

SOCIALIST

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LABOUR MUST FIGHT BACK

A bad guy and a worse guy

JIMMY KNAPP, the present General Secretary of the RMT, has to stand for re-election soon. Knapp is a cowardly "left"-talking bureaucrat whose stock-in-trade is selling out struggles and then blaming the membership. In 1992 he betrayed the victimised Manchester guards — despite a ballot majority for a strike in their defence. He helped throw away no less than two ballot majorities for strike action against the London Underground Company Plan. Last year he called off the third of the days of action against job losses, despite solid support for the previous two. At present he's busy signing away jobs and conditions right, left and centre. Naturally, RMT members should vote for him.

The "naturally" bit was meant to be a joke, but perhaps it wasn't in the best of taste: certainly, a lot of rank and file RMT members will find voting for Knapp very distasteful. There's a strong case for abstaining between him and his opponent Norman Guy. Some left-wing RMT branches have even nominated right-winger Guy as a protest against Knapp's sell-outs.

Nevertheless, most of the RMT left will be supporting Knapp with gritted teeth and knotted stomachs. It would have been infinitely better for the serious left in the union (loosely grouped around the "Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic Union") to have stood their own candidate against Knapp. They could have done so and various potential candidates were, in fact, approached. The best of the possible left candidates were unwilling to stand for fear of appearing to use CFDU's campaign for union democracy to further their personal ambitions. Another potential candidate though less credible is associated with the Morning Star who it seems don't want to oppose Knapp because, in the wider movement, they still consider him one of their chums.

So the RMT doesn't have a candidate. But why call for a vote for Knapp?

The glib answer would be that however bad Knapp is, Guy would be even worse. He represents the most neanderthal and venal section of the RMT bureaucracy — the people who gave Knapp his excuse to call off last year's strikes and whose main activity of late has been attempting to get the union's AGM overturned in order to protect their future redundancy pay-offs. A victory for Guy would be a massive boost for the hard right not just within the RMT, but throughout the labour movement.

But pointing out how bad Guy would be isn't enough. There has to be some positive reason for giving any support to Knapp. It is, admittedly, difficult to think of any. But in the end it comes down to this: Knapp can be moved. If the rank and file put pressure on him he can be forced to act.

Now, some of you may say, this applies equally to all trade union bureaucrats. True, but some are more equal than others, and Knapp is much more likely to respond to rank and file pressure than Guy.

Think on this: if Arthur Scargill can force Jimmy to the left and call strikes alongside the miners then surely the RMT rank and file can do the same. After all, there's nothing a left faker likes more than faking...

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

By Tom Rigby

The Tories are embarrassed and on the run. Figures published by the Treasury itself show that all the Tories talk about reducing taxes are a lie.

In fact, the average family now pays more tax than they ever did under Labour.

Though it's great to see Tory politicians wincing with embarrassment and fumbling for the right word, we should be aware of the dangers implicit in the current episode of Tory embarrassment.

The Labour front bench have accepted the central Tory argument that low taxation should be one of the key objectives of government policy.

Smith, Brown and Prescott will now have to compete with the Tories in a Dutch Auction to show who can make the most savage cuts in public services, the NHS, welfare benefits and public sector pay in order to finance tax reduc-

tion.

Temporary Tory embarrassment could be transformed into a long term adoption by Labour of their opponents agenda.

And we should be perfectly clear about what that agenda implies.

- Cuts in social security, pensions and invalidity benefit.

- Scrapping universal benefits like Child Benefit

- Running down the NHS and not investing in available technology that can save lives.

- More private health care and insurance leading to a fully divided two tier health service.

- Further cuts in student grants leading to a situation where working class youth will find it very difficult to go to college or university.

- More contracting out and "Market Testing" in the public sector leading to lower wages, worsening conditions and attacks on trade union rights. Already the Tories plan to scrap 1 million public sector jobs in the next few years,

farming the remains out to private sector profiteers.

- A continued indefinite pay freeze for public sector workers.

If Labour is not to throw away the political advantage it now has over the Tories then it must reject this agenda.

Instead Labour should go out and organise a mass campaign of political action and support for workplace struggle with the object of forcing the Tories to face an early general election.

But in order to get this the rank and file of the trade unions and Labour Party must light a bonfire under the front bench. We must reassert the elementary ideas of working class solidarity and socialism, the idea that human needs should come before capitalist profits, that decent health, education and housing are human rights for all and not commodities to be purchased on the basis of the balance in your bank account.

We saw a glimpse of such a working class revival during the

pits crisis in October '92. We will see it again so long as the left in the labour movement get it's act together and does everything it can to force the TUC and Labour leaders to lead a serious fight back.

The lie machine



The Mirror printed a damning, front page indictment of British capitalism this Tuesday (Jan 25th) when it carried the tragic story of Vicky Rimmer.

Vicky who is blind and unable to move, talk or eat is dying of a rare disease CJD. It is quite likely she caught the disease through coming in to contact with contaminated meat from animals suffering from "Mad-cow" disease.

A government doctor told her family to hush up the story "Think of the economy" he told Vicky's granny.

It seems that the profits of the Tories' favourites the farm lobby stand a lot higher than the health of our youngsters. British meat is the most poisonous in Europe: the EEC even once refused to use it as emergency relief for the starving. But they still pay farmers for the Euro-Meat Mountain.

18 January 1994. Supporters gather to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the setting up of the women's camp at Parkside pit near Warrington. Photo: Paul Herrmann



TUC march Unite against racism!

THE TUC is organising a national trade union demonstration against racism and fascism in East London on Saturday 19 March.

A neo-Nazi British National Party member Derek Beackon was elected in Millwall, Tower Hamlets, last September. A brutal racist attack on an Asian youth, Qudus Ali occurred in the same month.

The labour movement must start building now for this TUC march. The demonstration organisers are expecting 20,000 people. However, this protest could be much bigger than that if the official labour movement begins some serious work.

The TUC's initial march leaflet points out that the racists are getting a hearing because of increasing levels of unemployment and terrible housing conditions. Half right! The other side of the matter is that the TUC needs to spell out a radical policy to deal with unemployment and the housing crisis. It hasn't!

We must tie campaigning against racism and calls for black and white unity to campaign for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay a massive extension of public works and the right of all to a home. That could end unemployment at the expense of the capitalists — make them pay for the crisis, not black workers!

The racist Liberal who run Tower Hamlets council are being as obstructive as possible. They have denied march organiser George Connolly the use of two local parks, and it now seems that the rally will have to be held in neighbouring Hackney.

Quite rightly, the TUC's Race Advisory Committee has a policy that the Liberals should not be involved in the demonstration. Tower Hamlets Liberals have been involved in a series of scandals where they have been thoroughly exposed for their pandering to racism.

A Labour victory over the BNP in the May local government elections must be another key element of

this campaign. We should argue that union delegations to the TUC's demonstration should then go back and organise for Labour in the May. In particular we should target the seats where the fascists are standing.

And here there is an argument to be had on the left. The SWP's front, the Anti-Nazi League, gave out leaflets in Millwall saying "don't vote nazi". In other words they could not even bring themselves to say "vote Labour". They said in effect 'Vote Liberal, Tory, anything will do'.

To organisations like the Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist Alliance we must say this: your organisations will be increasingly marginal as the run up to May begins because the only anti-fascism that makes sense against nazi election candidates is a policy which includes canvassing and working for the trade unions' party, Labour. No-one is arguing against demonstrations and pickets and stickers and self defence. We are for these things. But your organisations must also say "Vote Labour" too.

Unite Against Racism Assemble at 11.00, on Saturday 19 March in Spitalfields, East London

Warning to Student activists

By Mark Sandell

LAST TERM Seth Harman the Socialist Workers Student Society organiser offered Left Unity votes at NUS conference if we organised a national student demo.

Now Left Unity, five Area NUS's and 12 University student unions have organised a national march SWSS are claiming it is a Socialist Worker Party demo!

They have put out their own Socialist Worker publicity and are putting motions into student unions saying it's an SWP event.

The problem is that most student unions will not support a Socialist Worker demo. SWSS are a small and unpopular sect.

Most students unions want a broad based national demo. SWSS's antics could undermine the demo if they go unchecked. The SWSS leadership are prepared to undermine mass action, attack the broader left, and lie about the demo, so long as they can recruit a few students.

SWSS should stop its attempt to give the mobilisation for February 23rd the kiss of death, and unite with Left Unity and others to build a broad based demonstration.

Tower Hamlets 9 — innocent!

On Friday 10 September 1993, at a picket in East London in solidarity with racist attack victim, Qudus Ali, nine youths were arrested and charged under Section 1 of the 1986 Public Order Act. This is the very serious charge of riot, carrying a maximum of ten years imprisonment. The picket was attacked by the police. These youth are innocent and should be released! Protest! Picket Thames magistrates court 9.30 Tuesday 1 February Bow Road London E3 More details: 081-548 0099

Build the fightback!

THE TORIES' pay freeze which means that all public sector workers will not get an increase in their pay packets until 1997 shows clearly the need for a co-ordinated fight back across the unions. But the problem is that the national union leaders are at best very sluggish about organising such a fightback.

It is therefore vital for rank and file activists from across the unions to meet, debate and discuss strategy. An occasion for such discussion will hopefully be provided by the forthcoming Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee conference in early February.

Despite the fact that the SMTUC has not done much in the last few years it remains the only relatively open co-ordinating centre that could help link together the left in the unions.

All serious socialist trade union activists should attend. If workers from a broad range of industrial sectors and experience can make an input then the SMTUC can take on some life again.

Build the Fightback — Unshackle the unions! Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee Conference

5/6 February 1994 Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Registration and sponsorship The conference is open to delegates from bona fide trade union and labour movement organisations and to individual activists. Full weekend £10, one day £6 low/unwaged £3

Send registration and/or sponsorship details including name, address, union or organisation to Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15.



No The Star is not denouncing the fact that the Windsors are at least 6 mansions or castles and a large part of Scotland to house a family of 11. That would be cheap. Whereas a working class family of 11 living in two council semis is a major scandal!



The Daily Express was doing its best to help the beleaguered Tories this week. What they failed to point out was that the DSS has deliberately transferred thousands of people into sickness and invalidity benefit so as to artificially reduce the already artificially high unemployment figures. This is a no-lose game for the Tories because in stage 1 you reduce the dole figures and in stage 2 you expose 'benefit fraud'.

The old left continues to rot

THE "George-Galloway-loves-Saddam-Hussein" affair gave the Tories a brief respite from their own scandals and sensational revelations last week.

It brought no respite to socialists concerned at the continuing decay of the old left. It was the latest putrescent manifestation of that decay.

The Tories needed the respite, and though in fact it was the BBC monitoring service which "broke" the story, we got tabloid front pages like those you see in the montage on page 4. Beneath the abuse, they must have loved George Galloway! "Where's your nose been, Galloway? ...stuck up Saddam's junta, that's where!" grimly chortled the dingy *Star*. The *Express* was less vulgar but not less stark in its judgement on Galloway's speech in the presence of the Iraqi dictator: "Treachery". The *Mirror* called Galloway, "the mother of all idiots".

There is a reckless hypocrisy here, of course. George Galloway offered Saddam Hussein only dollops of goey flattery and a pennant when he met him; the Tories who rushed to denounce Galloway had given him a secret supply of arms in the build-up to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Where were the front-page-tabloid denunciations then, or later?

Two things need to be said here. The first is that George Galloway is right to call for an end to the sanctions against Iraq. Saddam Hussein has survived sanctions. Thousands — perhaps many thousands — of Iraqis have not. Vast numbers of poor Iraqis are today suffering privation and hardship because of those sanctions.

The second thing that needs to be said is that the outcry, disgustingly hypocritical though it was, for once was justified.

Saddam Hussein has misruled Iraq for a quarter of a century. The independent Iraqi labour movement was long ago crushed, its militants killed and jailed.

Saddam Hussein is an Iraqi-scale cross between Hitler and Stalin. His regime is one of the most murderous in a world in which savage-

ly repressive regimes are no rarity.

Now, despite Saddam Hussein, it was necessary to oppose the US-led onslaught on Iraq three years ago — as *Socialist Organiser* opposed it. It is necessary now to oppose sanctions. But that does not require of socialists that they support Saddam Hussein, fawn like power-worshipping courtiers before a mass murderer, or make tight-throated, awe-struck speeches in his presence, in praise of his "strength", "courage" and "indefatigability".

Indeed, to link the demand that UN sanctions be lifted with praise for Saddam Hussein is to discredit the anti-sanctions cause with many who do not want to go on punishing the Iraqi people with sanctions but would like to see Saddam Hussein in hell.

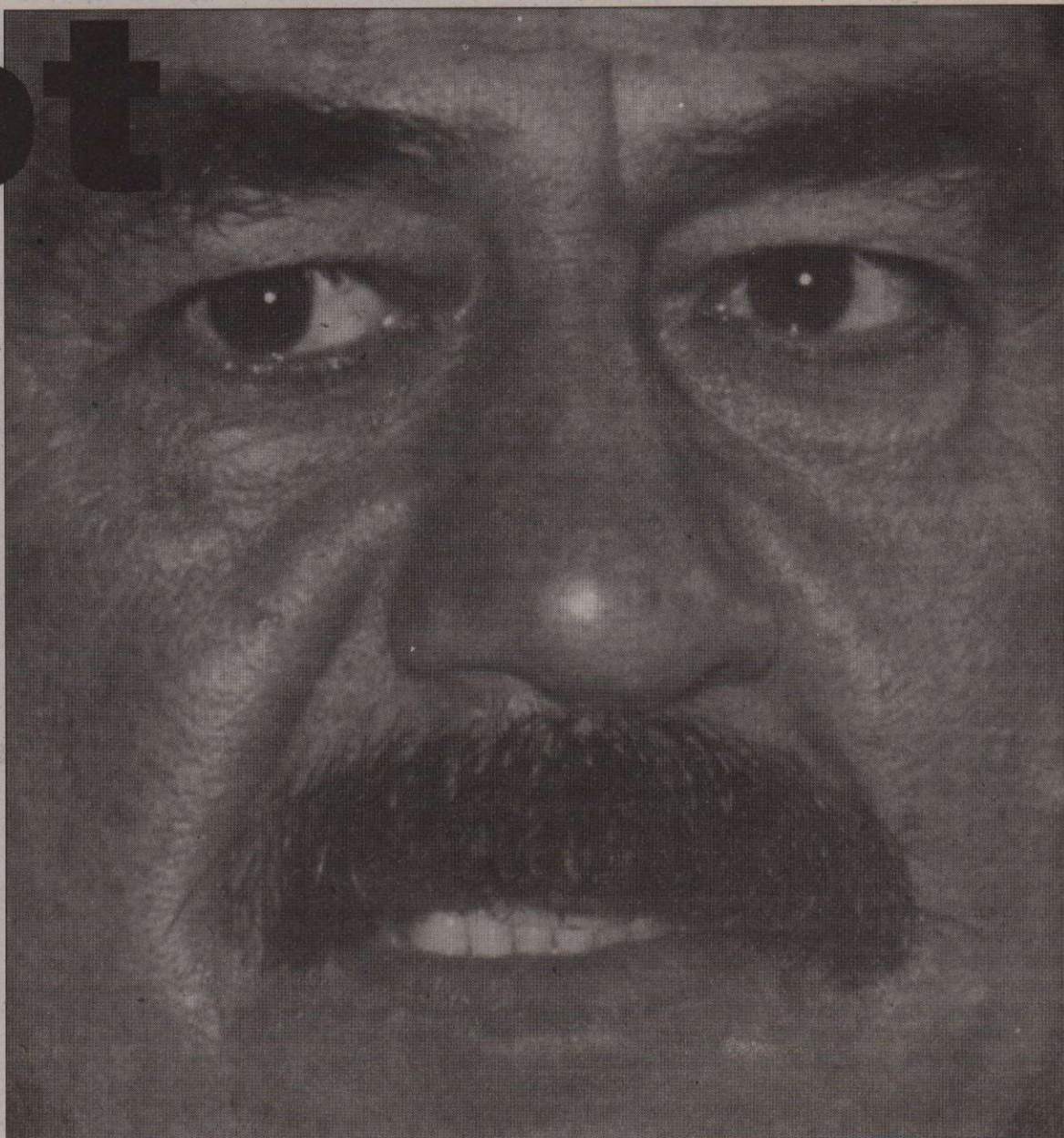
The facts seem to be these. George Galloway, MP for Dundee East, was one of a delegation of European MPs who presented Saddam Hussein with a pennant from Palestinian youth in the Israeli occupied territories. His Scottish voice grave with sincerity, Galloway stood within smelling distance of the Iraqi Dictator and addressed him directly:

"Sir ... we salute your courage, your strength and your indefatigability".

He then went on to assure Saddam Hussein that Palestinians he had just visited were naming their children after him. He ended his speech with the words "we are with you", and then some words in Arabic which the BBC translated as: "Until victory! Until Jerusalem!"

At first Galloway tried to weasel it out, denying that he had been addressing Saddam Hussein. He had, he said in face of the evidence of cameras and microphones, merely been saluting the Iraqi people, not Saddam Hussein. He later admitted under pressure that the words, which began with "sir", were addressed directly to the indefatigable and, unfortunately, strong dictator.

A salute to the peoples of Iraq would be spectacularly ill addressed were it to be delivered to a dictator who oppresses and slaughters Shi'as and Kurds, who make up the majority of the people in the Iraqi



Strong, courageous, indefatigable murderous dictator

state.

Kurds and Marsh Arabs alike rose in revolt three years ago when they thought they saw the chance that the US war would topple Saddam Hussein, and they paid a very bloody price for it. The US and its allies did want to get rid of

"The Galloway affair gave the Tories a brief respite from their own scandals and sensational revelations."

Saddam Hussein, but they have been careful to preserve the regime even under Saddam Hussein, in order to prevent the artificial Iraqi state from breaking up.

Galloway's "no-harm" account of what he was doing when he flat-

tered the dictator will seem sick to most of "the peoples of Iraq". To pretend that this dictator represents the Iraqi people is to side with the dictator against "his" people.

Sicker still was Galloway's last salutation in Arabic to the man who rocketed gas bombs on Israel three years ago: "Until Jerusalem!" What can that mean if not blatant warmongering: until "we" have conquered Israel?

The sight of Galloway standing respectfully before that mass murderer and oppressor of his own people, and presuming to speak in the name of the left of the British labour movement when he told him how "brave" and "strong" and "indefatigable" he is, and that "we" are "with" him "until victory" and "until Jerusalem" — that is the latest terrible measure of the moral, political and intellectual decay of the official left.

The basis for Galloway's reputation as a "left" MP has always been something of a mystery. Yet he is still accepted as one of their own by

the *Morning Star* left and by the left wing of the PLP.

The Labour Party gave Galloway a slap on the wrist, eager to get the matter off the front pages. The "official" leaders of the left have, as far as we know, done nothing to dissociate from Galloway. George Galloway will continue as an ornament of the left.

Galloway's antics come on the heels of Bernie Grant MP's call at the end of last year for "voluntary repatriation" of black people to Africa or the West Indies.

Grant is an altogether more sympathetic character than Galloway. He is a black man with long experience in the labour and socialist movement. He has been driven to this "go-but-get-a-good-price-for-going" surrender to racism by the relentless racist pressures which he feels as a black man inside British capitalist society.

Yet he too belongs to the same pseudo-left as Galloway, on its

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

Karl Marx

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WE SAY

Fight for union rights

TEN years ago this week the Tories outlawed trade union membership at the government's GCHQ spy centre in Cheltenham.

Ten years later, the unions are still outlawed. GCHQ has become a symbol of the fact that Britain's trade union movement suffers under the worst legal shackles in western Europe. We now have a trade union movement which is in fact only semi-legal.

One of the central jobs for anyone who sees socialism as the self-liberating drive of the workers for their own freedom is to help free our trade unions.

The Tory anti-union laws must be resisted wherever that may be possible.

But we must also campaign for the election of a Labour government committed to scrapping them, and committed also to replacing them with a Charter of positive legal rights for workers.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which publishes *Socialist Organiser*, has been central to the fight for such policies in the trade unions and Labour party. Our determined and consistent effort alongside serious non-aligned trade unionists helped to create the conditions where the Labour Party is committed to establishing the following legal right for trade unionists.

1. The right for an individual to belong to a trade union.
2. The right to recruit fellow workers into a trade union, as the basic planks in a fair and protective legal framework.
3. The right of trade unions to be recognised by employers for collective bargaining purposes.
4. The right to be active within a trade union, and to take industrial action without fear of prosecution.
5. The right to strike following a ballot, to picket effectively, and to take industrial action in support of others without fear of sequestration of union funds or persecution.
6. The right not to be dismissed while taking part in industrial action, including strike action.
7. The right of all trade union members to determine their own rule books.

If Labour wins the next election this could become one of the most explosive issues in British politics.

South Africa

SOUTH Africa is a strange and brutal place. It is a land where apartheid has been abolished but squatter camps remain. A country where nothing is quite what it seems; the "liberation" movement included.

Now, the African National Congress — which has the dubious honour of being the world's oldest surviving national liberation movement — is promising to create a new South Africa without touching the wealth and power of the white capitalist class who have benefited from apartheid for decades!

The ANC which expects to win South Africa's first one-person, one-vote election talks about "radical transformations" but promises very little concretely.

According to the ANC's new economic policy document: "no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life." True, but the ANC then goes on to say that there will not even be any significant tax increases, or an increase in public borrowing to pay for basic improvements in the daily lives of the black majority.

In other words, the ANC campaign slogan should be "you can have as much change as you want as long as it doesn't upset the Johannesburg stock exchange and the big banks".

The ANC look set to conform to an old pattern in colonial and semi-colonial countries in which a middle-class nationalist elite rides to power on the backs of the great mass of exploited workers and farmers.

The problem for the ANC is that South Africa is not a backward overwhelmingly peasant country with a weak working class. It is the most advanced capitalist nation on the continent. Its workers will not stay silent for long.

In the end, they will fight the ANC just as militantly as they fought apartheid. To prepare for those battles the South African socialist left should stand against the ANC in April's elections on a platform of "jobs, homes and education for all".

Russian campaign formed

By Matt Cooper

A NUMBER of socialists have come together to form a campaign pledged to help the hard-pressed Russian working class and the small number of real socialists.

The Committee to Defend Russian Socialists and Labour Movement (CDRS) was formed at a meeting during the *Critique* conference, held in London on 22 January. The meeting was addressed by Hillel Ticktin and Mark Osborn.

We feel that the initiative is necessary, despite the existence of other organisations working in the same area, because some of the difficult political questions are not being addressed in a socialist way.

Anti-Yeltsinism is not enough. If we are pledged to British labour

movement action for the Russian workers' organisations, we must have some agreement about which are the Russian workers' organisations!

We feel that it is quite wrong, for example, to treat the Russian Communist Party as if it were the equivalent of the British Labour Party. They are not the same!

The Russian CP is the rump of a brutal ruling class which for years exercised arbitrary rule over tens of millions of oppressed workers and suppressed nationalities.

There are problems also about the official Russian unions. Are they unions? They have a lot of members — perhaps 70 million — but what do the workers think of them? In opinion polls the workers show they have more faith in their foremen than in these "unions" which were for so long vicious stooge organisations for the

old managers.

The "socialism" of the fragments of Stalinism is a backward-looking, utopian, reactionary socialism. For the British labour movement to touch, or link up with it, will only in the long run discredit our movement — and rightly so too.

The real Russian workers' movement will take time to develop, and it will develop in opposition to the old Stalinists, the managers and the new capitalists. They face a terrible crisis. We must help them.

For more details of the Committee's planned work phone Mark Osborn on 071-639 7965.

The old left continues to rot

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"Trotskyist" as distinct from its "Stalinist" wing. Grant is clearly a man who has lost his bearings. His opposition to white racism is communalist, not socialist or even properly liberal. If we are not in favour of full integration and full equality then the "left" will be to the right of the hypocritical official rhetoric of the Tory Party!

The call for "repatriation" has been the rallying cry of the racist right of all shades since Enoch Powell made his "rivers of blood" speech in 1968. Here it is in the mouth of one of Britain's black MPs!

This idea is either a weapon of malevolent "cleanse Britain" white racists, or, to put it in blunt English, it is plain crazy. Where can the vast numbers of British blacks, many of them people born here, go "back" to? The comedian Lenny Henry said that he'd love to have the NF — whose natural slogan this is — give him £2,000 to "go home", because the fare to Wolverhampton was much less. But he was joking, sending up the idea for the vicious racist nonsense it is. Bernie Grant, left-wing MP for Tottenham, is not joking.

To make such a proposal is to sell the pass on black people who are determined to make a home in this country where many of them were born, and to win equality here. It concedes that there is something "wrong" with them.

And to start talking about the price for selling residence here is to start down the slope at the end of which might well be not *voluntary* but *forced* repatriation. Grant's proposal might have been designed to feed the development of a mass racist neo-fascist right in Britain. Of course, that was not his intention.

The advocacy of the repatriation of Britain's black citizens should not be tolerated in the labour movement.

Neither should fawning before mass murderer Saddam Hussein and what looks — and curiously the press scarcely commented on this — very like advocacy of a new Islamic war against Israel.

Galloway should be thrown out by his local party. Bernie Grant should be asked by his party not to advocate "repatriation". He should be dismissed as Tottenham's Labour candidate if he refuses to agree. We, of course, would advocate that he be replaced by a left-wing alternative.

Both these measures are necessary for the health not only of the left, but of the broader labour movement. Yet such an approach is not likely to meet with widespread approval on the left.

It is possible for the honest left to get into such a state that nothing creates an impression. There is evidence that the left is in such a state. Standards collapse. Hopes of anything better go. The belief that it is possible to do anything about a bad situation goes too. Nobody knows what "left" is anymore, so anything goes. Judge not lest ye be judged! Do not react lest that be "witch-hunting", and lest ye too be witch-hunted. That is the common wisdom on the left now.

With that approach, the regeneration of the left will prove impossible. Those who want to regenerate the left must abandon this approach and the demoralised, beaten-down fatalism that goes with it.

We say that what George Galloway did and said in face of Saddam Hussein proves him unfit to be a Labour MP and that he should be deselected; that an MP, black or white, who

continues to advocate voluntary or any other sort of racial expulsion from Britain is not fit to be a representative of the labour movement, and that Bernie Grant should be deselected if he continues to defend such views.

The left must begin to pull itself together. Vigorous assertion that we have nothing in common with the advocacy of "repatriation" of black people, or with fawning to military dictators, is as good a place as any to start.



LABOUR PARTY

Big opportunities for the Socialist Campaign Group

“The left must talk about ideas”



Alan Simpson MP is the new secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs. He is convinced that the left in the Labour Party can renew and regenerate itself so long as it is prepared to go out and really try and convince people of the need for socialist policies. For too long the left has been on the defensive. It has been frightened to talk to people about ideas. But now this can change.

using vast amounts of resources to ship goods round the world, so people can have lettuces three days early, is a disaster. It drags everything down to the lowest labour costs and the worst employment practices. Internationally, we are looking at huge changes in strategic thinking about economics. The World Bank and IMF programmes have been catastrophic for developing nations. They have destroyed all of the infrastructure projects, in order to skew their economies towards production for export based on a single product. That has triggered a glut in the world market, a collapse in the commodity price, and an inability of that country to service the

“We can talk in principled terms about planning without necessarily talking about inefficient Stalinist bureaucracy.”

SHOULD WE argue for re-nationalisation? The Party's renewed commitment to full employment is an immensely popular policy. But if we want to be taken seriously we have to talk about the issue of ownership and control. We should not be frightened to argue for renationalisation. I'm sure that the city and the stock-exchange would scream blue-murder. But the truth of the matter is that the vast number of small share issues from privatisation were sold on within the first week after the initial sale. They became institutionalised. If Labour wanted to we could even create a minimum limit of shares which could be traded as ordinary stock. The small shareholder is not the person who ought to be threatened. What we do want to change is the rules covering the tidal movements of speculative money, which threaten the basis of any recovery.

An economic recovery in this country alone is impossible, given we are so integrated into Europe. We need a European-wide strategy.

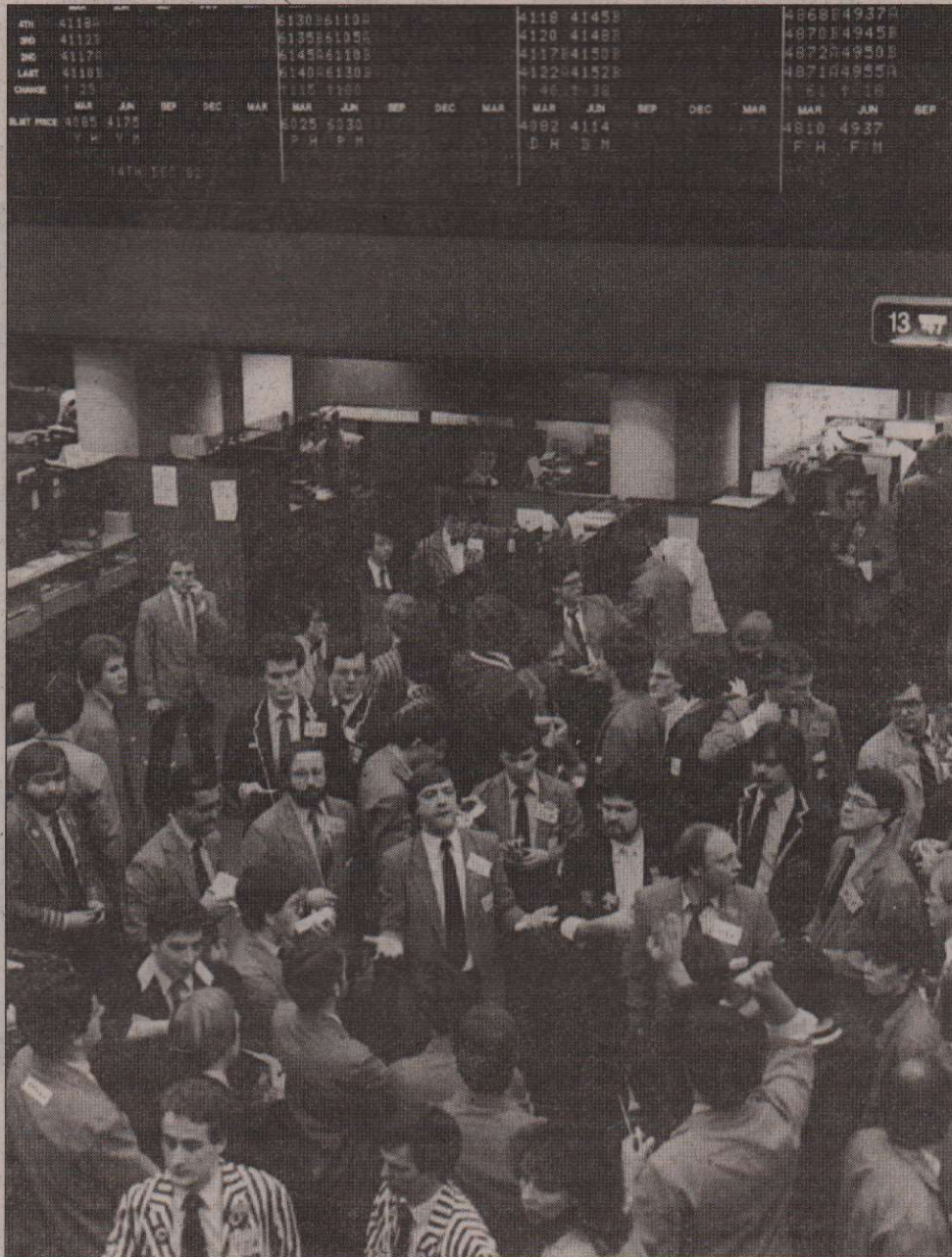
It is important for the left to make clear that the one thing we cannot have is an alternative economic strategy that is just for this country. What is happening here is also happening right across Europe. We should use this as a platform to argue for a European full employment programme. It will mean challenging some of the sacred cows of economic policy. Before the ink has dried on the GATT agreement, we should ask the basic question is free trade or world trade a good thing? Environmentally

debt it took on to get the World Bank or the IMF money in the first place. Those countries who are most dependent on exports are those with the greatest debt, and it's only going to get worse. It's the first law of holes: if you're in one stop digging. What has been driving the economic policies of those institutions is the economics of the madhouse. We have to work for a model of economics, for the century ahead, which is about sustainable economic systems.

That implies planning on a world scale. It must imply the overthrow of capital.

For almost a decade the left has been afraid to mention planning. It's OK to mention masturbation but not planning. It's not planning that makes you blind. If you ask people in any city about bus deregulation, they tell you it means you get caught between dogdgers in the rush hour and a desert every other time. What people want to know is when they can catch a bus and will it connect? They want to be able to plan their lives sensibly. It is an absolute tragedy that Labour has failed to see. We can talk in principled terms about planning without necessarily talking about inefficient Stalinist bureaucracy — that's what drives people barmy, but good planning is at the heart of socialism.

The prospects for the left in the Party are improving but,



The city and the stock exchange will scream 'blue-murder' at renationalisation. But that should not inhibit Labour.

we've got to move on from some of the shackles that we left on our own legs. One of these is that we've spent so long fighting a rearguard action to defend positions in the party and trying to caucus around getting people on particular committees or whatever, that we've forgotten to ask ourselves what we were doing it for. The starting point is for the left to start to talk about issues that run through the immediacy of everyday lives. We can start wherever we like, we can start about crime, personal safety, the kids who are sleeping homeless on the streets. You can talk about the schools that have buckets in their classrooms catching the drips. Talk about the sense of being lost and the cause of it, the dreadful sense of insecurity and despair that large sums of people live their lives in. If we have the courage to start from there and face the awful fear that hangs over this country at the moment. Then begin to talk about what would make a difference. If the left started to talk about this it would affect the whole party and the trade union movement.

We must talk about issues. We need a serious and thoughtful basis of discussing the possibilities for radical change. If we are going to get out of this mess we'll do it together. I'm optimistic about the possibilities of that. There is a generation of older people who have retired who want a say, who are not ready for the scrap heap. They have a series of ideas, backed up by the experience of living through some of the most miserable periods of the last century, and knowing what the most civilising changes were in their own life times. There are,

“We will reap a whirlwind of change for the better.”

also, kids coming through schools who have much more of a global / world perspective than I had at their age. It is one of the tributes to education. If

we can link up the kids' global perspective with the experience of the generation of people who lived through dramatic changes for the better, then we'd be passing on how we can change those ideas and dreams into practical realities. Those of us caught in the middle of those generations have become bowed by machine politics and convinced by Thatcher when she said there is no alternative. I just want to go round to people and say to them of course there's an alternative. If the party can reclaim a belief in itself, if the left can contribute to making people feel good about having ideas, then we will reap a whirlwind of change for the better, in terms of giving Labour policy ideas that we are not afraid to stand up and argue about well in advance and invite the Tories to come and take us on.

Alan Simpson MP was talking to Tom Rigby. In future weeks in *Socialist Organiser* Alan will look at issues such as the link between Labour and the unions, and the question of how we can get full employment.

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Foot versus the man of Steel

LAST year was not a good year for Paul Foot. He resigned as a weekly columnist for the *Daily Mirror* on the grounds that it was going downhill and found a new home in that epitome of incisive investigative journalism, *Private Eye*, a magazine whose critical faculties have become more than a little blunted since the days when it broke the Profumo Scandal while the rest of the journalistic establishment dared not.

It seems that 1994 will be no better. Foot's long-standing weekly column in *Socialist Worker* seems to have disappeared, its space being taken with one by Mark Steel, a stand-up comic. Some would argue, that this is a suitable supplement for a paper whose headline this week reads "Crucify the Tories". Which is rather too long after the Major quote to be a joke, too short on politics to be useful, and without the free packet of nails to make it genuinely ultra-left.

Whether Foot is merely "resting", jumping another boat he believes to be sinking or was given the push for writing garbage is unknown. But one thing is for sure, Mark Steel is continuing in the Foot tradition. Foot is a good journalist who is transformed into a bad journalist when toeing E's line of bad-politics. Mark Steel is a funny comic whose columns in *SW* have transformed him into an unfunny bore.

JUST TO set the record straight (if you'll pardon the term), the scurrilous accusation that Shakespeare's works are heterosexist and homophobic needs refuting. The suggestion was made by an East London headteacher who stopped students from her school going to see Prokoviev's balletic interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Not only did Shakespeare write over half his 150 or so sonnets to a "Beautiful" young man, he also wrote a number of gender-bending roles. Take *Twelfth Night*. A young woman, Viola, dresses up as a young man only to find that the Duke, Orlando, has taken a shine to her as a boy. Sighs of relief all round as Viola is revealed as a woman after all. As you like it has Rosalind, a woman disguised as a boy, teaching a man how to "woo" women and enacting the woman's part with him. Confused? The evidence suggest that William S. is too, sexually. In *A midsummer night's dream* the enchanted fairy queen, Titania, falls for Bottom when he is

GRAFFITI

VIVELA
REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

transformed into a donkey: Obviously, if he were around today, Shakespeare would back "Back to Basics".

THE recent court ruling in the US has not only given us a new verb ("to bobbitt" as in "she bobbitted her husband with the bobbitting knife to leave him as neutral as a gingerbread person"), but it has given new impetus to men's groups, who seem to have no trouble holding onto their members at the moment, unlike one John Wayne Bobbitt. Could we suggest a slogan for all these new-found advocates of an end to marital violence: "wife-beaters of the world unite... you have nothing to lose but your (continued page 47).

It is good to see that Michael Howard will not after all be centralising the appointment of one-third of the members of police authorities in his own hands but passing over the responsibility to a group of socially aware and representative citizens, the Lords Lieutenant. Anyone of course can become a Lord Lieutenant, so long as your pockets are deep enough to pay around £2,000 each for the two ceremonial uniforms and £700 for the ceremonial sword.

All 46 English Lords Lieutenants are, of course, men. 10 are hereditary peers, 32 went to Eton, 20 took degrees at Oxbridge and 1-in-4 lists shooting as a hobby in *Who's Who* (although what they shoot is not specified). Britain is, after all, a classless society.

SUNDAY Times Editor Andrew Neil has often been on TV lately chastising the Tories over "Back to Basics". Of course Neil is the soul of moral rectitude himself. Neil's paper has run a long campaign claiming that AIDS doesn't exist, and even if it did heterosexuals can't get it anyway.

Strange then to discover that Neil, according to the *Financial Times*, alters the *Supday Times's* horoscopes to make sure that it predicts a good week for Gemini. (Guess what Neil is?) If it's in your stars you'll get Aids. Otherwise you have nothing to worry about. In any case it is fixed and predetermined in advance.

Thatcher's barrow-boy

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

ANYONE who glanced at last weekend's press valedictories could be forgiven for thinking that Kelvin MacKenzie had died. Or hopping so, anyway.

In fact Mr MacKenzie is very much alive and about to take over as Rupert Murdoch's number one honcho at BSkyB. Nevertheless, his departure from the editor's chair at the *Sun* does mark the end of an era. He shaped the paper in his own image, making it the living embodiment of the philosophy and values (if you can call them that) of Mrs Thatcher's Britain. And MacKenzie's *Sun* didn't just reflect the Thatcherite agenda: it helped create it. According to the *Lady's* press *gauleiter* Bernard Ingham, the *Sun's* gung-ho editorial line often served as a very useful weapon against cabinet wets and others within the Tory ranks who occasionally questioned the wisdom of permanent revolution. It was a truly symbiotic relationship.

But MacKenzie's greatest service was as a translator of the stilted mantras of Thatcherism into the language of the saloon bar and the CIU Club. He possesses one quality that his political mistress and most of her courtiers noticeably lacked: a sense of humour.

It was this that made the *Sun* such an effective propaganda weapon — or as Mrs T herself put it, "our conduit to the working class." Just as a skilful club comedian of the Bernard Manning variety can get otherwise decent people laughing at the vilest material, so the *Sun* could make you chuckle, despite yourself, with headlines like "Up Yours Delors" and "Toe Job to No Job."

The extent to which the *Sun's* Thatcherite panache actually influenced working-class votes is impossible to gauge.

In 1979 MacKenzie's predecessor, Larry Lamb, had thrown the paper behind Mrs Thatcher and is widely credited with having won over the crucial "C2" vote for the Tories. The Tories would probably have won with or without the *Sun* in '83 and '87, but its rottweiler attacks on Foot and Kinnock certainly helped. 1992 was a closer-run matter and the *Sun's* election-day front page ("If Kinnock wins today will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights") was certainly more effective than anything the *Mirror* could do for Labour.

MacKenzie's barrow-boy image may account for the strongly chummy (even affectionate) tone of much of what was written about him in the non-Murdoch press over the weekend. There was something almost masochistic about the way papers like the *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Observer* (all favourite targets for MacKenzie's jibes) fell over themselves to extol his intelligence, wit and intuitive journalistic skill. Inside Fortress Wapping, however, the cowed minions who worked under him tell a different story. Most *Sun* staffers hate and despise MacKenzie. What seemed to outsiders blunt humour and plain-speaking was to insiders bullying, cruelty and ritual humiliation. And MacKenzie's spitefulness could also impair his journalistic judgement — most famously when the *Sun* accused Liverpool fans of causing the Hillsborough tragedy through drunkenness. The story caused fury

on Merseyside, resulting in a boycott and, eventually, a grovelling apology to the people of Liverpool.

THE overthrow of Mrs Thatcher came as a crushing blow to MacKenzie and the *Sun*. Their loyalty had always been to the Great Leader herself, rather than to the Tory party *per se*. The paper continued in its role as anti-Labour rottweiler, vilifying Kinnock and the rest of the Labour leadership in highly personal terms throughout

the 1992 election campaign. But the *Sun* had lost its political lode star and soon turned its fire on Major and the hapless Norman Lamont. Something else was happening as well: there were definite signs that the public was tiring of the blatant bias, frequent dishonesty and Essex Man values epitomised by MacKenzie and his paper. In 1988 the *Sun* was selling 4.2 million; by 1991 it was down to 3.5 million and falling. For a brief period between the demise of Cap'n Bob and the arrival of David Montgomery, the *Mirror* seemed poised to catch and overtake it. The 5p price cut and Montgomery's disastrous regime at the *Mirror* have kept the *Sun* ahead. But its present circulation is still well down on the glory days of the 1980s and even Rupert Murdoch cannot continue to subsidise the price-cut indefinitely. All in all, the future doesn't look too bright for the old 'currant bun' just at the moment. And to add to its troubles, the recent savaging of Major is going to make it very difficult for the paper to support the Tories at the next general election. With his usual impeccable timing, MacKenzie has quit while he's still (just) ahead.

He'll be remembered as the most important editor of the most influential paper of the 1980s. He'll be remembered as the man who did more than anyone else to drag British tabloid journalism out of the gutter and into the sewer.

Over at BSkyB, director of programmes Michael Elstein has recently been working hard to improve standards. I bet Mr Elstein is looking forward to working under his new boss.

"Most Sun staffers hate and despise Mackenzie."

Too PC or not too PC?

WOMEN'S EYE

By Joan Trevor

SHE didn't turn down the cheap tickets because *Romeo and Juliet* is a "heterosexual love story". She had other reasons, which the tabloid press has no interest in digging out.

But she did think that her pupils wouldn't be missing out on much through her actions.

What I hate in all this is the rancid glee of the tabloid press, their burgeoising lesbian-hunt against Jane Brown, the rightness — or rather, in my opinion, wrongness — of her original decision. Mostly the tabloids, because they don't really give a toss but know they're on to something that can whip up hackneyed, reactionary bluster. But you will have your own favourite hate-figures in all this, and your own peculiar focus of opprobrium.

So where should socialists focus their fuss in all of this?

Given that some things are given, like tabloid vilification of lesbians and gay men, we gain most by examining what we can change, that is, ourselves! Do we want to defend political correctness like we defend black people and lesbians and gay men and women from attack by the ruling-class?

Our society, created and run by the ruling class, oppresses lesbians and gay men. And black people. And women. And oppressed

people find all sorts of ways to fight back against that oppression. The up-to-date — the easiest, most ineffectual — way to fight oppression is political correctness.

When I first got active in politics — in student politics, if that makes any difference — you could be "right-on". That meant that you tried to be anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic. You set out to include black people, women, lesbians and gay men in all your student union activities. When you advertised a student union event you did not put up a poster picturing a scantily-clad woman under the words, "lads, if you want to pull, come to the disco".

We bent over backwards not to ban things. We suggested publicity that would make everyone feel welcome. We did it all very imperfectly (not least because most of us weren't nearly as right-on as we thought we ought to be.) So did all the councils who tried to promote "positive images" of lesbians and gay men in the mid '80s before the Tories banned them from doing it.

They showed lesbians and gay men in every aspect of life in a way heterosexuals take for granted. They were trying to make life more comfortable for gay men and lesbians — particularly the young ones.

But the tabloids made out that "positive images" aimed to "convert" children to homosexuality. The more rabid tabloids said that even if positive images were only about reassuring young lesbians and gays, we shouldn't reassure them — they are all unnatural

sodomites and man-haters who ought to stay in the closet.

The positive image-makers retorted that if images determined sexuality there wouldn't be any gay people. This was a serious debate.

It was difficult, the fight for positive images. Some campaigners found an easier way which suited the increasingly prevailing climate of censoriousness, and that was to ban what they thought of as sexism, racism or homophobia. Or, rather, to bawlderise and replace what they saw as sexist, racist or homophobic language.

Positive images can be creative. So, weirdly enough, can political correctness, but it is no way to fight for equal rights or, even less, liberation for lesbians and gay men, or women, or black people. It is one way of writing. We shouldn't let anyone bureaucratically impose it in place of "normal" language.

Jane Brown doesn't — probably — believe in banning and bawlderising literature and words she doesn't like. But, however flippantly, she snubbed Shakespeare as belonging to that school which wants all people to be straight or fearful. Shakespeare was — allegedly — bisexual, and his plays have women passing themselves off as men and men passing themselves off as women. So her fire was seriously misdirected.

Of course, she wasn't getting at Shakespeare. She was getting at people who've probably never read a Shakespeare play in their life but think a man and a woman are best off when they fall in love

with each other, get married — stay married — and have children.

Some socialists are annoyed with Jane Brown because she is undiplomatic and alienates the only-slightly-homophobic members of society who we might otherwise woo to tolerance of lesbians and gay men.

In fact there are lots of things we might say that the press would slag off which we should go on saying. It doesn't seem unreasonable that a chairman become a chair or a chairperson. (I'm not too sure about "gingerbread person". I don't, after all, aspire to be a gingerbread anything, although I might quite like some day to be a chair.)

But we should persuade people about that. We should oppose attempts to impose the term "chairperson" for "chairman".

Some socialists are annoyed with Jane Brown because she attracted adverse media attention to their Labour administration. Hackney's Labour councillors probably couldn't give a toss that Jane Brown turned down the *Romeo and Juliet* tickets except that the press got hold of the story.

Now they appear ready to throw a lesbian to the media lions because they've never taken the trouble to question whether censoring language and literature changes the world for better or worse. They haven't bothered until now to think about the implications of the power their headteachers have over what pupils see and read.

Let's not us be too complacent about all this.

Support lesbian and gay rights:

Equalise the age of consent!

Ed Whitby, Sheffield

LAST WEEK 2,000 people demonstrated outside Parliament demanding an equal age of consent for gay men. At present everyone can consent to sex at 16 years except gay men who must wait until 21. Stonewall, the parliamentary lobbying group claim support from 250 MPs, including at least 200 Labour MPs.

Changes are being proposed in the Criminal Justice Bill on the age of consent.

The Bill proposes to continue a discrepancy between the ages of consent for gay and straight youth by lowering the current age of consent from 21 to 18 for gay men.

An amendment proposes equalisation of the age of consent at 16. The Tories have called a free vote on the Bill and amendment, but instead of Labour championing youths' rights the Labour leaders have also made it a free vote. It is a matter of conscience, they claim. In the name of "freedom of conscience" Labour MPs will be free to deny 16 year olds the freedom to enjoy consenting sex!

If we win the vote, this will be a big step forward. It will come after 14 years of repressive legislation from the Tories.

Remember? Clause 28 which banned local authorities and schools from portraying homosexuality as acceptable, or giving "positive images" of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

The Tories attacked the rights of lesbians and gay men as parents. British courts have taken children away from their mothers just because they are not heterosexuals. Winning the vote, although a victory, will not immediately change much.

Clause 28 will still be in place.



Lesbian and gay youth want the freedom to enjoy consenting sex!

The courts will still be attacking the rights of lesbians and gay men to bring up their own children; lesbian and gay men will still be prevented from fostering and adopting.

They will still face discrimination — and often attacks — at work, college and in the streets.

We need to keep up the pressure to win the vote! Lobby parliament on the night of the vote! Ring 071-222 9007 for details.

Take up the fight locally, in your workplace/college/school, in your trade and student unions and demand

the labour movement campaigns on these issues.

We need to compel the trade unions and Labour Party to support and fight for an end to all legal and social discrimination.

Unless we work to challenge the

sanctity of the nuclear family we can never achieve the full liberation of human sexuality.

Important gains may be won in parliament, but liberation will only be won by overthrowing the capitalist society that oppresses us.

Opinion

The law and sex

Mark Sandell

THE equalisation of the age of consent for gay men would be a victory for sense and justice but the age of heterosexual consent in Britain — 16 years — is too high and the law is too rigid.

Legally, anyone having consenting sex under the age of 16 is breaking the law. This is absurd!

Of course some legal control is needed. Young people must be protected from predatory adults. All sex should be as free as possible of any emotional or physical coercion or exploitation. Children are under the physical and emotional control of adults and in a particularly weak position *vis-à-vis* those older than them. There has to be some legal age of consent.

Any legal age limit is problematic.

We all have a sexuality even as babies. But power and control and violence are part of the modern family, and our society and children need legal protection.

The best solution would probably be an age of consent around 13 years with some age difference guide lines like they have in Holland. (That is sex between a 13 year old and a 17 year old would be legal; sex between a 13 year old and say, a 21 year old illegal).

Laws on such patterns should be applied with tolerance and it should be accepted that children under 13 have a sexuality and that the law and society should not repress that sexuality.

Even so, it is worth reporting that in a society with so much sexual violence and abuse inside and outside the family, the law still has a role in protecting children's sexual rights.

What are you playing at?

An Open Letter to the "Revolutionary Communist Party"

ON 9 DECEMBER 1993, the London School of Economics Student Union, in co-ordination with a number of other student unions, organised a march to oppose the cut in grants and the attacks on student unions.

When we set off from the LSE a number of your members — perhaps a dozen — put on pink stewards' bibs. They were not official stewards, but that is what they looked like to students on the march and that is what you must have intended.

Who were these people? I've never seen many of them before. Were they all students? Were they from the London area.

After we met the second march from South Bank your 'stewards' moved towards the front of the merged demonstration. When we got to the rally point you used a number of loudhailers to attempt to take over the rally.

Your members said we should "march on parliament", something that was clearly impossible in the cir-

cumstances, given the number of police surrounding us. You then, amid the confusion you had caused, tried to lead as much of the march as you could into the police line.

As students crossed Waterloo Bridge in small groups to go to the lobby of Parliament, your fake stewards confused the situation by collecting about 150 students in Houghton Street, announcing "let's break through these police lines and march to Westminster."

After that failed you attempted to occupy the student union building. Can you inform us what your stewards were up to? The LSE Student Union had organised the demonstration.

Were you deliberately trying to destroy the rally? Were you trying to provoke the police to wreck the rally? What were you and your fake stewards playing at?

The behaviour of your so-called 'revolutionary' organisation was a disgrace.

Tesher Fitzpatrick
(General Secretary LSE Student Union)

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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Why the Tories are

Tory tax promises in shatters

Gerry Bates takes a look at the issues

THE SENSE of crisis which surrounds the Tory government is not receding. It continues to grow. First there was the Tim Yeo scandal. This was then followed by the revelations that the Tories who run Westminster council spent £21 million of council cash to buy votes for themselves by moving yuppies into the borough while evicting working class people from their homes.

Things then got even worse from the Tories when the Scott inquiry established that Major either lied and covered up his role in supplying arms to Iraq on the eve of the Gulf war or was completely unaware of what the government departments he was supposed to be running were doing.

It is against this backdrop that this week's official figures were released from the Treasury

showing that ordinary people now pay more tax than they ever did under Labour.

This is how the main bosses' paper, the *Financial Times* put it:

"At the centre of the row, which arose just ahead of tomorrow's crucial House of Commons debate on the finance bill, was the Treasury's disclosure that a married man on average earnings with two children would this year pay 32.9 per cent of his earnings in direct and indirect taxes rising to 35 per cent in 1994-5. That compared with 32.2 per cent under Labour in 1978-1979.

Labour backed up its attack by highlighting official figures showing that the proportion of gross domestic product taken by tax excluding oil taxes would rise to 35.5 per cent in 1994-95 and 38% in 1998-99.

That would outstrip the high of 36.75 per cent taken under the last Labour government in 1975-76."

Why the Tories target the welfare state

EVERYONE KNOWS that "Back to Basics" was supposed to be about personal morality.

This is what Major himself said at last year's Tory conference.

"It is time to return to the old core values, to self discipline and respect for the law, to accepting responsibility for yourself and your family."

Central to this "moral" crusade was to be an attack on "welfare scroungers" and young working class single mothers in particular.

This crazed attempt to find scapegoats flows from the profound problem of public expectations which have dogged the Tories since they came to office in 1979.

The Tories were never concerned with public expenditure as such — the state needed to spend spend on the police and the army, for Thatcher was always determined to maintain Britain's military role externally and extend it internally. But they were concerned with spending on industry which distorted the market and crucially with welfare spending.

At the heart of their strategy was the view that such spending was economically disastrous as it fuelled inflation, government borrowing, and must be slashed, and so must taxation, which fuelled inflation as workers sought to compensate for tax losses through wage increases.

What the government was saying essentially was that the role welfare spending played in reproduction, in accumulation — through providing capital with a healthy, skilled, compliant labour force — and in the legitimisation of the capitalist system, by demonstrating that the state looked after people who could not look after themselves, would be discarded in the inter-

est of slashing inflation and increasing profitability.

The problem for the Tories was that the cuts they made in services for working class people were cancelled out by increased social security payments resulting from mass unemployment.

By the end of the first Thatcher government public spending had not decreased, indeed, on some figures, the "good" work of the 1974 Labour government was undone and public expenditure increased to 46% of GDP.

Despite some improvements for the Tories in the late '80s the ratio of public spending to GDP had grown almost 6% in the last five years.

The reason for this change is that in the 1980s the government's accounts were padded by income from North Sea oil and from sell-offs of state assets. They made huge tax cuts for the rich — though, because of higher VAT, overall tax paid by the average person has increased under the Tories.

Now there is much less padding from North Sea oil and from sell-offs. The budget deficit is also increased by social-security spending on three million unemployed (or four million, if the figures were counted without fiddling). It seems, however, that a big chunk of the deficit is "structural", that is, it would continue even if joblessness declined drastically.

That "structural" deficit could be dealt with by increasing taxes on the rich and cutting military spending. But of course the Tories won't do that.

Instead the likes of Portillo, Lilley and Major have the cheek to target single mothers as scroungers simply for wanting a home for themselves and their children.

The fruits of Tory policy

THE GAP between rich and poor has grown. The average pay of top bosses is over £10,000 a week. The average income of the poorest 10% of the population is £54 a week.

Tory tax cuts have also made sure that the rich get to keep a bigger share of their fat salaries. £31 billion have been handed out in cuts in income tax since 1979. The top 1% of the population received 27% of this, whilst the bottom 50% received just 15%.

While the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. In the past five years alone top executives received pay increases of 133%. At the other end of the scale, the bottom 10% of the population is now 4% worse off than it was in 1979.

Homelessness is rocketing. Mass unemployment has become the norm both in and out of recession. Trade unions have been shackled by anti-union legislation. Local government democracy has been virtually destroyed. A two-tier system — one for the rich, one for the poor — is being created in health, education and the social services.



Crisis surrounds the Tory government

Big battles loom

THE TORIES are determined to make working class people — especially the old, the sick, the young, that is, those that are most vulnerable — pay for the crisis of British capitalism.

Unfortunately for them the attacks they are proposing, like VAT on fuel, cuts in unemployment benefit, tax increases of 10%, cuts in student grants are likely to provoke opposition.

But most important of all, the 3 year public sector pay freeze is virtually certain to provoke some large-scale confrontations between the Tories and the public sector unions.

So far many public sector workers have been more worried about losing their jobs than going on strike over the 1½% pay limit.

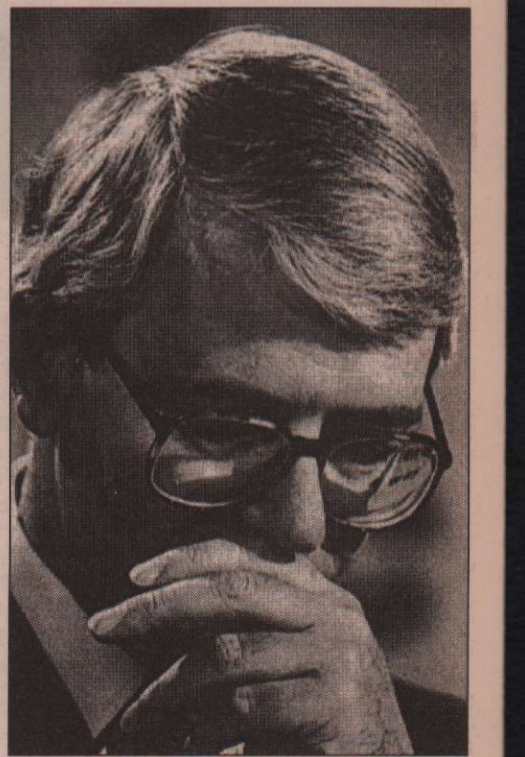
There are clearly signs, that this is changing. Like the postal workers vote to reject the 1½% freeze last year.

With workers having to face the fact that they will get no pay rise until 1997 things look bound to change.

It's not possible to predict exactly where and when the battles will start but what we can say is that it is vital for all serious socialists and trade union activists to fight for cross public sector workers' unity.

A revival on the industrial front — even a limited one on the scale of the 1989 rail and town hall strikes — would start to give people confidence to resist. It would also create the conditions for a potential revival of the left inside the political wing of the labour movement: the Labour Party.

It would, at the very least, make it easier to force Labour to campaign on some of the policy commitments — like full employment and workers rights — which Smith was forced to concede last year in order to push through his attack on the trade unions' links with the party.



Under Major's Premiership the Thatcherite project has come unstuck.

Thatcherism's success

It is now a visible and palpable fact that the long w Right-wing, free-market Toryism is running out the conditions for its own demise.

Some free market ideas are now central parts of the Tories: thus the Labour front bench avoids any talk of compulsory competitive tendering and Market Testing. Meanwhile the core traditional Thatcherite themes of an effective mass ideology.

Talk of "union power" [after 15 years in which the sense as an explanation for economic decline. The longer nationalised.

What is distinctive about the far right — as opposed to the mainstream "consensus" — no longer of British capitalism. This can be most clearly seen in the "No Turning Back" group hardly fit in with the tradition.

Under Major's Premiership, Thatcher's free market ideas either mutate into an even more vicious religious and dogmatic script or it will implode towards the centre.

The greatest irony of 15 years of Thatcherite conservatism is thus helping to strengthen the right wing of the Tories have not destroyed the labour Party's return to office a 'safe' party for British capitalism.

in crisis



Can Labour beat the Tories?

LABOUR NOW has a massive poll lead over the Tories. The question is can this lead be translated into a Labour victory? The first point to make is a lot depends on whether the Labour leadership go out and campaign and really hang the Tories. This was done in 1963-64 the last time the Tories had a similar sense of fatigue and scandal — it can be done again today.

The second point is that Labour can now hope to win because the party has been made safe for capitalism — at least for now. Kinnock purged the left, Smith has attacked the union link.

The kind of interventionist policies that Smith — if not yet Gordon Brown — now seems prepared to talk about hold no threat to capitalist power whatsoever.

Most governments in advanced countries reckon that they must try to make their industry competitive not just by bashing workers but also by investing in education, training, research, new technology and infrastructure (communications, transport and so on). The British Government's long-term view is uncertain, but it seems that at least some of the Tories reject a strategy involving heavy public

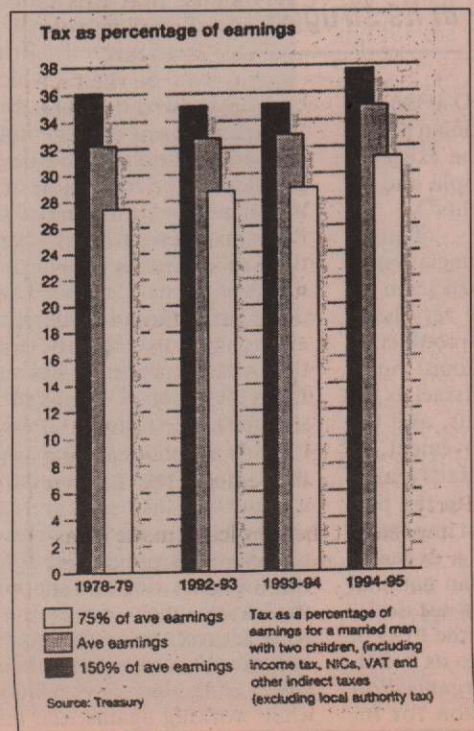
investment as unaffordable and smelling of socialism.

Instead they aim to make Britain a cheap-labour, low-tax production site for multinationals, conveniently placed off the coast of Europe and enjoying the advantage of English language.

This strategy is probably unrealistic in capitalist terms, and certainly disastrous for British workers. However, many people who want more public investment are just as ruthless as the Tories about cutting welfare services and working class living standards.

This includes the leadership of the Labour Party. As a result, if Labour beats the Tories at the next election the divisions that emerged over the union link will be deepened.

Labour's "modernisers" purpose in attacking the union link will be clearly visible: they are preparing for government, they want to immunise the next Labour government from pressures from the trade union rank and file. Pressures that will be very real if Labour tries to manage capitalism in conditions of decay.



...turn into failure... of Thatcherism is coming to an end... mainstream consensus amongst capitalist political renationalisation and supports policies like com... no longer have the same purchase as elements... TUC has lost 1/3 its membership] no longer makes same goes for nationalised industries that are no... sed to the ideas that they have managed to estab... represents the most rational policy for the future... in their attitude to Europe where the dogmas of... logic of capitalist development and European inte... et project appears to have exhausted itself. It will... moral authoritarianism along the lines of Portillo... ntre... nter-revolution is that in seriously weakening the... g of the Labour Party and the trade union appa... y for ever but simply recreated the conditions for... sm. How safe it remains depends on the left.



The left could unite and mobilise on the basis of defence of the welfare state and a campaign for the 35-hour week.

Debate: Where Peter Hain goes wrong

By Martin Thomas

LABOUR'S left wing could find a new basis for a campaigning united front. Interviewed in *Socialist Organiser* last week (20 January), Peter Hain MP (a leading member of the Tribune Group of MPs), which includes the "softer", more mainstream Labour left, said that the "key questions" for unity between the "Tribune" left and the "harder" left, are "defence of the welfare state and... full employment." And "full employment can only be created in the advanced economies of Europe with a shorter working week."

These planks — the welfare state and the shorter working

week — could be a basis on which the left could unite, mobilise, reach out to millions of people, and put new hope and confidence into working class politics.

Hain's interview also highlighted questions which need to be debated inside any united left campaign.

Hain argues that to cut the working week with no loss of pay is "an impossible demand... not realistic."

"There must be a gigantic shift towards investment", he insists, and that means restraint on consumption. "The British economy is in serious long-term decline because it is geared towards consumption. Production is geared to instant consumption rather than investment." But who divides income between consumption and investment? The bosses, not the workers. The issue cannot be assessed in abstraction from the division of income between social classes, between bosses and workers.

British companies do pay out an unusually large proportion of their profits in div-

idents, rather than keeping the profits to buy new technology. But if workers hold back on wages, who says the bigger profits won't just be spent on even more luxury consumption, and viciously job-cutting new technology?

We are a long way from any absolute clash of resources between investment and workers' consumption: huge resources go unused through unemployment, and a big part of consumption goes to the luxuries of the rich. It is possible and realistic for workers to demand shorter hours, more socially-desirable investment, and better wages — all at the expense of the rich.

Hain says that investment must be "controlled"; "We need to shift the City... away from its short-termism". He argues that this should be done not through nationalisation, but through increasing, and more socially-oriented, government regulation. Thus "piecemeal changes... will eventually lead to the socialisation of the economy."

But if a Labour government leaves key businesses in private hands, then it has to avoid "crashing" their share prices. And if government regulation bites into profits, turns investment away from where the bosses and bankers want it, and blocks the union-bashing and speed-up typical of the privatised sectors, then it will "crash" share prices. There is no reason to believe that the programme of socialisation by piecemeal regulation would turn out any better than the "planning agreements" of the 1974-9 Labour government.

Nationalisation alone is not the answer: it must be linked to workers' and democratic control. But without the public ownership of the major means of production there is no socialism.

"Nationalisation alone is not the answer: it must be linked to workers' and democratic control. But without the public ownership of the major means of production there is no socialism."

The Israel-Palestine Accord

A bantustan in the making

Realising that it was grossly inadequate, *Socialist Organiser* nevertheless welcomed the PLO-Israel Accord because it seemed to contain the seed of a possible evolution towards a real solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict: two states for two peoples. The Accord — which has run into difficulties, but is still intact has, not unexpectedly, been condemned by most socialists of *Socialist Organiser's* general — Trotskyist — persuasion. The majority of the members of the Israeli organisation, the Revolutionary Communist League favour the Accord for reasons similar to ours; a minority can see no good in it at all. Below we print the positions of that minority. The majority view appeared last week. The text has been slightly abridged for reasons of space.



The Palestinian's struggle continues

THE ACCORD, which began with the Madrid Conference, is a product of power relations, both international and regional, and also among the currents within the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) itself, which favoured those willing to accept the conditions of surrender dictated to them by the United States of America (USA) and Israel. The entrenchment of the USA's hegemony, following the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to Syria entering the USA's sphere of influence and the huge cuts in Saudi Arabian financial support, came together to strengthen the PLO's more compromising components and the class strata they represent. They came to the conclusion that there was no hope in fulfilling their interests for an independent political entity and that, anyway, their interests as capitalists can be fulfilled by integrating themselves into the "New World Order".

The Madrid Conference, and the agreement that followed it, also had the aim of terminating the Intifada. The Intifada was not just a struggle for political independence in the territories that were occupied in 1967. It also inscribed on its banner the aspirations for the national liberation of the whole Palestinian people and the re-unification in their homeland.

The Intifada also succeeded in undermining the status quo that existed for twenty years in the Occupied Territories since 1967 — which caused the Israeli political and military establishment to come to the conclusion that it is no longer possible to maintain a situation of non-annexation and non-retreat, rather a political solution must be arrived at, that will grant a degree of

sovereignty to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

In the months preceding the Accord it was already clear to the Israeli government that its attempts to strengthen the Palestinian delegation and to weaken the opposition to the Madrid process had come to naught. There were signs that the leftist fronts' (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) call for a "national dialogue" regarding the PLO's democratisation, the Accord and the Intifada was winning the support of parties like the Communist Party and public figures like Haider Abdel Shafi and others from within Fatah. Arafat has lost much of his authority in the Occupied Territories, including among members of Fatah itself, and in the eyes of thousands of Palestinian fighters in the camps in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The PLO's disintegration accelerated and Rabin needed to decide quickly between the "dead horse" — the delegation — and the "half-dead horse" — Arafat, and chose the latter to sign the autonomy agreement with him. Arafat was also willing to compromise on the same minimum that he forbade members of the delegation to retreat from during the ten rounds of discussions, out of fear of an additional deterioration in Israeli-Palestinian relations and a total loss of control over the Palestinian national movement.

The Accord — the Declaration of principles

THERE ARE two parts to the Accord. The first discusses the declarations concerning mutual recognition between the sides and on the condition of Israel's recognition of the PLO. This introduction constitutes the framework

and it is the condition (again, Israel's) for the second part, which includes the details for the "Gaza and Jericho First" plan.

A. The mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel

The PLO recognises the right of Israel to exist in peace and security, declares its renunciation of the use of terror and violence, and promises to punish anyone who trespasses on this commitment, and also to erase the articles in the Palestinian Charter opposing Israel's existence. In exchange,

Israel recognises the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people (thereby recognising the existence of the Palestinian people and its legitimate "political rights").

The three declarations — of mutual recognition, the renunciation of terror, and erasing the articles in the Charter — touches the very heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as a conflict between the Zionist movement, and the State of Israel as the embodiment of its aims, and the Palestinian national movement.

Therefore, Yasser Arafat's renunciation of "terrorism", in the past and in the future, is most important for Israel because it is a de-legitimation of the Palestinian national movement's struggle. In his declaration, Arafat stripped the PLO of its essence and agreed to its definition as a "terrorist" organisation that has no justification for its actions. Likewise regarding the

Palestinian Charter amended in 1968. Relinquishing the vast majority of the Charter's articles is like a relinquishment of the organisation's quasi-constitution which reflected its general strategy, even if the emphasis on mass struggle had been transferred over the years to the

political-diplomatic arena. The Charter remained the relational framework for judging and evaluating changes in policies that were mostly approved by an artificial majority in the PLO institutions.

As *Matzpen** explained (in the pamphlet *Our Position Towards the PLO*), Fatah's conception of the "Armed Popular Struggle", which had

"In these declarations the PLO wiped out, with one blow, the whole justification for using any available means in its struggle."

been adopted by the PLO, was that "the recruitment and the independent organisation of the Palestinian people for the liberation of their homeland, and (the removal of) the Palestinian issue from the hands of the Arab countries (will mean) that their liberation will be based on their desire to fight by all available means against any power that tries to block their road to national liberation." From the notion of "armed struggle" stemmed the strategic necessity of the revolutionary struggle against the Zionist State, against imperialist control in the region and against the Arab regimes. So we reasoned, together with progressive forces in the whole world, our support for the PLO; namely, due to the challenge it presented to the imperialist order in the region and its being an igniter of national movements there, while working against the institutions of the colonialist Zionist regime

responsible for dispossession, occupation and wars, while serving as a bridgehead for imperialism in the region.

In these three declarations the PLO wiped out, with one blow, the whole justification for using any available means in its struggle. In this way, including signing the Accord and postponing the discussion on the "Right of Return", despite strong opposition by some leaders in Fatah itself, the PLO relinquished another aspect of its character: its claim to represent the whole of the Palestinian people, including the refugees and the Arabs in Israel, to whom the PLO continued, until recently, to pay lip service. By doing so, the PLO hammered the last nail into the coffin of the Palestinian national movement, and split the Palestinian national problem into local problems of Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria and so forth, similar to what happened to the Kurdish national problem.

Israel's recognition of the PLO, therefore, is not recognition of the same organisation which for many years had denied its legitimacy, but rather of "a mere shadow of that organisation" (according to Shimon Peres). On the other hand, the PLO's recognition of Israel is a victory for Zionism. During all the years of the Israeli occupation we were witnesses to efforts by the Zionist left to view the occupation of 1967 as the main reason for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while systematically concealing the roots of the conflict, the dispossession of the Palestinian people by the Zionist movement and the role played by Zionism and the State of Israel for imperialism in the region. Suddenly, since the signing of the Accord, we are witness to numerous articles and utterances calling the conflict by its real name — "the conflict between Zionism

and the Palestinian national movement". We are witness to a national sigh of relief over the end of that conflict — which depended on the recognition by the Palestinian national movement of Zionism's righteous path and on the Palestinian national movement absolving it of blame as a colonialist movement of dispossession. The PLO supplied this recognition, of which Zionism had need, as is deduced from the "renunciation of terror".

B. The accord — "Gaza-Jericho First"

AS WAS SAID, the main questions were postponed to the stage of discussions that will supposedly take place in another two or three years on the final status of the Territories, at which the Palestinians will be free to raise any issue and Israel will be under no obligation to accept their demands. This applies to the settlements and Jerusalem, to Israel's commitments to a general withdrawal, and of course the Accord does not in any way recognise that the Territories are "occupied" or provide any guarantee for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State or the right of return — neither of the 1948 nor of the 1967 refugees.

The Israeli army is not going to withdraw to the 1967 borders. Both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) will continue to guard the settlements, the roads leading to them and the "peace of any Jew moving about in the streets of the occupied territories." From the strategic points to which it will withdraw, the IDF will be able to quickly intervene whenever it perceives that Israeli interests are threatened.

In the areas that will be evacuated, the PLO will be responsible for establishing order, for putting down the Intifada — which, at the moment, can and also needs to escalate — and the opposition that supports it.

According to declarations by Rabin and Peres, the IDF's "dirty work" is being transferred to the Palestinians themselves, who will be able to perform it "free from human rights organisations and appeals to the high

"The goal of the economic accords is to preserve the Palestinians' dependence on Israel."

court." However, since Israel and the PLO cannot completely trust the local police forces to people whose solidarity was forged during the Intifada, military forces loyal to Arafat will be brought in from abroad in addition to the local recruits. Cooperation between the Israeli police, the Shabak and the Palestinian police will only gradually increase with time.

The Accord's economic aspect — neo-colonialism

THE goal of the economic accords is to preserve the Palestinians' dependence on Israel. Until now the two economies' relationships were a classic example of the colonialist division of labour: the centre sells its industrial products and the periphery sells its labour. Various arrangements in the Accord ensure this "co-ordination", among others, by "joint projects" built on Palestinian labour, Israeli knowledge and financing from the major capitalist countries.

All of the promises about the opening up of possibilities for economic

development are a smokescreen, when the major natural resources — the land and the water — remain under Israeli control. The Palestinian economy is also designated the additional objective of being a reservoir of cheap labour, that it is to be a subcontractor for Israeli companies which will export to the Arab world thereby making the products "kosher" for the Arab consumers. Thus, we have before us neo-colonialism which will replace the Zionist-Israeli colonialism.

Prospects regarding the final status of the Occupied Territories

SUPPORTERS of the Accord are assuming that, come the final stage of the talks, Israel will display "good faith" and/or that international political circumstances will bring pressure to bear on Israel for the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The main question is: What is the degree of sovereignty that Israel will be prepared to grant Palestinians? Today's fact on the ground, and the maps which were submitted to the Palestinians in the Taba talks point to "settlement clusters" which will separate concentrations of Palestinian populations, breaking their territorial continuity, which is a condition for building a centralised political entity or a centralised development plan.

What international political circumstances can change in the context of the "New World Order" that will pressure Israel to break the Accord's framework and to relinquish its sovereignty over East Jerusalem and, in actuality, over Greater Jerusalem (from Ramallah to Hebron), and to dismantle the settlements? What can change the power relations between Israel and the Palestinians, when the Palestinian leadership itself opened the door for the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab countries, thereby decreasing their chances of pressuring Israel and the United States? The dismantling of the Palestinian refugees' influence, and to a weakening of the Palestinian leftist front's power in Diaspora, who represents the refugees' interests in the PLO.

What can be the prospect for change in power relations when the PLO leadership (read Arafat) everyday become increasingly captive to their commitments to the Accord: to establish political, security and economic co-ordination with Israel, to repress the Intifada and the opposition, to persuade various sectors of the population to participate in the normalisation of relations with the Israeli establishment, and to create a joint economic system that will facilitate Israel's neo-colonialist control in the region.

Continuation of the indirect occupation is an ideal solution for Israel and for the representatives of the region's new order. Therefore, Israel's "good faith" or the hoped-for vital pressure will in another three years result, at most, in the establishment of a Palestinian entity in which authority will be divided in a functional manner between Israelis and Palestinians: Israel will continue to be responsible for the settlement clusters and for the security of its citizens in roads and streets. It will continue, to a large degree, to control the bridges to Jordan and the land, water and the Palestinian economy while exploiting the masses of Palestinian workers, this time in partnership with the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

This will be the Palestinian Bantustan state, whose establishment will only increase the apartheid that already exists throughout Palestine.

Footnote: * Matzpen is the Hebrew language paper of the RCL.

Was Robert Burns an Englishman?

By Dale Street

ROBERT BURNS was "just as much an Englishman as he was a Scotsman, perhaps a trifle more." He was "perhaps fifty-fifty Celt and Teuton — a marginal type like the most of us."

Nothing in the poet's family background inspired in him a sense of Scottish identity:

"Not one of the poet's relatives is known to have had any sympathy with the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745, their breasts being evidently quite unresponsive to the romantic appeals of a few crackpots who tried to make Scotland a nation once again."

There was therefore nothing essentially Scottish about Burns's poetry. On the contrary:

"The language selected by Burns as the vehicle of his genius is more English or Teutonic than the language spoken today by Englishmen. To talk of Burns or his work as being the product of something peculiarly 'Scottish' is to talk like a fool."

This was the verdict of John S. Clarke in an article entitled "Was Robert Burns an Englishman?" which appeared in the newspaper *The Worker* on 31 January, 1922.

The Worker had originally been the paper of the Clyde Workers' Committee, a rank and file trade union organisation. By 1920, with Clarke as editor, the paper had the largest circulation of any revolutionary paper in Britain.

Clarke's view of Burns as "a mongrel type" was partly rooted in his view of Scottish history.

More fundamentally, it flowed out of his overall understanding of the driving forces of human development:

"What our nationalist culture-advocates forget is that culture is more the outcome of economic conditions prevailing at the time than of any inherent genius peculiar to the race or nation."

Capitalism boosted the development of productive forces and in the process of doing so dissolved national cultures:

"As progress develops, culture becomes more and more universal and less the product of a single people. It was capitalism [emphasis in original] which gave us the practicable steam engine, just as capitalism gave us Bessemer steel and the three volumes of *Das Kapital*."

That these were the creations of a Scotsman, an Englishman, and a German Jew was irrelevant. The development of capitalism generated a movement towards a universal culture.

Herein lay the genius of Burns. His poetry was an expression of that movement towards a universal culture. Was not, Clarke asked rhetorically, Burns's verse "Man to man the world o'er" a prophetic forerunner of the *Internationale*?

Clarke therefore dismissed "the crank theory of Scottish nationalism" with all its "tommy-rot about the 'culture' of their own blessed tin-pot clan." It cut across the emergence of a universal culture.

Scottish nationalism was as bank-

rupt as its Jewish equivalent. Nationalism is "As ridiculous in a Jew as it is in a Scotsman. The reactionary cry of 'Scotland for the Scots because they are Scots' or 'Palestine for the Jews because they are Jews' is quite enough to turn any intelligent person's stomach upside down."

"Celtic culture," continued Clarke, "is like the Jewish — merely of anti-quarian interest. A Scots 'nationalist' and his dreams are as impossible of realisation as they are disadvantageous to mankind."

It is easy to dismiss Clarke's article as an example of Marxism-gone-mad.

In its earliest stages of development capitalism created rather than destroyed national cultures. Scottish nationalism remains a living force seven decades after Clarke's article, and so too even more so does Jewish nationalism.

And Clarke's suggestion that Burns was English rather than Scottish was an exercise in provocation rather than historical analysis. His purpose in writing the article was not so much to discuss Burns as to attack nationalism, and Scottish nationalism in particular.

Clarke's concern was to promote class unity and challenge national-

ist separatism. And he was right to want to do so, however crude some of his arguments may have been (and, indeed, were).

The years following the First World War witnessed an upsurge of nationalism in Scotland. The war had (supposedly) been about the rights of small nations. So, ran the argument, the small nation of Scotland should have the right to self-government.

An editorial in *The Worker* warned of the dangers of this upsurge of nationalism:

"The Scots labour movement will do itself a bad turn if it introduces petit-bourgeois nationalism into the labour movement."

"It is the task of the Scots division to clear out of the labour movement the remnants of capitalist ideology. Any attempt to raise the banner of nationalism will be a diversion from this purpose. It will add confusion to the labour movement."

Whatever the shortcomings of his article, Clarke recognised that socialism is not an advanced form of nationalism but its enemy. He was giving expression to the same internationalism that John MacLean had voiced before becoming mentally and politically disoriented.

Clarke recognised that the perpetuation of national idiosyncrasies is no part of the socialist programme. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of many of the current generation of socialists in Scotland.

At a time when the misnamed "modernisers" hold sway in the Labour Party, Scottish nationalism has again become a pole of attraction for the disoriented and the demoralised.

Clarke may not have rated very high on the 'politically correct' scales, but he stood head and shoulders above those contemporary Scottish — and Irish and other — socialists who do not even know the difference between nationalism and socialism.



Arafat: has he compromised too much?

Lenin's life and ideas

War and socialism

Cathy Nugent continues a survey of Lenin's life, ideas and the events of his time. This week we look at the debates surrounding the First World War.

THE EVENTS of 1905 brought pressure from below for unification between the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions.

A fourth — reunification — Congress took place in Stockholm in the Spring of 1906 where an outline conception of democratic-centralism was adopted as a principle of organisation.

This was not democratic-centralism as it was known in latter-day Stalinist parties: the dictatorship of a bureaucratic party machine. This was not democratic-centralism as Lenin's bourgeois critics portray it, or as Lenin's "Trotskyist" epigones — the SWP, for example — practise it.

This was "universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; ... in the heat of battle, when the proletarian army is training every nerve, no criticism whatever can be permitted in its ranks. But before the call for action is issued, there should be the broadest and freest discussion and appraisal of the resolution..."

Democratic-centralism was in fact extremely 'liberal', and for Lenin factional activity — 'an open struggle between various tendencies' within the party — was 'natural'.

Lenin's conception of the party however was far more subtle, surprising even, than this. What was fundamental for Lenin was the struggle for ideas. This was what he was most

loyal to. He was ruthless about winning the battle of ideas both within his own party and against the bourgeoisie. He understood that "the ideological front" was the decisive "front", shaping and conditioning both the political and economic fronts of the class struggle.

The Mensheviks now had a majority. Sections of this tendency were now heading towards an explicit alliance with the Liberal-bourgeois Kadet party. In response, under Lenin's direction, the Bolsheviks set up a secret faction to organise against that majority as effectively as possible.

After 1907 the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks split again.

Party life in the period between 1908 and 1912 was moulded and marked by the triumph, once more, of reaction in Russia. There was a huge decline in numbers and bitter squabbles over policy and tactics within the socialist movement.

Lenin described the times as 'the period of absolute stagnation, of dead calm, hangings and suicides.'

At the end of 1907 Lenin left Russia and ended up in Geneva. Lenin too was affected by the mood. "I feel as if I have come here to be buried," he said.

But Lenin soon threw himself back into the fight, this time against both the ultra-right and the ultra-left in Social-Democracy. The ultra-right (a wing of the Mensheviks) wanted an alliance with the Kadets in the Duma; the ultra-left (a wing of the Bolsheviks known as otzvoists or "recallists") wanted to have nothing to do with the Duma and to continue the boycott of it.

Lenin had had to fight for the position of boycott during the 1905 revolution, when the overthrow of the Tsarist system seemed possible and it

made sense to have nothing to do with the Tsar's concessionary policy, of which the granting of the feeble and undemocratic Duma was a part. But the victory of reaction destroyed Lenin's hope that the working-class movement could by-pass the Tsar's tame institutions.

After the defeat of 1905 it was right to use the Duma as a platform for Social-Democracy however limited it was. Not to use it, said Lenin, would turn the boycott of the Duma into a political self-boycott. By contrast the Otzvoists made an apolitical and ahistorical fetish of the boycott policy. It was not serious politics.

In 1912 the Bolsheviks and "pro-party" Mensheviks (who were led by Plekhanov) held a conference in Prague. There the Bolsheviks effectively founded themselves as a separate party. This was the party which would — augmented by Trotsky and others — lead the October workers' revolution.

In August 1914 the First World War began. The war had a profound effect on Lenin's ideas.

The war itself had been predicted by the international socialist movement, watching the arms build-up by the European powers, in the first place Germany, Britain and France. The socialist Second International at its conference in 1912 had adopted a manifesto, formally recognising the coming war as an imperialist war in which there would be no "good" side. The manifesto declared it to be the duty of socialists everywhere to do all in their power to turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

And so what happened when war broke out came as a deep shock to Lenin. The main socialist parties, and in the first place that of Germany backed "their own" governments. When Lenin read in an issue of the official German socialist paper that the socialist deputies in the German Reichstag had backed the war by voting for war credits he was so surprised he thought the paper must be a forgery put out by the German general staff!

Many socialists of course did oppose the war from a number of different — but mostly from pacifist — standpoints.

Lenin, exiled in Switzerland up until 1917, set about analysing the causes of the war and why Social Democracy had collapsed into what he called "social patriotism" or "social chauvinism" (socialists in word, chauvinists in deeds).

The result of his thinking on the causes of the war were published in *Socialism and War* (written together with Gregory Zinoviev) and *Imperialism*.

Both sides in the war, Germany with her ally Austro-Hungary and the 'Entente' powers of France, England and Russia, were imperialist he said. Lenin now defined imperialism as a specific — the highest — stage of capitalism.

In the epoch of imperialism the struggle between the capitalist powers for the division and domination of the rest of the world became very sharp. War was a continuation of that struggle. At the same time all the contradictions of capitalism were intensified. Therefore the war would inevitably lead to the sharpening of the class struggle.

Lenin tried to work out a coherent Marxist framework for an independent working-class policy to the First World War which he was to argue for at the anti-war conferences of Zimmerwald (1915) and Kienthal (1916).

A socialist, he said, considers each



Russian losses on the Eastern Front ran at 50% through death, injury and desertion

war concretely. It is not enough to say all wars are bad. Some wars — for example where they have the effect of destroying despotism or freeing oppressed peoples — are progressive. This was a basic tenet of Marxism.

Marxists should generally, but not always, regard the victory of an oppressed state over its oppressors as progressive. But that was not this war!

Lenin likened the First World War to a "war between the biggest slave owners for the

preserving and fortifying of slavery". In the epoch of modern imperialism, war could only be a means by which gangs of "slave owners" fought each other for the right to continue to enslave and exploit colonies and which increased their oppression of "their own" national minorities.

In such a situation, Lenin argued, socialists should stand by the policy of "converting the imperialist war into a civil war". Further, Lenin advocated that socialists should be "defeatist": "all the socialists of all the belligerent countries should wish for the defeat of all their governments", he said.

Lenin's precise meaning is not always clear but effectively he meant that socialists should pursue the class struggle even if it damaged the "war effort" (e.g. strikes in munitions factories). Defeatism meant an international drive by the revolutionaries to prepare the proletarian overthrow of the bourgeois social order. For Lenin, there could be no peace, certainly no just peace, without the workers taking control, taking power.

Lenin's policy was counterposed not only to the "social-patriots" who were bolstering the war effort but to the pacifist sections of the socialist movement with their 'liberal' notions of peace and appeals for peace devoid

of class content. There were other shades of opinion too: a slogan used by Trotsky — "peace without annexations" — Lenin regarded as pacifist.

Lenin's preoccupations stemmed it seems from his desire to root out all opportunism in whatever guise from the socialist movement.

The First World War did, after the first months of class peace, escalate class struggle in the belligerent countries. Nowhere more so than in Russia did the ruling class show itself to be incompetent, corrupt, bankrupt.

On the eve of the war, sparked by a terrible massacre of workers at the Lena gold mines in

1912, workers' struggle had once more erupted in Russia. This continued right up to 1914. On the eve of the war there was a general strike in Baku, and barricades once more in the streets of St Petersburg. The declaration of war enabled the government to, temporarily, 'pacify' the unrest. Workers rallied round the flag. Not for long.

Months into the war, chaos reigned: continual breakdowns in industrial production, an overloaded railway system, agriculture suffering from lack of tools, inflation, a massive decline in productivity, catastrophic failures of the war on the Eastern front, Russian troops suffering 50% losses through death and injury and being used as cannon fodder for the other allies. The Tsarist state began to shake.

Strikes increased throughout the war. At the end of 1916, real wages began to fall dramatically. Terrible food shortages caused deprivation and starvation. The army faced a third bitter Russian winter in the trenches. These were the conditions that gave birth to the first, "February" revolution.

The third and final part of this series will be published next week.

"The first revolution will not be the last"

The following excerpt from "Letters from Afar" was written by Lenin on hearing the news of the February revolution. It summarises his perspective of the past years. He has been proved right!

The first revolution arising out of the imperialist World War has broken out. This first revolution will, certainly, not be the last...

Without the revolution of 1905-1907, without the counter-revolution of 1907-1914, it would have been impossible to secure so clear a "self-determination" of all classes of the Russian people and of all the peoples inhabiting Russia, a clarification of the relation of these classes to each other and to the tsarist monarchy, as transpired during the eight days of the March [February] revolution. This eight-day revolution, if we may express ourselves in terms of metaphors, was "performed" after a dozen informal as well as dress rehearsals; the "actors" knew each other and their roles, their places, and the entire setting; they knew every detail through and through, down to the last more or less significant shade of political tendency and mode of action.

...there was still needed a great, mighty, all-powerful "regisseur", who was, on the one hand, in a position to accelerate the course of history on a grand scale, and, on the other, to produce world-wide crises of unheard-of intensity; economic, politi-

cal, national and international...

This all-powerful "regisseur," this mighty accelerator of events, was the imperialist World War...

[It cannot] be doubted that the war is imperialistic on both sides. Only the capitalists and their satellites, the social-patriots and social-chauvinists, can deny or suppress this fact. Both the German and the Anglo-French bourgeoisie are waging war for the grabbing of foreign territory, for the strangulation of small nations, for financial supremacy over the world, for the division and redistribution of colonies, for saving the tottering capitalist regime by means of deceiving and disuniting the workers in the various countries.

It was objectively inevitable that the imperialist war should immensely quicken and unusually sharpen the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, and transform itself into a civil war between hostile classes.

This transformation has been started by the March revolution...

It is natural that the tsarist Russia, where disorganisation was monstrous, where the proletariat is the most revolutionary in the world (not due to any specific characteristics, but because of the vivid traditions of '1905') the revolutionary crisis should have burst forth earlier than anywhere else. The crisis was hastened by a number of most serious defeats inflicted on Russia and her allies. These defeats disorganised the entire old mechanism of government and the entire old system; they aroused the indignation of all classes of the population...

Rounding up the usual suspects



Matt Cooper
reviews
*Manhattan
Murder Mystery*

Directed by
Woody Allen

IN HIS private life, Woody Allen has, as far as I can make out, done nothing illegal. But if I were Mia Farrow I too would want to drag him through the dirt.

That Allen has problems should be no surprise to anyone who knows his films: his problems are Allen's stock-in-trade. They are paraded, parodied and thereby (on film at least) pardoned. Wearing his neuroses, hang-ups, vulnerabilities, fallibilities on his sleeve on screen, Allen has created great and perceptive films about the human condition. At one point in *Manhattan Murder Mystery* Allen exclaims "Don't tell me that life doesn't mimic film", and it seems that, in this instance at least, he is right. But here he has produced a rather anonymous, shallow film.

In *Murder Mystery* Allen plays Larry, a New York literary agent. We shall call this character Allen. His friend Ted we shall call Alan Alda, his wife Diane Keaton (Mia Farrow being unavailable), the writer who has the hots for Allen, Anjelica Huston. Casting this Woody Allen film was, it seems, not so much a case of finding appropriate actors for the roles but of rounding up the usual suspects!

The plot: Allen is married to Keaton. Keaton starts suspecting that the nice old man next door has murdered his nice old wife. Allen thinks that Keaton is turning into a scatty, neurotic housewife (she has not worked since the birth of their son, now 21), Keaton turns to Alda for some help in a bit of amateur sleuthing.

Alda divorced and with an eye on Keaton, is only too keen to help. In the meantime, Allen finds himself making more meaningful eye contact with Huston than a married man should.

The murder mystery is a foil to probe the rot in Allen Keaton's relationship and, perhaps, a metaphor for lost enchantment and vanished magic in their marriage. The only question is, will the mystery work to rejuvenate their marriage, or will Keaton go off to explore the mystery of Alda? To this I wish to add a further question, why should anyone care?

Through all of this, Allen neurotically mumbles and bumbles and wise-



Allen and Keaton go sleuthing

cracks. There are some good lines in the film, (Keaton: "But we might live next to a murderer". Allen: "Well, New York's a melting pot"), and, as

a romantic comedy, the film drifts along in an amiable and diverting way. Less substantial than Allen's *Broadway Danny Rose* or his *Purple*

Rose of Cairo, *Manhattan Murder Mystery* is well crafted and quite superbly directed.

But Allen is capable of far better

than this pastiche of forty-year old romantic comedy. I only hope that Allen will soon return from his trials with a better film than this.

Evolution of the mind



BBC2
Monday 24 January

Richard Love
reviews
Horizon

THE TRADITIONAL view of the development of the mind sees our brain as a computer running a programme written into our genes. *Horizon* dealt with a new theory which completely changes the way we look at the development of our mind.

A team of scientists lead by Nobel prize winner Gerald Edelman now call this computer model into question.

Firstly, they say it does not fit the physiology of the brain. More importantly, they question where the 'computer' programme comes from. They point out we would need to run different programmes for different stages of development that a three month old baby learning basic limb movements would need one programme, a 12 month old baby learning to speak another, an adult working out abstract theories yet another and so on. The computer model is not plau-

sible, they conclude.

Edelman's team use a 'Darwinist' theory to explain our mental development. The brain is a complex mass of billions of cells that interconnect with each other. The number of different possible permutations of these connections is greater than the number of particles in the known universe! It is an inconceivably high number. Brain activity is simply these interconnections switching on and off.

"This is evolution by natural selection at break-neck speed."

The mind develops by trying out different connections in a more or less random fashion. Small 'value centres' in the brain stem tell the brain when it has made a valuable set of connections.

So, for example, a baby learning to grab an object will move (all) its limbs

in a random way until it touches the object he/she is trying to touch. At this point one of these value centres will register a success, and the currently active brain connections will be strengthened. In future, that set of connections will be more likely to occur.

What is happening is that the brain is naturally selecting connections that are successful and (possibly) de-selecting or weakening those that appear to be useless.

This is evolution by natural selection at break-neck speed. Instead of many generations being needed to make changes, thousands of 'species' (brain cell connections) are tried and selected or rejected within seconds.

Edelman's team have constructed impressive computer models to test their ideas. They have for example been able to get a computer and robot to learn for itself the significance of colour.

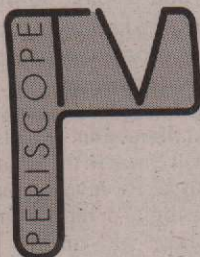
The theory seems to fit my own personal experience of learning to ride a bike. I wobbled around often falling off making random adjustments to try to balance. Gradually things got better until I could balance virtually instinctively. My initial attempts to balance were not informed guesses

as to what to do, but random stabs in the dark.

Horizon did not deal with psychology (although I should imagine Edelman's team have considered it). But for socialists there is something very important here.

Implicit in this theory is the idea that we are not born with any sort of programme that could make us instinctively evil. We will learn what is the right thing to do by a subconscious natural selection of brain responses that benefit us. This backs up the basic position of socialists that we are created by our environment and that we need to strive towards creating a better environment if we want to deal with issues like crime, and in general change 'human nature' from what it has evolved into inside the dog-eat-dog class society which has dominated our history for thousands of years.

The pseudo-science of the Tories who say some people are born evil and need to be locked up or even killed by the state was never a good theory. Edelman's team have come up with a plausible and convincing theory that, at the level of the physiology of the brain, backs up what we have long been saying.



On Channel 4, another chance to see Ken Loach's great film about building workers, *Riff-Raff* Tuesday 1 February, 10 pm

Alliance for

WORKERS'
LIBERTY

Meetings

**"Ireland in crisis
— what should
socialists say?"**

GLASGOW

Thursday 3 February

Speaker at both these meetings:
John O'Mahony (editor, *Socialist
Organiser*)

1.00pm, Glasgow University,
Queen Margaret's Union

7.30pm, Partick Burgh Halls

BELFAST

Saturday 5 February

12.00pm - 5.00pm,
Dayschool at Central Hall,
Rosemary Street

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 2 February

1.00pm, Sheffield University
Student Union

Thursday 3 February

Speaker: Pat Murphy
7.30pm, SCCAU, West Street

NORTHAMPTON

Saturday 12 February

12.30pm, Royal Mail Club, St
George's Street

YORK

Tuesday 1 February

Speaker: Nick Denton
8.00pm, Goodricke College, York
University

EDINBURGH

Wednesday 2 February

Speaker: John O'Mahony
1.00pm, Trades Council, Picardie
Place

NOTTINGHAM

Thursday 3 February

Speaker: Tony Dale
8.00pm, ICC, Mansfield Road

Tom Rigby of the AWL debates
Workers' Power

8.00pm, Castle Rooms

NEWCASTLE

Monday 31 January

Speaker at both meetings: Nick
Denton

7.30 Rossetti Studios, Leazes
Park Road

Tuesday 1 February

2.00 Student Union, Northumbria
University

An invitation to our readers

Alliance for Workers' Liberty
conference

THE ALLIANCE for Workers' Liberty's national conference will take place in London on the weekend of Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 March.

AWL will meet to take stock of the national and international situation at a time when the Tory government is in crisis. The issue for the left is how can we best help the movement to defeat the Tories? We will examine the possibilities of public sector action against the pay freeze, and assess the role our comrades and trade union fractions can play in this struggle and what they have been doing of the last year.

The inability of the Labour Party's leaders to provide sustained, aggressive, working-class opposition to the

Tory onslaught against the labour movement and workers' living standards has been analysed week-by-week in *Socialist Organiser*. This passivity of Labour, coupled with the Labour bureaucrats' ban against our paper (those who sell *Socialist Organiser* are open to expulsion from the Party) leaves the AWL, which was launched in response to the ban in 1990, with a number of problems.

Firstly, work in the Labour Party has been made more awkward for our members. It is not just that our members have been expelled and others often have to keep their heads down, but also that many Labour activists have dropped out or become, for the moment, inactive. There is a thinner layer of Labour left-wingers

to work with than there was, for instance in the early 1980s.

However, the picture is not uniformly bleak. Although socialist youth find the Labour leaders' prostration pretty nauseating, and this is a barrier to getting youth to join the Party, there are some signs that the

*"The issue for the left is
how can we best help the
movement to defeat the
Tories?"*

bureaucrats are moving to open up a youth wing. These new Labour youth groups, although generally closely watched, appear to have some possibility of attracting youth who want to fight the Tories — there have been some large launch meetings in some areas.

During the past year the AWL has played a major role in the Keep The Link campaign to save the Labour-union relationship. This initiative had class-wide implications and made a contribution towards stopping the Labour "modernisers" push.

We proved that revolutionary socialists who are well-placed because of patient past work can have an impact even in John Smith's Labour Party.

Socialist Organiser and the AWL have attempted to help stop the left's sectarian drift away from Labour. Labour is still rooted to the working class through the trade unions. Revolutionaries must still aim to influence Labour, and not allow the bureaucrats to force us out, needlessly isolating ourselves from the class.

This issue of the correct orientation to Labour will be posed starkly in the run up to the May local council elections when we expect a number of neo-Nazi candidates to stand. We believe that "Stop the Nazis" must

mean not only stickers, demonstrations and self-defence, but also working for a Labour victory.

Our conference will examine the extent of the fascist threat against a back-drop of far-right gains in Russia and significant Nazi organisations in Europe. We will debate the question of how to defeat British racism.

In recent years, the AWL has had a major effect in the student movement. A number of our comrades are members of the National Executive of the 1.5 million-strong National Union of Students or run college or Area student unions. We are involved in the activist organisation Left Unity which is the only real national left-opposition to the right-wing Labour leaders of NUS. Our comrades will be discussing the prospects for the student movement which currently faces the threat of a Tory axe. We will be developing our policy for students and their movement.

THE AWL CONFERENCE must also look at how our organisation as a whole is developing. This means debate about the direction of our paper and sales networks, development of international links, examination of our internal education structures and a balance sheet of our various fractions — from work in the unions to the development of a Black cadre.

We will look at past and possibilities of future recruitment and — central to everything we do — the development of branches and the political life of our branches.

What the AWL conference represents is an organisation meeting to discuss with the intention of going away and doing. We are building a socialist group which intervenes and fights now.

With this in mind we invite sympathisers to attend our conference. If you would like more details please write to us: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

New pamphlet from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty
Socialism and Democracy

ONE DAY EVERY five years people aged 18+ go to a polling booth, put a cross on a ballot paper, put the ballot paper in a ballot box, and then go home and sit up till the small hours watching excited middle-class men on TV tell us who form our next government.

The victors almost always win only a minority of the vote; but, because of our "first past the post" electoral system, one party gets most of the seats in the House of Commons and the right to rule our lives for the next five years.

This right to rule includes the right to change the rules in their favour, and to limit the other democratic rights we have, so next time around it is harder for us to get rid of them.

On the four most recent election nights the party celebrating victory has been the Tory Party. We wish it had been the Labour Party, but, even if it had been, what would they — and we — have won? The right to change anything really substantial, to fight against the Civil Service, the police and judiciary, ultimately, perhaps, the

armed forces? Not at all. These things are, if at all, at best only decided very indirectly by elections. If this is the case, why did, and do, Labour leaders like Michael Foot make such a fetish of parliamentary activity, and set themselves so much against extra-parliamentary activity? To safeguard the constitution?

Why have they, in the name of "democracy", bowed down to minority Tory governments determined to destroy all but a façade of people's rule over their own lives and communities? Why have they given up hope of going beyond the limited democracy we have to a better form of democracy?

Socialism and Democracy contains a debate between then Labour leader Michael Foot and writers in *Socialist Organiser* about democracy — what it means and how to win it.

The AWL's new 96 page pamphlet, Socialism and Democracy, is available for £1.95 (cheques to "WL Publications") from: WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Labour vote dodged at
ARA's AGM

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Dion D'Silva

About 200 people turned up to the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) AGM on Sunday 16 January in London. Many of the delegates were from national organisations.

Formally, ARA is the most democratic of the anti-racist organisations. The diverse nature of the affiliates and the delegates was reflected in the motions and debates.

Apparently there are some divisions in the ARA leadership about the response of the organisation to the election of the BNP councillor and the 16 October demonstration.

There were quite a few motions calling for unity in the anti-racist movement. One called for a joint conference with ANL, YRE etc. Though the sentiment for unity was strong the leadership managed to persuade conference to reject these motions.

The Executive Committee Unity state-

ment pledges "to... cooperative arrangements with any broad-based organisations to avoid divisions in the anti-racist movement." However it implies that other groups support ARA and, doesn't commit ARA to actually do anything to bring about unity.

Other resolutions on the Jamaican deportations and the rise of fascism were passed. ARA's campaign *Speak*

Out Against Racism supported the TUC demonstration on 19 March in Tower Hamlets. Further, it calls for supporters to work against the election of any BNP candidate as well as exposing the racist campaigns of the Liberal Democrats. What it doesn't do is call for a Labour vote. This is a major failing common to all the anti-racist organisations. To keep the alliances togeth-

er the campaigns are refusing to recommend a working-class answer — namely, to campaign for a vote for Labour. In the run-up to local elections we should put pressure on the campaigns to do just that. After all, if 8 more people had voted Labour in Millwall the BNP wouldn't have got its first councillor and the consequent respectability. *

Critique Conference meets

By Mark Osborn

ON SATURDAY 22 January the journal *Critique* hosted a day of debate in London. Over 200 people attended.

There is quite a lot to be said in *Critique's* favour — over the years it has provided a forum for serious anti-Stalinists to debate and discuss. Some of the central *Critique* people — for instance Bob Arnot and Mick Cox — make useful contributions to social-

ist debate. We might have sharp disagreements with some of Hillel Ticktin's views, but he is well informed and interesting. However, there is another side to the matter which was on exhibition on Saturday: a type of academic-fuelled ultra-leftism, where, for instance whether or not we should defend the National Health Service is considered just another interesting question to be debated. I'm sorry, bureaucratic or not (and it is) the existing Health Service is a very good

thing if you've broken your arm. To be a socialist and to have so little concern for the day-to-day interests of working-class people should surely utterly discredit someone?

The key thing here is that Marxism is not just about discussion. It is also about active involvement in the labour movement. And active involvement breeds a responsibility in individuals towards the workers' movement — a 'natural' antidote to ultra-leftism. Academic comrades, get active!

Step up the boycott French style

TEACHERS

By Liam Conway

TWO EVENTS either side of the Channel illustrate the contrasting attitude in France and Britain to the issue of state education.

In France the Government had clearly backed down on a proposal to increase state funding for private religious schools. But that did not stop one million demonstrators marching through Paris in defence of state education.

It was one of the biggest popular protests ever seen in Paris. It would have been even bigger but for the fact that the trains and airlines were unable to meet the demand for transport to the capital. And all this after the French Government was already defeated.

Compare that to the situation in Britain. The Tories have just

announced plans to set up selective schools based on a 15% contribution from parents. And how will these schools select their pupils? With the 11+ of course. But isn't the 11+ a thing of the past? Not at all! As a result of the much acclaimed Dearing Report, Key Stage 2 tests, taken by pupils at age 11, could well be used to reintroduce these Grammar Schools.

Add to this the enormous burden of assessment workload, more tests at age 14 and the Government's continuing insistence of the publication of league tables and it shouldn't be difficult for anyone in the know to see that the Dearing Report is a con trick.

Yet so far the NUT is the only union not to have been taken in by this media fanfare — and for good reason. "Sir Ron" as the Labour Spokeswoman on Education, Ann Taylor, ingratiatingly calls him, has left in place the essential fea-

tures that led to the boycott. Doug McAvoys has rightly stated that the boycott will continue.

So why have all the other unions, including the NASUWT, given up the boycott? According to Nigel DeGruchy, NASUWT General Secretary, Dearing represents a massive victory against the Government. But where is this victory? All that Dearing has seriously promised is a review of the National Curriculum. This may mean some reduction in content but it leaves everything else, including the tests and the league tables, intact.

Anyway, how can anyone believe that the review will bring any benefits? Have the NASUWT leaders forgotten that behind Dearing is a government that has attacked state education for years with a reactionary right-wing ideology and massive cuts. Have they forgotten what happened after that other well-known review — the Pit Closure Review?

LEA schools are literally falling to pieces, class sizes are rising and teachers are regularly sacked whilst the private and grant maintained sector enjoys an unprecedented boom. In response to all this the NASUWT abandons the only weapon of resistance we cur-

rently have against the Government. This is sheer folly. The boycott should be stepped up and all the education unions should be looking to build a demonstration like the one in Paris. Given the threat we face here, and the opportunity offered by the most unpopular government in living memory, the demo ought to be at least four times the size.

Currently, the NUT leadership is sending a survey into schools seeking the views of members on various aspects of National Curriculum Assessment and Testing. The result will be announced some time this week but the signs are that over 90% of returns support continuing the boycott. This is clear evidence that the strength of feeling against the tests has not been dented by publication of the Dearing Report.

It may well be that the NASUWT leadership has confused the mood of the media with the mood of teachers. The left must pull out all the stops to pressurise the NASUWT rank and file with one clear message — keep up the boycott! The future of free state education and the chance to significantly step up the struggle are riding on the current action.

Green nuclear power?



THERE IS still no definite solution to the problem of energy once fossil fuels have run out. There is also the problem of what to do with the highly dangerous and long-lived radioactive wastes produced by yesterday's solution to the energy shortage — conventional nuclear power. From Los Alamos, birthplace of the nuclear bomb, and from CERN, the high-energy physics centre in Geneva, come possible solutions to both problems.

In both cases, new types of nuclear reactor are proposed which use the abundant radioactive metal, thorium-232 (Th-232), to make the fuel. Particle accelerators, hitherto mainly used for research, are also part of the design, possibly, providing a commercial spin-off from a technology often criticised for its cost and irrelevance to everyday needs.

The main purpose of the Los Alamos group's proposal is to get rid of dangerous wastes from nuclear power stations. These wastes contain elements from the actinide group of metals. Many are artificial and all are radioactive. Some have half-lives of over a million years. The most dangerous are plutonium-239 and -240 (Pu-239/240), which would have to be kept away from living things for perhaps a quarter of a million years for their radioactiv-

ity to have declined to acceptable levels. Other radioactive elements are also present in these wastes, some with similarly long half-lives. It is hard to see how these can be kept safe for perhaps millions of years either by burying them underground (the nuclear industry's preferred option) or by keeping them in dry stores above ground (favoured by the environmental movement).

The Los Alamos solution is Accelerator-driven Transmutation of Waste (ATW). A particle accelerator fires protons (the nuclei of hydrogen atoms) at a target. This produces lots of neutrons which can be fairly easily "captured" by nuclei of Th-232. In a fairly short time, the result is uranium-233 (U-233) which is fissile. This means it can be made to split by neutrons, releasing energy which can be used to make electricity, just as in conventional nuclear reactors.

The neutrons from the accelerator can also be captured by the nuclei in radioactive waste, transmuting them into different isotopes of the same element or into isotopes of different elements. If these isotopes are stable, they are no longer dangerous; if unstable, they are likely to have much shorter half-lives

and will be safe in a shorter time; if unstable but with long half-lives, they are still available to capture neutrons which may make them safer. After a while, the waste can be treated to remove the short-lived isotopes, the others being recycled for further treatment. The ATW process also produces energy for electricity generation, in excess of that required to operate the accelerator. This would mean that electricity could be generated at little more cost than by conventional nuclear power, which includes no element of cost for waste disposal.

The Los Alamos group see the following advantages for ATW. Plants could be built alongside existing reactors so that waste would not need to leave the sites. The reactors would be inherently safe since, if the accelerator is turned off, the reaction quickly runs down to zero. This is because there is no chain reaction to run out of control. None of the products is suitable for military uses. Once the waste from the existing reactor had been transmuted, the ATW reactor could continue producing electricity from Th-232, one charge of 40 tonnes being adequate to keep a 3000MW reactor going for 30 years. At the end of its life, such a reactor would produce only some 10kg of dangerous waste, about one thirtieth of that from a conventional reactor. This would have to be burnt in another ATW reactor.

Carlo Rubbia, formerly Director-General of CERN and Nobel Prize winner for his part in the discovery of the W and Z particles, has suggested a similar system for energy production. He calls his reactor an energy amplifier (EA) since it uses energy to operate a particle accelerator to make neutrons to bombard Th-232. The resulting U-233 would release much more energy when it split up.

The EA uses a cheaper and more compact type of accelerator and existing pressurised water reactor (PWR) technology. Power output would be perhaps one tenth of tenth that of the ATW reactor but would be cheaper due to the greater simplicity of design. As with ATW, much smaller amounts of dangerous waste would be produced.

The EA is seen as a solution to energy shortages while ATW deals with the problem of waste from conventional nuclear power. Future energy supplies may well come from some combination of EA, ATW, nuclear fusion (which seems to be approaching its first goal of breakeven), and the sources favoured by the environmental movement. ATW could also play a role in disposing of the U and Pu from redundant nuclear weapons. Something similar was suggested a few years ago by, ironically, a member of the Green Party. His slogan for burning up nuclear warheads to make electricity was "Bombs into light!"

CPSA: unity slate to focus on defeating Market Testing.

CIVIL SERVICE

By a CPSA DsHSS SEC member

LAST Saturday's (Jan 22nd) recall conference of the CPSA Broad Left, voted to endorse a unity pact with the soft left BL '84 group in this year's national elections. A slate of candidates was agreed, including 2 Socialist Caucus members John Maloney and Mark Serwotka. The election pact, called "Unity" will contest the elections on a detailed policy programme. Although not perfect this programme calls for a national campaign of strike action to defeat Market Testing and to defend civil service jobs terms and conditions. This key demand, which was missing from last year's "Unity" programme, has been included because of the pressure exerted by the serious left in the union who fielded a candidate in last year's election on a platform of national industrial action to defeat Market Testing. It is also a recognition of the mood of the membership who have demonstrated their willingness to fight by the massive support given to the November 5th strike.

The only opposition to the unity

proposals came from the SWP who counterposed elections to rank and file resistance. It was the Socialist Caucus delegates to the conference who pointed out the necessity to fight back now, whilst also mobilising to elect a left leadership in April. Both of these elements being important. Whilst Militant represent an electoralist strand within the Broad Left, and the SWP an ultra-left mirror image, only the Socialist Caucus argued for a position which truly puts forward a strategy for the membership.

Fighting fascism

The conference also heard how the 16 CPSA activists disciplined in Sheffield for campaigning to sack a BNP member working in a job centre had won an out of court settlement against the Dept. of Employment. This is a significant victory, achieved in part because of the support given to the 16 by rank and file members of their union branch including strike action. It is also a re-buff to the hard-line anti-union management. The victory should be built upon in the case of the 2 sacked CPSA members in the Dept. of Employment in Bristol.

2,000 vote for Sheffield council strike

UNISON

By Chris Croome, Shop Stewards organiser, Sheffield UNISON No2 Branch

AT A MASS meeting of over 2,000 Sheffield UNISON local government members on 25 January there were overwhelming votes for strike action to oppose compulsory redundancies. Sheffield council is threatening up to 1,150 redundancies and believes that it has a budget gap of around £23 million. The first notices are expected to be issued on 1 February and UNISON has reaffirmed a position of walking out for a 24 hour strike if this happens. The meeting also resolved to organise departmental meet-

ings where redundancies are threatened to consider what action they are prepared to undertake.

Following two years of negotiating away services and terms and conditions in order to stave off compulsory redundancies. An attempt to win members to a position of opposition to all cuts in services and conditions lost by 971 votes to 740.

It now looks as if they next few months are going to be chaotic in Sheffield Council as union officials attempt to do a deal and members strike to defend their jobs. What is desperately needed is a united response from all the council unions involving a commitment to defend jobs and services and a massive campaign involving service user groups and the Labour Party to fight for proper funding for decent services in Sheffield.

BT workers face redundancy threat... again

BT

By a Central London BT engineer

BEFORE CHRISTMAS BT and the National Communications Union [NCU] NEC came to a compromise over the issue of the movement of "surplus" staff.

The targeting of staff on the basis of their appraisal results has been ameliorated, but the underlying threat to jobs remains.

In return for the "Identification of Redeployees" procedure the NCU has extracted from BT the promise to reduce the number of contractors used and to move surplus staff into any vacancies that are created. BT have also said they will set up no new "Resourcing" companies this year — as initially threatened.

There are two main problems with this approach. Firstly, there is no evidence that BT is willing or capable of redistributing its staff and displacing contractors. Previous "rebalancing" schemes have been a failure. Secondly, in many areas of the country, especially London, the number of "surplus" staff well outweighs the contractors used.

In effect, the NCU NEC played for time, avoiding a confrontation and subsequent ballot before Christmas.

The present compromise only last until April 1994 and the efforts BT has made up until this time will determine whether the agreement continues.

Now, though, NCU members are being made "redeployees", or "supernumerary", and some are being charged with NCI: "Non-Culpable Inefficiency", a procedure which eventually leads to dismissal.

Many NCU members are unaware of how the NEC has confronted BT over this issue. They were informed that the union had withdrawn from the "Annual Performance Reviews" — i.e. appraisals — but now, due to the compromise, the APRs are back and being used to judge staff.

The "Campaign for Jobs" that members of the Broad Left in the NCU believe is the answer to BT's staff-cutting measures has not yet achieved the move from an idea to reality — yet it is incredibly important that a nationally led united campaign gets into action very soon.

The Broad Left leadership in the union is prioritising unity within the NEC Broad Left caucus. This is important in order that any campaigning is done of a union-wide basis, but has hampered other important factors: the need for a clear lead and building upon the opportunities as they present themselves. For example, when the APR was first brought in there was genuine anger from many staff but no action was taken nationally for weeks whilst branches sent out contradictory instructions to their members.

Now the seriousness of the continuing compulsory redundancy threat has to be brought home to all NCU members, but in such a way as to make clear the union's determination that we will fight on this one.

NCU: vote Bill Fry!

SITTING National Communications Union general secretary Tony Young is getting very worried about losing to Broad Left challenger Bill Fry in the current election.

Young (known as "Tokyo Tone" by friends and foe alike because of his penchant for overseas junkets) has not done anything to defend BT workers jobs. The rank and file know this. As a result his campaign managers are panicking.

A victory for Bill Fry will help the Broad Left dominated NCU NEC cut through obstruction from some of the functionaries at Greystone House.

"Something similar was suggested by, ironically, a member of the Green Party. His slogan for burning up nuclear warheads to make electricity was 'Bombs into light'."

SOCIALIST

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No grant cuts! Defend NUS!

On to the streets!

Postal workers

Vote No! Save Jobs!

By a Manchester postal worker

"I F IT'S SO GOOD why are so many people trying to sell it to us?" That comment from a member of the UCW at last week's meeting of area reps from the north and Scotland called to discuss the latest proposals on productivity summed up the distrust of those present to what was in front of them.

Last October a Special Letters Conference passed policy calling for no further discussions on delivering and processing productivity until there had been significant progress on the union's claim for a shorter working week.

Three months later, nothing on the shorter working week but a 16 page report on productivity.

Faced with the threat to jobs in Royal Mail this represents the easy option for the UCW leadership.

They argue that jobs are going anyway so why not try and get a few bob for the workforce that remains.

Those of us at the sharp end don't see things in quite the same way. As far as we can see people who are already working hard are going to be forced to work harder.

In order to even enter the scheme on the delivery side offices have got to guarantee to achieve at least 20% cuts.

Other undesirable features of such a scheme could include: cover for absent colleagues without extra payment, being forced to work over finishing time on a so-called "swings and roundabouts" basis, giving up unsocial hours payments and other allowances and last, but not least, the ending of regular scheduled overtime.

All of us will be expected to work on a performance rate arrived at by a yet to be agreed



The last national strike in autumn 1988, Alan Tuffin's successor Alan Johnson is no different

Delivery Productivity Measurement system. The delivery section also includes a so-called Quality Premium. This will be paid if staff accurately deliver all the mail that comes to them in the time allowed.

Fair enough, you might think. Except that this will result in even tighter policing than at present and pressure upon individuals to take out more than they can cope with.

50% of the Quality Premium depends on factors outside the control of individual offices so it is unlikely they will ever be achieved.

The Delivery Productivity System as it stands at present would be voluntary with each office deciding whether to enter or not. If this scheme is accepted then the pressure

will be on offices to do a deal and after enough have been pressured into it — as happened with the predecessor scheme IWM — it will be made compulsory.

Office will be set against office. And members against member as unscrupulous managers exploit the situation.

Delivery staff have learnt from bitter experience to distrust productivity schemes. So, in order to force it through, the UCW executive have had to adopt some extraordinary procedures.

For a start they have lumped the delivery scheme in with one for processing, the promise of one for distribution and an admin incentive scheme that is already in existence. And threw it open to all members in Royal Mail.

They have by-passed the branch structures which would have allowed discussion on the merits of the scheme and have instead gone straight to an individual postal ballot.

And just to make sure that branches can't influence the way that members vote the details of the scheme were only released five days before the ballot papers were due to be sent out. All this chicanery has been backed up by a propaganda barrage from management in favour of a 'Yes' vote.

All staff in Royal Mail have been forced to endure a management pep-talk on the joys of productivity deal this week backed up by glossy leaflets.

The choice before UCW members in the Royal Mail is clear:

Vote yes and vote for even larger job cuts or vote no and you vote to tell the leadership of our union. "Get off your knees. Follow conference policy. Start the fight for jobs and the shorter working week."

By Kevin Sexton NUS NEC (in a personal capacity)

LAST WEEK a London student rally gave National Union of Students [NUS] president Lorna Fitzsimons a rowdy reception. When Fitzsimons told the rally how she could not call an NUS national demonstration, she was jeered and heckled by students. A chant of "hey Lorna, ain't you heard the demo's on the twenty third" drowned out her voice. When she denounced mass action screwed up leaflets showered on to the stage.

The rally at London Guildhall University was organised by the NUS London Regional office. It was one of three demonstrations starting and ending in different parts of London on the NUS day of action against grant cuts and attacks on student unionism. NUS leaders attempt to divide the action in London — called as it was very early in the student term — failed when students from the different demos made their way to the London Guildhall University rally.

Student anger at the rally focused on the fact that even the announcement of a 30% cut in grants in the budget could not spur Fitzsimons and her friends into action. They still oppose calling an NUS National Demonstration! They cancelled an NUS National Executive Meeting last term that was to discuss calling a national demo.

What the action on the 20th also showed was the powerful that is growing up behind the National Demonstration called by *Left Unity* and many local student unions for 23rd February.

Student activists must build flat out for this demo and write or phone Lorna Fitzsimons demanding she makes it an official NUS demonstration.

The NUS National Executive will meet on 8th February and *Left Unity* supporters have put in a motion for NUS to support and build for the 23rd.

You can write to Fitzsimons at NUS, 461 Holloway Rd., London, N7, and there will be a lobby of the NEC on 8th Feb.

We must put maximum pressure on the NUS leadership to build the fight back. Whatever Fitzsimons and her friends do or do not to, the Feb. 23rd demonstration will be a massive show of opposition to the Tories.

Lobby the NUS National Executive Meeting Make the 23rd Feb. demo an NUS demo! 10am Tues 8th Feb. 461 Holloway Rd, London, N7.

National Student March

- Hands off our grants!
- £70 a week min. grant
- Full benefit rights
- Stop tuition fees!
- Stop graduate tax!
- Defend NUS!

Weds. 23rd Feb.
Starts 1pm U.L.U.
Malet Street WC1

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