attain the eight-hour day was first born in Australia. The workers there decided in 1856 to organise a day of complete work stoppage together with meetings and entertainment as a demonstration in favour of the eight-hour day. The day of this celebration was to be 21 April. At first, the Australian workers intended this only for the year 1856. But this first celebration had such a strong effect on the proletarian masses of Australia, enlivening them and leading to new agitation, that it was decided to repeat the celebration every year.

In fact, what could give the workers greater courage and faith in their own strength than a mass work stoppage which they had decided themselves? What could give more courage to the eternal slaves of the factories and the workshops than the mustering of their own troops? Thus, the idea of a proletarian celebration was quickly accepted and, from Australia, began to spread to other countries until finally it had conquered the whole proletarian world.

The first to follow the example of the Australian workers were the Americans. In 1886 they decided that 1 May should be the day of universal work stoppage. On this day 200,000 of them left their work and demanded the eight-hour day. Later police and legal harassment prevented the workers for many years from repeating this [size] demonstration. However, in 1888 they renewed their decision and decided that the next celebration would be 1 May, 1890.

In the meanwhile, the workers' movement in Europe had grown strong and animated. The most powerful expression of this movement occurred at the International Workers' Congress in 1889. At this Congress, attended by four hundred delegates, it was decided that the eight-hour day must be the first demand. Whereupon the delegate of the French unions, the worker Lavigne from Bordeaux, moved that this demand be expressed in all countries through a universal work stoppage. The delegate of the American workers called attention to the decision of his comrades to strike on 1 May, 1890, and the Congress decided on



May Day march in France: the banner reads "May 1st of struggle and unity"

this date for the universal proletarian celebration.

In this case, as thirty years before in Australia, the workers really thought only of a one-time demonstration. The Congress decided that the workers of all lands would demonstrate together for the eight-hour day on 1 May 1890. No one spoke of a repetition of the holiday for the next years. Naturally no one could predict the lightning like way in which this idea would succeed and how quickly it would be adopted by the working classes. However, it was enough to celebrate the May Day simply one time in order that everyone understand and feels that May Day must be a yearly and continuing institution...

The first of May demanded the introduction of the eight hour day. But even after this goal was reached, May Day was not given up. As long as the struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie and the ruling class continues, as long as all demands are not met, May Day will be the yearly expression of these demands. And, when

better days dawn, when the working class of the world has won its deliverance — then too humanity will probably celebrate May Day in honour of the bitter struggles and the many sufferings of the past.

THE TORY government is abolishing the May Day public holiday with scarcely a squeak of opposition from the labour movement.

Yet the idea of May Day — concerted simultaneous demonstrations and strikes by workers all over the world, highlighting common demands — is more relevant than ever.

Capitalism has become more and more international; narrow national working class strategies have less and less grip.

In Western Europe, the increased integration of the European Community creates more and more pressure for a levelling of workers' wages and conditions across the different countries. The labour movement needs a Europe-wide strategy to impose levelling-up, not levelling-down.

The original focus of May Day — the shorter working week — is still relevant. On paper there is a European TUC campaign for a 35 hour week.

There should be a campaign in reality, with work redistributed so as to provide jobs to the millions of unemployed.

Workers in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe urgently need to see the labour movement as an active, dynamic international force — a force to look to when their first hopes of capitalist prosperity fade away. Workers in the oppressed nations need to see the international labour movement standing up for democracy and equal rights for all nations.

Mostly, in Britain, the labour movement has done little to make the May Day holiday legislated by the last Labour government as from 1978 into anything different from any other public holiday.

Now the Tories are scrapping the holiday and forcing the labour movement to think again. Let's rediscover the traditions of May Day!

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