


**VOTE LABOUR** **MAY 5th**

# SOCIALIST

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# Unite teachers to beat the Tory tests

By a Notts NUT member

**W**HAT kind of trade unionism do Nigel DeGruchy and the National Association Of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) now support? DeGruchy's speech at the NASUWT's Easter Conference suggests that they might be following in the footsteps of the UDM — the well known pro-bosses pit union in Nottinghamshire. Not supporting a continued full boycott of the government's SATs tests is one thing, but calling on NASUWT members to break the National Union of Teachers (NUT) boycott of SATs is a different matter all together.

And the language! DeGruchy urged the Government to "recapture some of the spirit of the Falklands war" by sending in special task forces of external markers to ensure that the tests for 7, 11 and 14 year olds go ahead this year without a hitch. He even said that his union would not object to its members joining such squads as those being planned by the right-wing Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth in South

London.

He told Tory Education Minister Baroness Blatch, who was in the conference hall listening:

"If you can organise the most impressive task force in history to rescue British citizens thousands of miles away in the Falkland Isles, surely it is not beyond the wit of this Government to arrange external markers to ensure that the tests go ahead this summer."

In response to the suggestion that this might be 'black legging' or 'boycott-busting' on the NUT action, DeGruchy replied: "that's their problem". "It would", he continued, "pull the rug from under the NUT's militant feet."

In a move clearly aimed at encouraging legal action against the NUT, DeGruchy claimed that the boycott would not stand up to a court challenge.

DeGruchy's grovelling to the Tories should sicken all genuine trade unionists. Nevertheless it can also be seen as an opportunity for the left to unite militants in the NUT and the NASUWT.

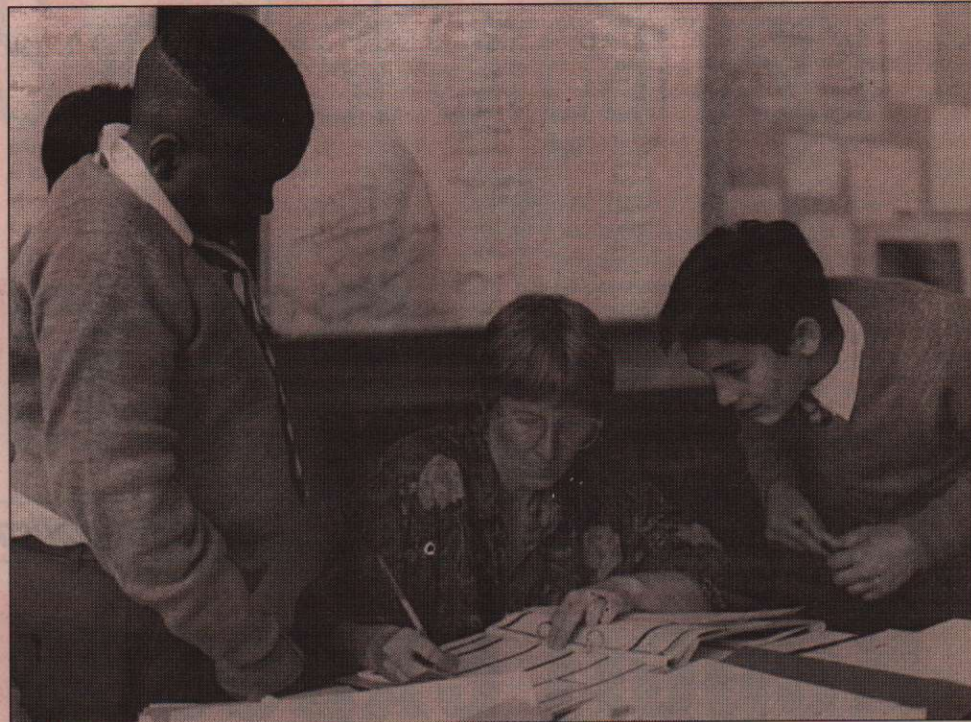
We must not forget that NUT secretary Doug McAvoy, reluctantly support-

ed by the Broad Left, is now trying to use the SATs boycott as a 'left' front in his campaign to get re-elected as General Secretary. Despite the massive Tory attack on education, the Broad Left — which, in the NUT, is not the real left wing — supports national action against the Government on no other issue.

The real attitude of the Broad Left to action was revealed on the last day of Conference when they used a cynical manoeuvre to prevent the passage of a rule-change on balloting procedures for action.

At present it needs a 66% majority of all members eligible to vote to initiate action. In practice this means that on a 66% turn-out about 100% would have to vote yes. Yet a perfectly moderate motion to change this to 66% of those voting was opposed by the Broad Left.

Worse, they manipulated conference standing orders to ensure that a vote on the motion could not take place before conference time ran out. The motion was set to pass with a massive majority and shows up the Broad Left for what they really are — fraud-



We should go on the warpath about the SATs boycott. Photo: Phil Maxwell

ulent as democrats and fraudulent as fighters. But it also shows them losing their grip on conference and the NUT.

The real left in the NUT is potentially stronger and more united than ever. With a large minority of 15 on the National Executive, and clear majori-

ties in Conference on most issues, the NUT left can act as a magnet to all teachers who want to fight the Tories.

DeGruchy is not getting it all his own way in the NASUWT. An amendment to continue the boycott received a large minority of votes at the

NASUWT conference.

Unfortunately, the lack of basic democratic structures in the NASUWT and the non-existence of any real organised left opposition means that NASUWT members who want to fight on the SATs must either join the NUT or carry out the tests.

Whilst we should urge all members of the NASUWT to pressurise their own leaders, NUT left should also encourage as many as possible to join the NUT. We should be bullish about the NUT boycott.

In Notts, we have responded to DeGruchy's 'boycott-busting' position with the slogan: 'NUT — the SATs busters'. This should be repeated across the country.

There was already clear signs of a membership drift from the NASUWT to the NUT before the Easter conferences. We should help turn this trickle into a flood.

The Left's long term struggle with the Broad Left in the NUT, and the need now to maximise resistance to the Tories, demand that we win over as many NASUWT militants as possible not just to the NUT but to fighting rank and file left.

This would be the best way to turn the Broad Left's retreat into a rout, to unite teachers, and to hasten the demise of the Tory Government.

## Left makes gains at Teachers conference

"**C**LEAR focuses for action" is how the Socialist Organiser bulletin described the outcome of this year's NUT Conference. The left were able to win positions for action on a number on points throughout the conference: class size, special needs and language support, as well the well-publicised renewal of NUT policy to boycott the government-imposed 'Standard Assessment Tasks' (SATs).

John Patten told newspapers during conference that "standards are starting to improve rapidly and the tests are contributing to that improvement". In fact most people know that it is teaching that improves standards and that the SATs only exist in order to make league tables (as indeed the National Curriculum in turn only exists in order to be tested). SATs are for the government a necessary link in the chain of an overall policy that is about enforcing competition between schools over diminishing resources.

The decision of the 180,000-strong NUT to continue the SATs boycott for as long as the Tories try to impose the tests potentially means defeat for a central point of Tory policy.

Less widely reported was an important decision to fight cuts in support for pupils whose first language is not English. This support, known in edu-

cational jargon as 'Section 11 Funding', has already been substantially reduced by the government which now plans to cut out specific funding for such work and merge it into a new 'Single Regeneration Budget' for urban aid. The result is a huge loss of jobs for teachers employed under 'Section 11' and less permanent employment for those who remain and, inevitably much worsened conditions in schools as support teachers disappear. Conference decided to campaign to hold a day of action this next term.

Conference also agreed, against the opposition of the Executive, to mount a campaign against excessive class size, and to organise national support for action required in schools. An emergency motion on Special Needs was agreed almost unanimously. This included a call for teachers to boycott a new government imposed system for identifying special need until there is some agreement on providing the resources needed to meet them.

Conference decisions, though, never mean anything in the NUT unless rank and file teachers fight for them to be acted on. Indeed, this year's conference refused to accept an important part of the Executive's annual report for the reason that the Executive did not carry out the decision of last year's conference to hold a ballot on action against

performance related pay.

This year, however, General Secretary Doug McAvoy is up for the election, and facing a left-wing challenge from Deputy General Secretary Mary Hufford. This perhaps explains McAvoy's conversion from an opponent of the SATs boycott into a man who presents himself as its leader. If the left in the union organises for the implementation of conference decisions and wins support for Hufford then the seaside votes can be made real.

The NUT left is currently divided between the 'Socialist Teachers Alliance' and the 'Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union', but both support Mary Hufford. Increasing numbers on the left are convinced by Socialist Organiser's arguments for left unity.

Practical collaboration between the STA and CDFU of the sort that won conference victories can be the key to success in turning them into action.

With unity as its theme, the Socialist Organiser/AWL fringe meeting this year was the largest yet. 60 people, including the leading figures from both the STA and CDFU came to hear our views of the sort of unity needed on the NUT left. Over 100 people bought the Socialist Organiser 'conference special', and one teacher joined the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

### National Conference Youth United Against Racism

- Fighting Fascism
- Stopping Racist Attacks
- Ending Police Harassment

11.00 - 5.00 Saturday 14 May

Davenant Centre, Whitechapel, East London

## Miners vote to fight

**M**INERS at Tower Colliery — the last in South Wales — have voted not to accept British Coal's plan to close the pit. The men — who were offered bribes of £7,000 on top of redundancy payments — want to see the pit go through the full colliery review

procedures.

Tyrone O'Sullivan, the NUM lodge secretary, says the Tories are hell bent on closure "purely to get us out of the way for privatisation".

The Tower colliers refused to be black marked should stand as an example to us all.

## Keep up the pressure in the colleges!

Elaine Jones reports from the National Union of Students conference in Blackpool

**I**T IS HARD to believe this is the conference of a near two million strong National Union of Students, whose members face the most serious attack on their living standards for decades, through a 30% grant cut.

The conference voted to keep an internal reform debate top of the agenda — above the debate of grant cuts and the debate on racism focused on the Nazis in the May elections.

Worse still, in the debate on grant cuts conference narrowly supported the total inaction of the National Executive.

Why is this conference so much to the right of the mood on the ground, which is vividly reflected in the 20,000 strong demonstration on 23 February?

In the absence of any action by NUS right-wing leaders of local student unions were forced by the anger of ordinary students to link up with Left Unity, who co-ordinated the National Student Alliance which organised the action.

Now those right-wing student union bureaucrats think the pressure is off and they have

slid back to supporting the right wing leaders of NUS.

The left in the colleges must organise to prove them wrong! We must keep up the pressure for action and for holding to account student union leaders who have let the N.U.S. leadership off the hook. That is why the National Student Alliance must be built in every college.

Despite the right wing nature of conference the Labour Students leadership are still terrified of Left Unity. This year the witch-hunt started earlier than ever before. Facing defeat by a right-wing independent, NUS National Secretary Faz Hakim stood down and used her

speech to attack Left Unity's Kevin Sexton, the NUS Vice President Welfare, smearing him for the upcoming election.

Independent right wingers withdrew from the election for VP Welfare to ensure that Ian Moss, from the right wing Labour Student faction maximised right-wing votes against Kevin Sexton. But it took the sixteen "hard left votes" of the Socialist Workers Students — the organisers of the famous "March on Parliament" on 23 February remember? — to enable the right wing Ian Moss to defeat the only socialist full-timer on the National Executive, Kevin Sexton.

# Capitalism makes them homeless!

**A**CCORDING to a report from the Empty Homes Agency, 864,000 homes stand empty in England. The 140,000 households officially homeless (400,000 people) could be accommodated six times over in those empty houses and flats.

The official figure of 140,000 households homeless is an underestimate; it includes only those "accepted" as homeless by local authorities, and thus excludes all single homeless except pensioners, and all childless couples. The European Community has estimated 688,000 homeless people in the UK.

But 864,000 is also an underestimate of empty homes: it counts only those homes which local authorities have noted down as empty. If all the empty homes are counted in — together with the empty office premises which could readily be adapted for housing — there are certainly more than enough available to accommodate all the homeless.

The housing group Shelter estimated 760,000 households "hidden homeless" in 1991 — not on the streets, in hostels, or in council bed-and-breakfast places, but surviving in cramped conditions by sharing with relatives or friends. They could have their own homes, too.

Of course, not all the empty homes are in the areas where homeless people are looking for accommodation. But plenty are. In London, for example, about 160,000 homes are empty on the official count, while about 75,000 people are homeless.

The capitalist market system and Tory government policy between them are wrecking the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, many of them children.

Living on the street for any length of time means you will die 20 or more years earlier than otherwise. Living in hostels or bed-and-breakfast places erodes the confidence and resilience of all but the strongest. It imposes almost impossible handicaps on children trying to grow up and get an education.

The Tories' excuse for all sorts of cuts in social provision, in the Health Service, in education, and elsewhere, is that "we can't afford" anything better. What they really mean is that the profit-grabbers and the wealthy don't want to afford that social provision. In housing the excuse is even more sickening than elsewhere. There is no real shortage of resources. The homeless could be housed even without taking the second and third homes of the rich and the unused space in their palaces.

How does the capitalist market produce this vicious waste of life? Isn't it supposed to balance supply and demand?

Your need for shelter is market



And now the Tories want to hit the homeless even harder, removing any obligation on councils to offer homeless families any more than short term shelter. Photo Phil Maxwell

"demand" for housing only if you have enough money for a mortgage. Supply and demand can balance perfectly while hundreds of thousands of people are still homeless, just as supply and demand for food can balance while people are hungry. Your need for shelter counts for less, in the market, than a rich person's whim for a third or fourth home.

Moreover, the real world does not match up to the theories of free-market economists. Supply and demand do not balance smoothly at all. They interact curiously to make house prices boom and slump.

Most supply of houses is also and simultaneously demand for other houses, for it is created by people moving. At any given time new houses are a small proportion of the supply; the supply created by people dying is also much smaller than the supply created by moves.

Thus supply and demand in housing feed off each other. When house prices are rising fast and credit is easy,

as in the late 1980s, those already housed have a strong incentive to cash in on the increased value of their house, pay off their mortgage, and use the surplus for a deposit on a bigger or better house. Young people starting their own households have a strong incentive to get in to the game if they possibly can, and they find credit easily.

*Your need for shelter counts for less, in the market, than a rich person's whim for a third or fourth home*

Both supply and demand are high.

When prices slump, as now, even people eager to move are discouraged from selling, because they may not be able to get a good enough price to pay off their old mortgage and have enough left for the deposit on a new house. Since jobs are insecure and credit is tight, young people are reluctant to take on mortgages, or cannot get them if they want them. Supply and demand are both low.

When prices are low, big developers hold houses empty deliberately to wait for a better price. Ordinary people wanting to sell their houses often have to wait a long time to get any price at

all.

At all times, landlords often wait for a half-empty house to become completely empty so that they can redevelop it. Shop-owners leave flats above their shops empty because they do not want to get tied up with tenants.

The worst landlord for keeping homes empty is central government itself. 16,000 government-owned homes — fifteen per cent of their stock — are empty. (A large proportion are army and air force quarters).

Local authorities generally have fewer homes empty, but sometimes they too have empty houses and flats, because the government blocks spending on necessary renovation and repairs. At the same time there are 500,000 building workers jobless, and over one billion bricks stockpiled in Britain!

A few straightforward measures could house the homeless. Let local authorities be granted money and a legal mandate to take over empty dwellings, do them up, and rent them out. Let the building industry be nationalised and reorganised as a publicly-owned, worker-controlled enterprise, employing a substantial permanent skilled workforce, to do the repairs and renovations, and new building where essential. Let decent



BNP fascist Derek Beackon won a council by election in East London by playing demagogically on the housing shortage

housing at an affordable rent be recognised as a human right, as basic education and health care are.

We need not have young people homeless on our streets. We need not have older people dying 20 or 30 years before their time because they have no shelter. We need not have children growing up in a succession of squalid, cramped bed-and-breakfast places.

We need not have capitalism. But to win something better we must mobilise and galvanise the labour movement to fight for it.

*"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

### Bosnia: air strikes won't help

THE NATO AIR STRIKES on 10 and 11 April against Serb forces besieging the Muslim town of Gorazde, in Bosnia, are not likely to help the beleaguered Bosnian Muslims.

What the Western powers want now in ex-Yugoslavia is a quick peace settlement that reopens the way for profitable trade and investment. They are happy to accept Serb domination over the smaller peoples of the region, as long as it is stable and secure.

Serbia wants to maximise its gains in the endgame, and that causes friction with the Western powers. Yet the Serbs know that the United Nations and NATO will always do a deal with them in the end, and the shape of that deal depends on how much they can conquer on the ground.

The floundering of the Western powers is illustrated by statements in the run-up to the Gorazde bombings. US Defence Secretary William Perry had said that "we will not enter the war to stop [the fall of Gorazde] from happening"; US armed forces chief General John Shalikashvili was "emphatically insisting that the military circumstances around Gorazde made it impossible for NATO to repeat the threat of air strikes" (Financial Times, 11 April).

Socialists should not place any trust or hope in the Western powers' intervention. The only way out is through working-class unity across the communal divides and consistent democracy for all the peoples and nations of ex-Yugoslavia.

### De Gruchy is a disgrace.

WHEN GOD MADE the world, he created beasts in a descending scale of wholesomeness. He created the higher and then the lower beasts, like the rats and the snake and the "slimy toad," and the worms; and finally, after he had created all the creatures on earth, he went down further and created the lowest creature of all: the scab. Or so Jack London thought. Jack London knew a thing or two!

They don't come any lower, or any slimmer, than Mr Nigel De Gruchy, leader of the National Association of School Masters/Union of Women Teachers.

This leader of a teachers' union is not only proposing to scab on the main teachers' union, the NUT, which is boycotting government-imposed tests in the schools. Such behaviour is not as rare as it should be in the trade union movement. No, Mr De Gruchy goes one further: he publicly urges the government to break the NUT boycott!

He offers the services of his members in mounting a special boycott-busting task force. Grovelling before the Tories, he urges them on to boycott-busting by recalling the vigour of the British taskforce which re-captured the Falkland Islands from Argentina in 1982!

The seed out of which the labour movement grew is a single great idea which has been expressed in different ways: solidarity; one for all and all for one; an injury to one is an injury to all. It is the great idea by which labour movements live or die, rise and fall, thrive or rot.

Applying that ideas consistently, militantly, implacably, we can change the world — and, in the schools, the NUT can change Tory policy. Without it, trade unions become bureaucratic skeletons and fall away to nothing.

Nigel De Gruchy is a disgrace to trade unionism!

### "Anti-fascism" is not enough: join the serious socialists!

THE SOCIALIST Workers' Party (SWP) is covering walls everywhere with a poster which says: "Don't vote Nazi. A vote for the BNP or NF is a vote for: no trade unions; no National Health Service; no rock, rave or soul music. Join the Anti-Nazi League Carnival. Join the socialists".

The Anti-Nazi League, the supposedly broad anti-fascist group run by the SWP, also has "Don't vote Nazi" posters, but this new one is the SWP's own "party" message for the 5 May elections. In all previous elections the SWP has had posters and leaflets saying "vote Labour", but not this time.

Their paper Socialist Worker does not add anything: the sole comment on the elections in its issue of 9 April is a tiny article saying: "We need to combat the Nazis' filth wherever they appear. Contact the Anti-Nazi League... and join the 'Don't vote Nazi' campaign".

Yet the same Socialist Worker also points out: "Italy shows that without direction the same discontent that has fuelled strikes and workers' protests across Italy can also turn to the false promises of the right".

Socialists have to offer positive political alternatives to the bitter and demoralised people who are thinking of voting Nazi. Just to say "don't vote Nazi" — i.e. vote Tory, Liberal, anything as long as it's more respectable than the BNP — is to offer nothing.

We must campaign for a Labour vote on 5 May, and link that campaign with a battle in the trade unions and the Labour Party to make Labour fight for decent jobs and homes for all.

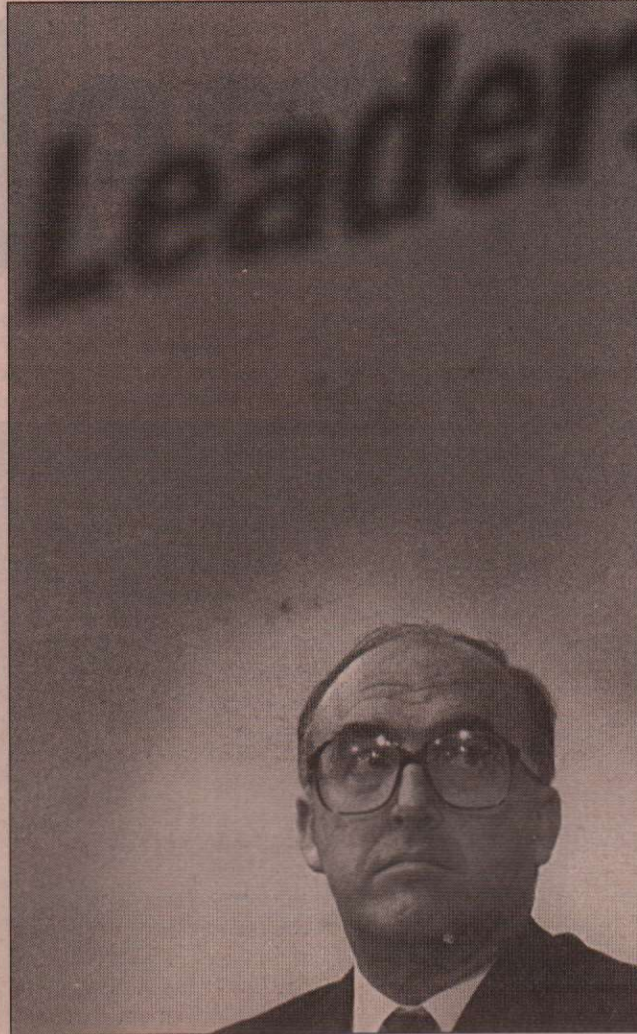
As Trotsky put it in the 1930s: "We have to take strong measures against the abstract 'anti-fascist' mode of thinking that finds entry even into our own ranks at times. 'Anti-fascism' is nothing, an empty concept used to cover up Stalinist skulduggery".

The giveaway on the SWP poster is the last phrase: "Join the socialists" (i.e. the SWP). The poster is not designed to sway people who are thinking of voting Nazi. It is designed to "advertise" the SWP's anti-Nazi energy — to leftists. These people are now not far from the political equivalent of a catatonic trance!

Join the serious socialists instead — in a campaign to make Labour and the trade unions fight for jobs and homes for all.

## LABOUR PARTY

# The scandal of John Smith's Labour Party



John Smith: having some local difficulties

By Dale Street

THE pus-filled festering sore of Monklands East Constituency Labour Party (prop. John Smith MP) was back in the news recently.

Hot on the heels of Monkland's mafia leader Jim

Brooks publicly denouncing his opponents (i.e. the rank and file Party membership) as "sons of bitches" and "the cockroach tendency", the mafioso tendency staged a mass walkout from the CLP's Annual General Meeting at the end of February.

If left wingers were to get up

to such antics they would be suspended quicker than you could say "National Constitutional Committee". But in the little Sicily of Monklands East it's a very different story.

The local council and Labour Party have been a personal fiefdom of the Monklands mafia since the early 1970s.

Lanarkshire's answer to the Cosa Nostra quickly gained a solid reputation for religious sectarianism, a (fairly literal) "sons and daughters" policy in recruitment to the council workforce and unorthodox habits in allocation of council spending.

Only in the introduction of colour-coding did the Monkland's mafia prove to be a force for innovation: prospective council employees who applied on a green form got the job; those unlucky enough to be sent a white recruitment form were unsuccessful in their search for employment.

When boundary re-organisation took place in 1983 the mafia instilled future Party leader J Smith as the duly selected Labour candidate for the newly-created safe Labour seat of Monklands East.

By a curious coincidence, Smith has consistently ignored appeal from Party members for a clean-up drive in the CLP. Letters appealing for action in the late 1980s went unheeded.

And when Labour officials in Scotland were finally forced to conduct an inquiry

into the CLP in 1993, Smith remained firmly glued to the sidelines. "Don't ask me — as he might have put it — I'm only the local MP and Party leader."

The inquiry was conducted with all the enthusiasm of a bought-off Italian judge. It ignored the much publicised "jobs for the boys" racket, rapped a couple of knuckles, and hoped that everyone would forget about the scandal as soon as possible.

The lack of action on the party of the Scottish Executive and the local MP, was taken as the green light by Sicily's Scottish cousins to carry on mafiosing.

For Scottish Labour Party officials now to denounce the CLP as "a liability", "a pain in the neck" and "a law unto themselves" is the height of hypocrisy — they had the chance to clean the mafia out of Monklands, but threw it away to avoid embarrassing the Labour Party's El Duce.

The latest brainwave to emanate from the Labour Party's Scottish headquarters (registering 0.5 on the Richter Scale) is for the appointment of a full-time organiser to take over the running of the CLP.

The Tories would, of course, have a field-day: John Smith wants to run the country, but he can't even run this local CLP.

Anyone thinking of applying for the job should be warned in advance: if you don't get a green application form, you haven't got a chance!

# The feel good factor

## THIS SPORTING LIFE

By Gary Scott

POLITICAL commentators sometimes talk of a "feel good factor."

As the economy picks up, as consumer spending increases as England do well in sport people generally feel good about the state of the nation.

If there is such a thing as a "feel good factor", it follows that there must be such a thing as a feel bad factor. On top of mass unemployment, homelessness, the dismantling of the welfare state and increased taxation, John Major has presided over a series of sporting disasters.

England's football team have failed to qualify for the World Cup, last year we had the farcical spectacle of two false starts in the Grand

National and in the Winter Olympics Torvill and Dean were "cheated" out of the gold medal.

As I write England cricket team have lost the Third Test

*"Thinking of John Major feeling bad, makes me feel good."*

against the West Indies. After England lost the First Test the West Indians were accused of using unfair tactics — they bowled too fast. After England bowled out for 46 in the second innings of the Third Test there were no excuses.

England captain Mike

Atherton said they were "simply blown away."

The most disgraceful aspect of the defeat was the way in which the England batsmen surrendered their wickets. They were accused of spinelessness, and compared to scared rabbits.

This makes me think of English cricket's number one fan John Major and how he must be feeling.

A few weeks ago I watched a rugby union match on the television between England and Ireland. I am not a big fan of rugby union but I thought it would be nice to see Ireland win — not because I believed it to be a blow for anti-imperialism but because it was played at Twickers and John Major was in the crowd. Ireland won by one point. Thinking of John Major feeling bad makes me feel good.



Feeling good: Curtley Ambrose

## ITALY

# Divisions in Italy's right wing open up chances for the left



Berlusconi: falling out with his extreme right wing friends

By Gerry Bates

ITALY'S RIGHT won the election on 29 March. Led by Italy's Rupert Murdoch, media baron Silvio Berlusconi, who put three TV channels at its disposal, the coalition of the right which includes the neo-fascist MSI (now known as the National Alliance) won an overall parliamentary majority.

But, having helped each other to bamboozle the

Italian people and win the election, the three main groups in the coalition have fallen out amongst themselves. On 8-10 April they made a new pact: the new government will create three big new regions in Italy (North, Centre, South, in addition to Sicily, Sardinia, and the existing small autonomous regions). Berlusconi will be prime minister, and the constitution will be amended to make the prime minister

directly elected and extremely powerful. Yet all sorts of arguments and crises probably remain before a government is formed.

Berlusconi is a sort of Thatcherite, while the neo-fascists, much of whose support is in the poverty stricken south want to preserve some rudiments of a welfare state.

The Northern League want a federal Italy, the neo-fascists do not.

The disarray and divisions

on the left are very good news for the left. It means that nothing is yet fixed or set. But will the left — whose right wing time-serving neo-Stalinist leaders led the labour movement to defeat in the election and allowed Italian neo-fascism to advance to the threshold of a share in government power after fifty years in the wilderness — be able to deepen the disarray of the right and take advantage of it?

# Anti-racist groups meet

By Bob Royale

THE Communities of Resistance Against Racism and Fascism National Rally in Manchester on 9 April allowed anti racist/fascist campaigns and activists to exchange experiences and to draw out the common themes that united particular, localised struggles.

Although all the campaigns represented at the rally were worthy of support, to my mind there were

three specific campaigns that really stood out.

The M25 Three Campaign concerns the fate of three black South London males who were convicted of murder on the M25. These three males were convicted despite the fact that eye witnesses to the event testified that two of the felons involved were white. To make matters worse, at the actual trial two of the prosecution witnesses, who were white, admitted to carrying out

the murder but under instruction of the three accused. For this heinous act the two assassins were promised the princely sum of ten pounds each!

Anwar Ditta, an Asian woman of considerable strength and determination, spoke to the rally about the campaign launched in the early eighties to prevent her deportation following a marital breakdown. What Anwar demonstrated with crystal clarity was that the immi-

gration laws are sexist as well as racist. In order to establish her right to UK residence Anwar had to withstand an insidious attack on the paternity of her children and consent to medical examinations of a most intrusive nature.

The 43 Group was a campaign launched in 1945 by ex-members of the armed forces to fight the potential rebirth of Oswald Mosely's Black Shirts in London's East End. Morris Beckman, a prominent member of the 43 Group, left the rally in no doubt that in the fight against the Black Shirts no quarter was given. Whether they knew or not, the 43 Group based their strategy on Trotsky's dictum "that it is necessary to acquaint the head of a fascist with the pavement". In their courage and single mindedness the 43 Group can teach the current anti racist/fascist movement a thing or two.

# Union leaders try to call in their debts

DEEP STIRRINGS in the bowels of the labour movement have awakened the somnolent one.

I have received signals and messages which I will now present to you, the reader, as a herald of great events to come.

These reveal the full significance of a report presented to the general public by Paul Routledge, the political correspondent of the "Independent on Sunday".

Routledge writes (10 April):

"Labour is proposing a national minimum wage of at least £4.05 an hour as part of a Charter for Employees that could also bring back secondary picketing and protect strikers from dismissal.

"The proposals are in a confidential draft document being circulated by Labour headquarters. It includes the draft of a written endorsement by John Smith, which says: 'When people work for a living, they should be paid a living wage.'

Senior members of his Shadow Cabinet are strongly opposed to putting a figure on the minimum wage, and it is by no means certain that Mr Smith himself will finally agree to do so. But trade union leaders, who feel they are owed a political debt for delivering Mr Smith's 'one member, one vote' reforms last autumn, will insist that the £4.05 must stay.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Further dissent is likely over what the paper calls 'restoration of the right to strike.' This would include 'sympathy action where there is a direct interest, with protection against dismissal for those taking industrial action.'

The statutory hourly minimum rate of £4.05... is a sharp increase on the £3.40 an hour in Labour's manifesto at the 1992 general election.

I have quoted Routledge at length because his article is accurate and has not been followed up by the rest of the press. The reason this article has not been followed up is what is perhaps most interesting.

The "spin doctors" and news managers at Walworth Rd. are desperate to prevent any public interest developing in Labour's policies and in its policies for "employee rights" (i.e. workers) in particular.

Where the media manipulators fear more than anything else is a trade union revival giving rise to a vigorous policy debate about what Labour — which is still, after all, a trade union based party — will do for trade unions when it achieves office.

Now, I cannot provide you with examples of a new wave of direct-action trade-union militancy, because that does not yet exist. But I can point to some very interesting developments amongst a section of the trade union bureaucracy. They have, it seems, decided to put up a fight against Labour's "modernisers".

The signs include these:

- A "very senior figure" in the trade union movement insisting that the £4.05 minimum wage and the legal right to strike and join a trade union without the fear of the sack are a "litmus test" for John Smith's commitment to the trade unions who fund him.
- A very agitated John Prescott wondering how he can maintain his pro-union image and still stay in the shadow cabinet.
- The existence of a 32 page "draft activists' campaign pack" circulating around Walworth Road which encourages trade unionists active in the party to "identify key issues in your workplace which clearly affect workers such as health and safety and racial discrimination."

Of course all this comes as no surprise to the somnolent one, armed as I am with Marxist foresight.

And once again, experience brings us back to a fundamental truth. The British labour movement, is not two totally separate entities — the trade unions and the Labour party — but an integrated whole. Even right-wing trade union leaders need a party that will deliver reforms that allow them to strengthen their organisations and increase their membership base and income.

Once more, as during last year's Labour-union link debate, we Marxists must be prepared to unite with the devil or his grandmother if together we can deal a blow against Labour's "modernisers". Perhaps this time we'll win. In order for that to happen the stirrings from the deepest bowels must become an open and self-confident campaign.

## Ideas for Freedom

# Workers' Liberty '94

WORKERS' LIBERTY '94 is an annual event to promote political debate on the left.

It will be held from Friday 8 to Sunday 10 July.

All major issues which face socialists — from the politics of beating the Tories to issues of sex and sexuality — are discussed.

Cheap food, entertainment, a bar and accommodation are available. There will also be a professionally staffed creche.

Tickets are cheaper during April: unwaged £6; low-waged and students £10; waged £14.

For more details or to purchase a ticket write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to "WL Publications".

# Gunning for him

**M**ORE tales from the Land of the Free, or the United States, as it is more accurately known.

This Wednesday (12 April) will see a by-election for the Californian state legislature called under rather unusual circumstances.

Under the California state constitution its state senators are recallable if a sufficient proportion of voters petition to that end.

When a group calling itself the Coalition to Restore Government Integrity collected 40,000 signatures in the San Fernando Valley suburb of Los Angeles their state senator, David Roberto, was forced to face re-election.

But what was Roberto's crime to face such an orchestrated campaign to end his political career?

Was it his reputation as a back-room dealer in the California senate? Or his taint of corruption since three of his underlings were convicted of bribery?

No, the Coalition to Restore Government Integrity is a front for the National Rifle Club, and Roberto's crime is to have been instrumental in getting the Assault Weapons Control Act onto the Californian statute book.

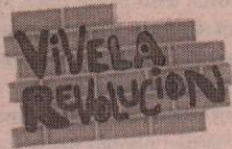
The law makes it difficult for the peace-loving citizens to buy military automatic assault rifles (like the AK-47) over the counter.

**T**HE ANC's transformation into a bourgeois parliamentary party is now almost complete.

Not only did they chose to ignore the recent record of Winnie Mandela to include her high enough on their electoral list to guarantee her a parliamentary seat, but now the *Cape Times* has published details of a leaked ANC document accusing her of embezzling a fortune from ANC funds: hundreds of thousands of Rands are believed to be involved.

**O**H well, there goes another easy answer.

## GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

According to a Policy Studies Institute report into the viewing habits of young offenders they prefer to watch Australian soap operas to "video nasties" like *Child's Play*, *Driller Killer* and Peter Lilley's speech to last year's Conservative Party Conference.

But before you jump to the quite reasonable conclusion of wanting *Home and Away*, *Neighbours* and the rest of the Antipodean lager louts banned, bear in mind that the report also states that the figures for youths with these viewing habits are the same as for the number of law-abiding youngsters.

The only difference is that the young offenders have less access to TV. And could this possibly be linked to poverty and deprivation?

That's not worth a standing ovation at this year's party conference... well, back to the drawing board for Conservative speech writers.

**P**OLICE officer of the week goes to the West Yorkshire copper who was indulging the usual *Sweeney* fantasy by driving around too fast with this blue light flashing, speeding through Swillington towards a serious accident in Leeds.

The unarmed copper must have realised that Leeds was four miles away and he probably would be back of the queue of police cars when he arrived, but the ever resourceful bobby had a solution.

He knocked down and killed Andrew Duxbury, a partially sighted and disabled man.

Thanks to the British police we can all sit safe in our homes — a much safer bet than going near roads infested by police drivers with speed addictions.

# Pottering through the evil empire

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**W**HEN my turn comes I just hope that I can face that final curtain

with some of the courage and dignity of Dennis Potter. And his rage too: no one who saw last week's extraordinary valedictory on Channel 4 will easily forget Potter's final salvo against Rupert Murdoch and all his works: "I would shoot the bugger if I could." He meant it too.

Critics of this column have sometimes complained that I'm too forgiving of the *Sun*, the *Sunday Times* and the rest of the Digger's evil empire. My reply has been that I'm not soft on Murdoch: just aware that he's a fact of life and that sometimes the peculiar brand of right-wing egalitarianism espoused by his various organs can be quite interesting and/or amusing.

It is also a fact that a lot of the

anti-Murdoch propaganda comes from the *Telegraph/Spectator* axis and is far more reactionary than its target.

The left's bleating against the *Sun* is not much better, whether it be Neil Kinnock blaming the tabloids for Labour's election failure, or old Stalinists saying, in effect, that the working class are all gullible morons.

Potter's anti-Murdoch obsession is a different matter: "Just pick up a copy of the *Sun* and say, 'Is this Britain? Is this what we've done to ourselves?'"

For him, the Murdoch media superhighway (not to mention John Birt and the other "croak-voiced Daleks" currently debasing the BBC) is quite simply an affront to human decency.

Potter spoke of his love for England with the kind of nostalgic, non-chauvinist patriotism that reminded me of another romantic, individualistic socialist, George Orwell. Key to

Potter's entire philosophy is his avowed pride in the achievements of the 1945 Labour government.

Now, to wise persons like you and I, the Attlee government might not seem too much to write home about. The nationalisation of the mines and the railways, the creation of the NHS, the implementation of the Beveridge Report — none of it has much to do with socialism as we understand it. But to people of Potter's generation, these were mighty achievements.

For Potter and the tens of thousands of children of 1945 who think like him, our arguments about True Socialism must seem pedantic at best.

They're not talking about banalities like *facts* — it's what the Attlee government *symbolised* that's important.

Concepts like "decency", "fairness" and "humanity" are almost as alien to the post-1945 left as they are to the Thatcherites. But to Potter and his generation these vague, woolly notions are the gospel. It's why pensioners are always to the fore in protests over the NHS. And it's why Dennis Potter hates Thatcher, Birt and Murdoch with a venom that few of us can even begin to comprehend.

A couple of years ago, Potter

delivered a typically vituperative tirade against Murdoch that, on the face of it, chimed in with the mainstream Labour "left" view: this unpatriotic, vulgar, American-Australian is polluting the atmosphere of the nation and the world with his down-market, right-wing propaganda. He must be stopped, or at least curtailed.

But Potter also recognised the dangers of state control over the media and made a point of *not* advocating the mainstream "left" solution of increased censorship.

His answer was much more sensible: strict controls over media *ownership* and, in particular, cross-ownership between newspapers and broadcasting.

Interestingly, as the Labour Party has backed away from cross-ownership controls, its appetite for censorship has increased. For all his hyperbole and crankiness, Potter talked a lot more sense than the official spokespersons of the "left".

In the month that Italy's Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi, won power on the back of a massive populist media campaign, Potter's parting salvo should give us all pause for thought. Do not go gently into that dark night. Rage, rage against the Digger and his like.

# Sex-selection is anti-woman!

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Maxine Vincent

**A**S revolutionary Marxists, we believe the progress of scientific knowledge and the development of new technology is a good thing. It gives humanity the potential to liberate all human beings from poverty, starvation and the endless drudgery of wage-slavery.

In the last decade or so, massive advances have been made in areas like information technology and quantum physics. The most controversial area of science, however, which has sparked off public debate has been the advances in bio-technology, especially in the area of genetic engineering.

A few weeks ago, a British couple were the centre of a storm of media controversy after they announced they had "chosen" the sex of their child before it was conceived. Public opinion has been divided; the government have said largely nothing, although the Labour Party have said it is morally wrong, unnatural and that Parliament should legislate to control it.

Pre-conception sex-selection touches on the way we treat two very important groups of people in our society: children and women.

Children are regarded as second-class citizens by adults. They are people who have no rights, they are the property of their parents, who can do what they want with them. Child sexual abuse and the

recent ruling that it is legal for a childminder to smack a child in their care show this.

The selection of a child's sex before conception is the logical conclusion of these attitudes. To choose the sex of a child so you can have exactly what you want is the ultimate in selfishness and consumerism, and shows that the parents care more about what they want than the life they are creating. It means that, more than ever, a child is a product, and will be expected to develop in certain ways and do certain things, instead of growing and developing into a person for themselves and in their own right. It will mean even more pressure to conform to their parents' ideals and destroy any sense of self-worth.

Bourgeois society reduces all human interaction and relationships into transactions. More than ever, children will become commodities, selected according to their gender, throwing up many questions: what if the child turns against the heterosexual values that dominate society and it is gay? Will the parents ask for their money back?

In future will we see Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where people are genetically engineered and conditioned to fulfil certain functions? Where free will, the freedom to develop and change as a person in your own right is denied? Robert Heinlein's *Beyond This Horizon*, where couples cannot have children unless their genes, when matched, will produce the "perfect" child? Certainly, the reality is far more

frightening than anything any author could dream of.

The other group of people affected by pre-conception sex-selection are women. As someone who (still) considers herself to be a feminist, I am appalled at the idea of sex-selection in a world which considers male children more desirable than female children.

Male children are celebrated; they are wanted to carry on the family name, inherit the property of the father, or carry on the family business. On the other hand, female children are seen as a burden. Even in white western culture they are generally regarded as more troublesome: "You have to watch girls more than boys" is a common-place attitude amongst parents.

There are very few cultures in the world where this is not the case. In some parts of the world (including Britain), some women are forced to abort female foetuses because they are not economically useful, or it brings shame on the family, especially if they are the first child.

Pre-conception sex-selection for women means that couples will choose to have boys more often than girls, which will in turn re-inforce all the vile attitudes and values that I have just described. It could become a kind of sick status symbol to boast that you can afford to "buy" your son.

Many women will be forced into "choosing" the sex of their child against their wishes. When they might want as little interference from doctors and the state as possible.

Pre-conception sex-selection

means yet more control over our bodies and our reproductive capabilities, making us vessels into which men deposit the foetus of their choice, with no regard to our wishes about how we want our pregnancy, childbirth and rearing of our children to happen.

In the world we live in now, it is impossible for pre-conception sex-selection to be anything other than fundamentally anti-women, both for those women who have children, and for our unborn daughters who will never be conceived.

So what can we do? What should we do? It's true that a "Pandora's Box" has been opened — we can't pretend that now it has been developed the technology will go away again. Progress doesn't work like that.

There may be circumstances where selecting a particular sex would be a good thing — for instance to avoid passing inherited diseases such as haemophilia, which are transmitted through a particular sex. However, apart from that, I think socialists should argue it is wrong and press for legislation to ban the selection of a child's sex.

This does not get rid of the difference in the ways male and female children are seen and treated; only a socialist revolution and the destruction of sexism and male domination will do that. But think what the alternative would be — eugenics by the back door.

We must love children for what they are, not what we want them to be.

# Israelis refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories

By Rayna Moss

ON THE NIGHT of the first holiday of Passover my partner, Peter Wiener, was arrested by military police. Three days later he was tried and sentenced to imprisonment in a military prison.

Peter Wiener was not accused of membership in the racist gangs of the Kiryat Arba settlers; he did not overturn carts in the Hebron market; he did not torture detainees, nor did he shoot into a crowd of Palestinian demonstrators before the open eyes of Israeli Defence Force [IDF] soldiers and television cameras.

He did not pour acid on the prayer rugs in the Ibrahimi mosque (also known as the Machpela Cave), and he did not "succeed in killing" shoe salesman Qaed Salah inside his shop in Hebron.

He did not form seemingly-underground terrorist units which terrorise the residents of the Territories and cause damage, destruction and death, all by means of weapons supplied by the IDF and under the warm umbrella of their friends in the "Regional Defence."

Had he done any of the above, or even worse, he would likely be at home now, enjoying the Passover holiday in the company of our young son, since there is not one judge in Israel who is capable of using the full force of the law against criminals and hooligans who operate out of racist fanaticism and whose victims are merely Arab residents of the Territories.

Peter Wiener refused to take part in the occupation, and demanded to perform reserve duty within the recognised borders of the State of Israel. And for that he was punished. One month in a military prison, with an option for more.

The IDF decisively proved that its long arm is capable of dealing with such dangerous criminals. The citizens of Israel may sleep safe in their beds.

The fact that the army, the police, the Border Guards, the Shin Bet and its illustrious Chief, did not know, hear, see or read anything to cause them to anticipate the massacre (including an explicit threat by the Judea and Samaria Council to the late General Tamari); that they failed in capturing the ringleaders of Jewish terrorism in the Territories; the fact that the Israeli judicial system did not succeed in dealing with the actual and potential Goldsteins; all of that does not mean that the security forces are incapable of putting their hands on the person who truly threatens the rule of law and democracy in Israel: a reservist who refuses to serve in the Occupied Territories.

It matters not that the IDF authorities saw no need at the time to take any steps against Goldstein for having disobeyed an order on racist grounds, and allowed him to carry a firearm for years until he finally carried out his infamy (since a Jew only

becomes a "psychopath" after the murder, never before; or alternately, a "good guy", depending on the number of Arabs he managed to kill); or that the person in charge of security operations in the Hebron area on behalf of the IDF considered the massacre to be an act of national liberation. The IDF manages to function with guys like that.

But a person who respects the rights of the Palestinian people, who is not willing to serve beyond the state's borders, who refuses to ignore the UN resolutions (which are only valid when the occupier is Iraq and the occupied is rich in oil) — that is the person whom policemen are sent at night to arrest and place behind bars.

I wholly support the right of soldiers to refuse to evacuate settlements for moral reasons; more than enough volunteers will be found for that task among soldiers forced to risk their lives for the sake of the messianic fantasies of a handful of Goldsteins and Levingers. And when the IDF issues orders to soldiers prohibiting them from firing at Jews even if the latter are murdering Arabs; when the leftist government imposes a curfew on the victims of the massacre while allowing Goldstein's fans and those who would happily follow in his footsteps, to celebrate — the illusion that one might serve as the "good soldier" in the framework of the occupation army evaporates. And it is not as if there are none.

From friends and acquaintances in the Territories I have heard tales of true humanists, who helped people in distress and amazed Palestinians, used to the IDF's iron fist, with their humanitarianism.

But that is neither here nor there. Occupation remains occupation; charity is no substitute for national independence and liberation from occupation.

They [the Israeli right-wing] are not our brothers and we want no part of them.

Not the settlers in Hebron, dancing on the blood of helpless worshippers,

not the settlers of Kedumim: they have torn themselves from the State of Israel; they have torn themselves from the laws of the state and from the international laws; they have torn themselves from any norm of fundamental justice, of equality, of seeking peace and safeguarding human life. They have separated themselves from any concept of decency and honesty, and have placed themselves above the native inhabitants of the Territories, on whose land they live.

We are not willing to protect them or to serve them. We are not prepared to imprison hundreds of thousands of residents in their homes, so that they can worship tombs. We are not prepared to confiscate land, from individuals or from the community, so that they can build villas and swimming pools.

We are not prepared to be part of



The Israeli army in the Occupied Territories

the 1,000 soldiers and policemen who allow the Kahane and Levinger gangs to realise their racist ideology.

If the government does not have the power, the will or the ability to remove them from there, the least we can do is to refuse to serve them. It is enough that our tax money pays for their "quality of life," their weapons, their evil council and their criminal rabbis' committee: we do not have to contribute our lives and our bodies.

Rabbi Shlomo Goren warned this week that "much Jewish blood will flow" if it is decided to evacuate the settlers from Hebron. Is Goren prepared to volunteer his son, or grandson, to die for Tel Rumeida?

Let the followers of the Lubavitcher, who call on us to fight and not give up one inch of Holy Land, volunteer for the task. But not us.

My son will not be orphaned for the sake of a group of fanatics from Brooklyn, or any other group that exploits the occupation and the repression of the Palestinian population in order to gain fresh air and a pastoral view, in the framework of Israeli apartheid — whether in the West Bank, in Gaza or in the Golan.

The "Holiday of Freedom" was a bit sad in our home. The amusement parks and other recreations were off limits, both because we needed to be close to the telephone to receive

information about my partner's place of detention, and for reasons of economy, since a criminal of his sort does not receive a salary during imprisonment.

Naturally, there were also beacons of light, in the form of dozens of phone calls and messages, from friends and strangers, who expressed their support, offered their help, and strengthened us.

Standing out from all these was the letter of three friends from Nablus, whose concern for a person sentenced to one month in prison was especially touching and heartwarming, due to the fact that all of them together have spent about a quarter of a century in Israeli jails for their resistance to the occupation.

**"Our solidarity with you in your temporary distress, deriving from your democratic and humanist views. We are very sorry that people like you are imprisoned because they are freedom- and peace-lovers. Your position reflects the other face of Israel, the face of peace, with which we identify and in which we participate in the Palestinian and Israeli peace camp. We hope that you will soon be released from prison..."**

The writers of the letter declined to mention that they themselves were under a curfew and thus unable to work or to leave their homes. They had plenty of time to formulate letters in Hebrew and discuss the sacrifice of an Israeli who was willing to

go to prison rather than take part in their repression.

No, it is not a war between brothers, but rather a common war of those who oppose violence, murder, pillage and occupation, Israelis and Palestinians alike, against the enemies of peace and life itself.

If Palestinians, among them a person who lost his younger brother in the Intifada, and others who spent their youth in prison, refuse to capitulate to the blind hatred, to the rage created by the occupation, let us also refuse to capitulate to the occupation.

Unlike those hooligans who set out in the dead of night to set fire to the homes of Palestinians and to smash windows, who shoot to kill and who urinate from the rooftops of their stolen homes onto people whom they regard as belonging to an inferior race, we are forced to pay a price, albeit a modest one.

We will gladly pay it many times over, just not to "succeed in killing" and not "to die for Hebron," or Gaza, or Qalqilya, or Majdal Shams. *Translated by Yisrael Shahak and first published in Davar Daily, 4 April 1994.*

• Letters of solidarity can be sent to reserve Sergeant Peter Wiener, Serial Number 2113406, Military Postal Code 03734, Israeli Defence Forces, Israel. Please send copies to Rayna Moss, 77 Emek Yizrel, Street, Tel Aviv 66043.

# Support the South

**Anne Mack looks at the arguments for supporting the Workers' List, not the African National Congress, in South Africa's forthcoming elections.**

**Why is the Workers' List Party standing in this month's South African elections?**

The Workers' List is standing over 200 candidates, ranging from unemployed township youth activists to veterans of the armed struggle and imprisonment.

They are doing so in order to raise the need for a mass workers' party which can fight for policies in the interests of the working class.

They believe that the majority of South Africa's population — which is made up of wage workers and their dependents — need a political party of their own and should not rely on parties dominated by other classes.

The demands of the Workers' List include:

- Jobs, homes, education, health and social services for all.
- A massive public works programme under workers' control of electrification, building houses, schools, creches, parks, halls and roads in the townships.
- No repayment of IMF loans which were spent on oppressing the people. Nationalisation under workers' control of the monopoly companies, banks, mines and land without compensation to the employers.
- Put the apartheid war criminals on trial. Defend communities and trade unions.
- No reliance on the South African Defence Force [SADF].
- Support the right of the oppressed to defend themselves.
- No general amnesty.
- Fight to bring to trial all those who defended apartheid capitalism by means of torture, detention, maiming and killing of those who fought the system.
- For a workers' government.
- For a genuine constituent assembly which is not tied down by undemocratic guarantees to the white capitalist elite and by the ANC's plan to govern alongside DeKlerk.

● This should be a stepping stone to a workers' government under the democratic control of the mass organisations in the factories, townships and villages.

The Workers' List are defending a very important socialist principle. They believe that in order to free themselves the workers need a political party which can link together all the individual, localised, partial struggles and demands of the working class into an overall, generalised, society-wide political alternative.

The idea of a mass workers' party is an idea whose time has come.

In one recent poll over 60% of black workers said they would support a party which specifically represented workers as workers.

The conference of the 220,000-strong steel, engineering and car workers' union NUMSA has also supported the idea in principle and voted not to support a coalition government between the ANC and National Party. The 170,000 strong textile workers' union SACTWU has called on the trade union federation COSATU to break its links with the ANC after the elections.

The Workers' List is attempting to provide a sharp focus for this broad based sentiment in favour of a workers' party.

**But what about the African National Congress?**

The ANC's leaders are not putting forward policies in the interests of the workers.

On the contrary, they are preparing to enter a coalition government with the National Party on the basis of policies that are tailored to fit the class interests of a tiny minority, of the 0.1% of the South African population who control 80% of the wealth.

The ANC have promised to create jobs, build homes and provide services, but have not talked seriously about who will pay for these policies.

This is what the ANC's manifesto says:

*Mandela rejects the class struggle of the workers and supports the aspirations of the black capitalists*

*"Our objective is to use resources more efficiently and not to increase the tax burden. Large sums of money already go to education, health and other areas. But the results are poor. Money has been used on a racial basis and squandered in corruption and bureaucracy. This will be done away with."*

This argument simply does not add up. Especially when you taken into account the fact that the ANC has guaranteed the jobs, pay levels and pensions of all the old apartheid civil servants and security force personnel.

If you consider the scope of some of the problems facing the people of South Africa it becomes clear that the ANC simply can't deal with them on the basis of the Thatcherite principles outlined above.

- 50% of the workers are unemployed (80% between the ages of 25 and 35).
- Between 30 and 40% of the population are illiterate.
- At least two million homes must be built to house the homeless, never mind upgrade existing housing stock.

The only way even to begin to deal with these problems is to overthrow the capitalist class whose system created them. The ANC is not interested in doing this, but is if anything, moving to the right.

Just how right-wing the ANC's economic policies are may come as a surprise to some of their starry-eyed supporters in the Europe and the USA, but they represent no fundamental change of policy whatsoever for the party's leadership.

The ANC has never been socialist. It has always supported capitalism and has merely opposed the fact that the black elite were hampered by apartheid from developing into a full fledged ruling class of exploiters.

This is how Nelson Mandela himself put it in 1956:

*"Whilst the Freedom Charter [the ANC's historic programme] proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis... its declaration 'the people shall govern' visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country, be they workers, peasants, professional men or petty bourgeoisie..."*

Even when the ANC supported nationalisation of some monopolies, a demand that has since been abandoned, it did so as a means towards developing a black capitalist class.

As Mandela again explained:  
*"The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of the country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before."* (Nelson Mandela, *In Our Lifetime*)

It would be difficult to find a clearer or more honest expression of bourgeois nationalism. Mandela rejects the class struggle of the workers and supports the aspirations of the black capitalists.

Mandela is a fine and honourable revolutionary, but he is a bourgeois revolutionary.

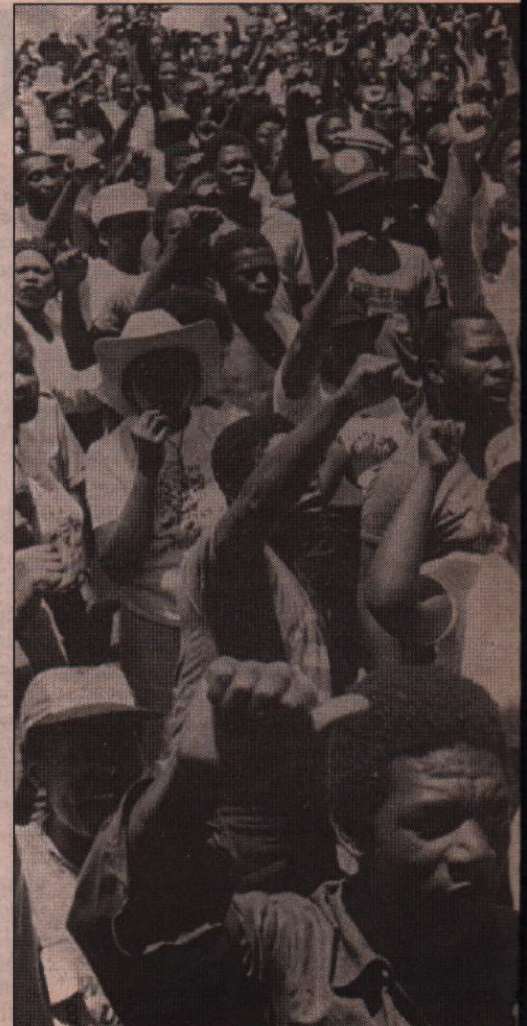
He has dedicated his life to struggle, but to a struggle for democratic rights within a capitalist framework. The problem is that there is a conflict between genuine democracy — meaning real self-rule for the majority — and the continuation of capitalism in South Africa.

Just how right-wing the ANC has become is clear from the fact that they have even included on their slate the former boss of the Transkei bantustan, Major General Bantu Holomisa.

Before he became a 'comrade' Holomisa, who took power in a South African military intelligence supported coup in 1987, used to be regarded, like everyone else involved in the bantustan structures and the puppet black local government structures, as an enemy.

Holomisa, who went to a special school for the sons of Chiefs and Headmen, was trained in military matters by the SADF. He was the first black graduate of the staff and management course of PW Botha's army college in Pretoria.

He has been responsible for his police shooting



"If the workers labour and struggle but have no

people dead at ANC rallies and beating strikers. Thousands have been imprisoned and tortured by his regime. Yet he is part of the ANC's broad alliance.

Other ANC candidates include KwaNdebele homeland leaders who have opposed the right of women to vote. They are joined by Democratic Party MPs who used to be the key white allies of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi.

**But surely the main thing is that the ANC's struggle has won the vote for the people of South Africa. Surely, in return, the ANC should be supported?**

Yes, it is a very big victory that black people can vote in the country's first ever non-racial election.

But the ANC are not the only people responsible for this victory. Tens of thousands of people have laid down their lives in the struggle who were not in the ANC.

The ANC can't just claim this victory for themselves. It is a victory for everyone who participated in the struggle. What's more, now that the vote has been won, people can choose who to vote for on the basis of the policies that different organisations stand for.

If people support capitalism and want an alliance with the mine-owners and National Party, they can vote for the ANC. If they want a socialist democracy, they can vote for the Workers' List.

**But workers will still vote ANC. Above all else there is no mass alternative. Many workers will want to see an ANC government tested before they think about abandoning it. So surely we should support the ANC critically?**

Yes, the majority of workers will vote for the ANC. This is not unusual, nor is it inexplicable.

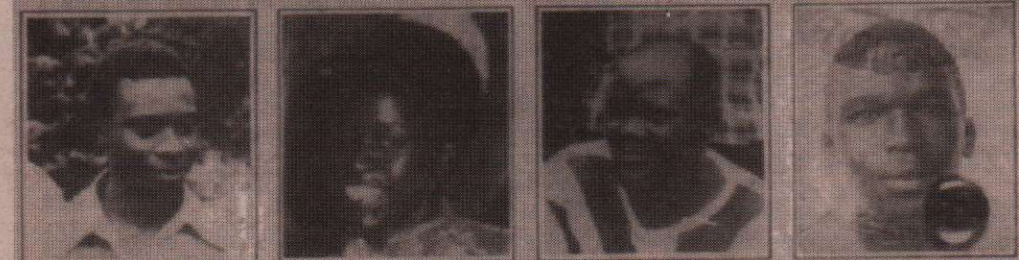
It flows from the fact that the ANC became the major political focus for opposition to the apartheid regime. Its leaders were imprisoned, tortured and killed. Yet it did not abandon its central goal of one person-one vote.

But, in a society in which the overwhelming majority of the population are workers and their dependents, the ANC's long struggle cannot be a sufficient reason for socialists to advocate voting for it.

To repeat, the central principle of socialist pol-



**HAMBANI KAHLE MA-COMRADES**



**ASISOZE SANILIBALA FUTHI  
SIYOQHUBEKA NJALO  
NOMZABALAZO ENAWUFELA**



**We will never forget you, we will never give up the cause you died for**

The choice for South Africa's workers: the bourgeois politics of the ANC or policies in the interests of the working class?



# African socialists!



political party to represent them the central task facing socialists is to create one."

ities is that the workers must free themselves. No other force can do it. In order to free themselves the workers need a party.

If the workers labour and struggle but, as in South Africa, have no political party to represent them, then the central task facing socialists is to build one.

If that party has only the support of a small minority, then so be it. What is important now is to lay down a marker for the future.

That might be true, in general, but not in this particular case. If the central principle of socialist politics is self-emancipation of the working class then the left should argue that we vote for the ANC but without any illusions i.e. we vote with the class. It is only after big struggles against an ANC government that it will be possible to form a workers' party.

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Two issues are being conflated here. Firstly, whether or not the formation of a mass alternative to the ANC is possible immediately and, secondly, the question of principle, of whether or not socialists should advocate that the workers vote for a party that puts forward policies in their class interests as opposed to the party of the newly emerging black capitalist class.

Let's deal with the question of principle. If socialists don't fight for the workers to build a party that can really represent them, then what is the purpose of being a socialist?

The idea of working-class political independence is non-negotiable. If you give that up, you give up everything. It's a principle you have to fight for even if you are in a tiny minority.

It is also a principle that you don't support the political party of the exploiters. The ANC has now become the party of the South African bosses. In one poll 68% of the directors of major companies said they wanted Mandela as President.

But you support the Labour Party. In its politics, its programme and its record the Labour Party is a bourgeois party. Large numbers of capitalists back John Smith and Gordon Brown. So how come it's okay to vote for the Labour Party but not the ANC?

The ANC and the Labour Party are parties of a fundamentally different nature. The Labour Party is a bourgeois workers' party.

That means that it is dominated politically by pro-capitalist politicians who are prepared to administer capitalism and attack the workers when they are in power.

However, it is also based on the trade unions which are the elementary bedrock organisations of the working class, the organisations the workers throw up spontaneously to defend themselves against capitalism.

The working class is directly represented in the Labour Party via the block votes of the 4.5 million affiliated trade unionists.

Now, it's true that link is controlled by the trade union bureaucrats, but so are the unions themselves.

If we can fight to transform the trade unions into fighting organisations of the working class, thus breaking the control of the full-time apparatus, then we can also fight to transform the unions' political wing, the Labour Party. At the very heart of the Labour Party there is an organic link with the trade unions.

There is no such link between the ANC and the South African trade unions.

As the passage from Nelson Mandela we quoted earlier made clear, the ANC has never defined itself as, in any sense, a workers' organisation.

It is a nationalist organisation — first "African"

## How you can help!

Other parties can count on the support of governments, big business and many overseas political parties. The Workers' List can only count on trade union, labour and student activists like you. Please send donations to help our campaign to "Workers' List Supporters" BM Box 4863, London, WC1N 3XX, or directly by bank transfer to account number 1979-318433, Ned Bank, 100 Main Street, Johannesburg, South Africa. Make cheques payable to "WOSA"

then "black" and today "South African" — which has become the best hope capitalism now has in South Africa. All its leading personnel are preparing to take over the running of the South African capitalist state alongside the former racist bureaucrats of the National Party. That state machine will brutally defend capitalist property if it is seriously challenged by the workers.

So, if you want a definition of the ANC, it is a political organisation of the black elite with the purpose of integrating that elite into the capitalist ruling class.

As that integration is now vital to the survival of capitalism in South Africa, the ANC is now the country's most important capitalist party.

**But the ANC is a party of mass struggle. It isn't just the leaders. What the leaders do will be determined by struggle. This is helped by the fact that there are trade unionists and members of the South African Communist Party on the ANC's slate who will defend the interest of the workers.**

The alliance between the trade union leaders and the ANC is one in which the trade union leaders are very much the junior partners. The central policy decisions have been made by the ANC top brass and are, as we outlined above, entirely in the interest of the capitalists. There is even speculation that the present National Party finance minister Derek Keys and chair of the reserve bank Chris Stals have been told by the ANC leaders that they can keep their positions under an ANC/National Party coalition government.

The ANC supporters in the unions have not cut across this strategy. They have supported it. That's why they are ANC candidates.

For instance, the one time left-wing metalworker leader Moses Mayekiso, who is now an ANC candidate, recently denounced striking Mercedes Benz car workers for "factory tribalism" simply because they wanted higher wages than the union had negotiated nationally. After Mayekiso and CP boss Joe Slovo had split and demoralised the strikers — at a mass meeting they were flown to in a special charter plane by Mercedes bosses — the riot police were sent in to smash up the occupation of the strike-bound plant. 500 union militants were sacked.

ANC supporters in the trade union leadership are generally supporting a policy of negotiating long-term virtual no-strike deals as an economic version of the ANC/National Party coalition.

There are no structures by which these trade union candidates can be held accountable for what they do in office as they have been formally 'released' from their trade union responsibilities and positions.

**What about the South African Communist Party? Many ANC candidates are members of the SACP. Why not support them? The SACP is a workers' party.**

The SACP are certainly a party in the workers' movement. Whether or not they are a workers' party is another question.

The SACP's main policy is to prevent the working class organising independently on the political plane. They are the main organised right-wing force in the trade unions and the closest allies of the openly pro-capitalist ANC leadership.

If the SACP was standing against the ANC there would be a case for socialists supporting them as many fighting rank-and-file trade unionists see them as some kind of genuine left wing force but they are not doing so. They are part of an ANC list and to vote for the SACP you also have to vote for everyone else on the list.

What's more, the SACP also represents the most undemocratic and authoritarian forces in the ANC. It was the SACP who put down the mutiny in the ANC's Angolan camps in the mid-1980s killing people who just wanted an end to privileges for the leaders of the movement, democratic elections and the opportunity to fight inside South Africa. Many SACP members in the ANC's armed wing MK were trained by the KGB and the Easter German Stasi. They are unreconstructed Stalinists.

Their vision of socialism is that of a prison camp from hell. It is therefore probably a good thing that they are not interested in fighting for it.

But now with a very serious neo-fascist threat from Inkatha, the AWB and elements in the security forces, isn't it necessary to close ranks against that the common enemy and support the ANC?

Yes, it's necessary to unite against the fascist Inkatha threat — but that doesn't mean voting ANC. It means building defence committees in the townships and workplaces. Everyone who wants to defend trade union and democratic rights can unite on that basis while arguing out political differences on other questions and supporting different political parties.

**An ANC victory would boost the confidence of the working class and encourage demands for change.**

Not necessarily. An ANC victory is at least as likely to dampen down and put a brake on mass struggles at least in the immediate short term. Workers will be told to "give the ANC a chance" by many of their trade union leaders. Many will, at least in the initial post-election period, be prepared to accept this argument.

What's more, in the long pre-election period, which actually started with the release of Mandela in February 1990, the ANC leadership have systematically held back workers' struggles. This has combined with "third force" terror in the townships and mass unemployment to create a very low level of trade union and community militancy. Though the fact that the poll is taking place is a victory, it happens at the time of the lowest level of mass struggle for at least 11 years.

**The ANC is not the same as the National Party. Socialists can't be neutral in the struggle between the two forces.**

Of course it is not the same. Only a crazy sectarian would deny that there are very real differences between these two parties. After all, one of the key functions of the National Party governments for over 45 years has been to attack and repress all opposition coming from the black population, including the ANC. Nevertheless, the ANC has made it clear that it is prepared to enter a coalition government alongside the National Party and is ready to govern South Africa in the interests of the monopolies and mining bosses.

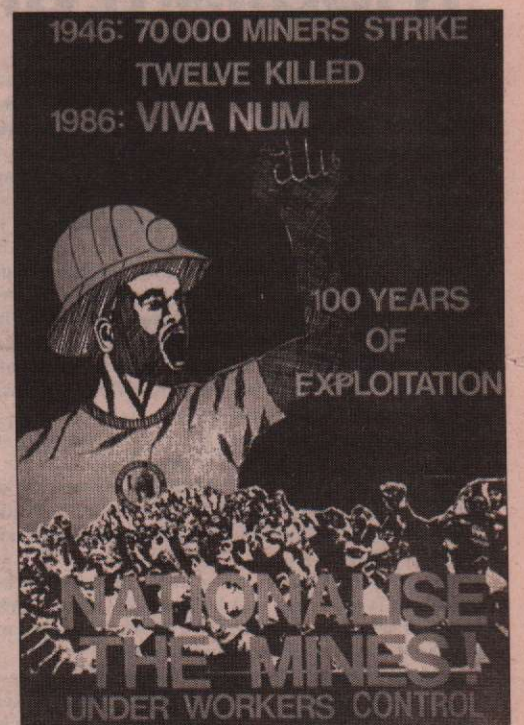
There are big differences, but they are not ones of a basic class nature.

**But the vast majority of South Africans will support the ANC. Isn't it cultural and political imperialism for socialists in a place like Britain with a long colonial history to oppose them?**

No. But it is political and cultural imperialism to say that all black people think alike. It is condescending nonsense to say that black people — unlike any other people — are not divided into classes and don't form different political organisations to represent different class viewpoints. Of course, black people do these things!

That's why the ANC and the Workers' List are putting forward different policies. Just because the majority of South Africans support the ANC, that doesn't make the ANC's policies right.

In fact the mass struggles that are about to shake South Africa, and make clear how the ANC cannot deliver, will prove the Workers' List Party justified in making their stand.



Nationalise the mines: a demand once supported by the ANC, now forgotten.

# Inkatha and the threat of civil war

**As we go to press the civil war in Natal between Chief Buthelezi's Inkatha movement and the supporters of the ANC could well explode dramatically. Buthelezi has said his party will continue to boycott this month's election, while the ANC leaders are determined to use force to make sure the poll takes place. Anne Mack looks at the background.**

## BRIEFING

**Zulu nationalism has real material, historical roots. It is not simply an invention of the apartheid system and of those who have benefited from it like Buthelezi.**

The powerful centralised Zulu state developed under the ruler Shaka at the start of the nineteenth century. It was the most formidable military force in South East Africa, capable of massacring a 1,600 strong British army at Isandlwana in 1879, but defeated when the capital Ulundi was occupied by the British a few months later. Internal Zulu civil war followed and by 1883 had finally finished off any hopes of driving out the colonialists.

At its heyday, the Zulu state had functioned as a combined military and social force. It was based on a standing army of up to 100,000 men. The standing army also produced the bulk of the social surplus. In the Zulu state all men between 18 and 30, and most women, were organised into age regiments for the purpose of war, but also for labour on the royal homesteads. This labour supported the creation of a permanent staff of state officials. The Zulu rulers took control of marriages out of the hands of local homestead heads. To leave an age regiment, marry and settle on land of their own with cattle of their own, young men and

women needed the King's permission. In this way the Zulu royal house overcame the conflicts, primarily over land, between different kinship based homesteads (kraals). In place of a very primitive form of surplus extraction, rooted in the authority of the homestead headman, a fully developed form of state emerged. As a result, all the peoples in the fertile area of what is today Natal were united under the Zulu kingdom. A tiny clan, the Zulus, transformed themselves through conquest and forced assimilation of other peoples into something perhaps closer to a modern nation than the kind of primitive tribe you find amongst all peoples on the verge of class society.

Apart from the Boer Republics, the Zulu state was the last force to hold out against the attempts of the British Empire to create a single unified capitalist state in South Africa.

The survival of the Zulu kingdom, while other less developed peoples were crushed by the British much earlier, created a certain sense of superiority and difference over other tribes. By the mid 19th century the Zulus had a word, amakafula, for Africans who went out to work for the whites in the mines and on the land. Amakafula is derived from 'kaffir', with the meaning "they are kaffirs, we are Zulus" — it also means "those we spit out."

The Zulu state was so strong it could not just be crushed as other pre-capitalist social forms had been. Instead, elements of it were adapted by the colonialists for their own purposes. The British found a role for the Zulu paramountcy and especially for the layer of chiefs below the King in controlling their erstwhile warriors who were now wage workers.

Buthelezi's Inkatha continues to carry out this job.

It is ironic that Inkatha does not represent any real continuity with the heroic, but despotic, period of Zulu military power but, rather, with its decomposition and the growth of the rag-tag bunch of parasites who grew rich out of labour recruitment, land grabbing and tax collection as the local instruments of British rule after 1883.



Armed Inkatha people take shelter from defensive fire as they attack the ANC headquarters in Johannesburg

**Inkatha is an ultra-reactionary social force which uses Zulu nationalism to justify the continuation of outmoded social institutions like the Chiefs, a repressive one party state — the KwaZulu bantustan — and brutal capitalist exploitation.**

It is vital to understand that the fighting in Natal between Inkatha vigilantes on the one side and trade unionists and ANC youth on the other is not an example of inter-tribal faction fighting. To a large extent it is a class war between different forces in the Zulu speaking black population.

One of the central functions of Inkatha and its gangs of vigilantes has been to attack the independent black trade unions.

Take one example: the black busworkers of Pietermaritzburg have been one of the more dynamic forces in the local workers' movement.

They have been organised by the militant TGWU since the early 1980s and have helped unionise many workplaces in the area. Their pivotal role in the local economy, e.g. they provide the main means of transport for black workers, has meant that when they take action it has a devastating effect on all the employers in the area.

As a result, they have been the targets for the Inkatha death squads. For instance, after the successful May Day stayaway in 1987, four union activists were killed by Inkatha thugs in a period of nine months. Two others were either stabbed or shot at, and crippled. Eight bus drivers were detained without trial for very long periods, and five union members were blatantly victimised and sacked.

Meanwhile nobody has been prosecuted by the police for these actions.

In other areas of Natal/KwaZulu, militant

trade unionists have had to form armed self-defence squads to safeguard their townships against Inkatha attack. One such stronghold was even protected by an electric security fence built by striking engineering workers who also had to turn gunsmiths in order to be able to effectively defend themselves.

Inkatha even set up a fake trade union — UWUSA — which is much more like a Nazi labour front than a genuine workers' organisation. It has now collapsed amid the aftermath of the "Inkathagate" scandal in which it was proved that UWUSA was funded entirely by the security branch of the apartheid state and that its "members" were bussed to its Durban launch from the rural areas under pressure from the local warlords. Its main policy was to attack the genuine trade union movement, and the ANC-aligned COSATU federation in particular. It has even been revealed that Buthelezi's speech at the launch of UWUSA was written for him by white civil servants in Pretoria.

There are other factors behind the Natal fighting besides Inkatha's drive to wipe out all its opponents. Sometimes the youth "comrades" use undemocratic and arbitrary methods that may drive people into Inkatha's hands. Similarly the simple fact that this fighting has gone on for over ten years now means that it has developed elements of a vendetta about it in which each side seeks vengeance and revenge.

Nevertheless, it is fundamentally a class war between militant youth and workers on the one side, who want trade union rights and democracy, and Inkatha's chiefs and their indunas (warlords) on the other, who want to defend their privileged position which is based on various forms of extortion such as "rents" for squatters in the townships and shanty towns and "bride prices" in the rural areas.

**Buthelezi and Inkatha's big problem is that the South African capitalist class, and the bulk of the military and political ruling stratum, no longer fear the ANC leaders (see centre pages). If these people can do a deal with Mandela, what need have they for Buthelezi?**

Buthelezi's weakness is that he can only be a regional power in South Africa. His base is in the Zulu population. He simply does not have enough support nationally to be able to play the role allocated to him in the original (post-Mandela release), military and political strategy of the ruling class.

This strategy involved a conscious combination of negotiations with the ANC leadership, to draw them into compromise, with unleashing a reign of terror in the townships organised by the "third force" — vigilantes and hit squads trained by the intelligence services but operating semi-autonomously.

The aim of this strategy was to both weaken and undermine the ANC and terrorise their looser supporters.

## Natal

The province of Natal, including Buthelezi's KwaZulu bantustan, occupies an area of 91,355 square kilometres or 8.1% of the total area of South Africa. Yet it contains over 20% of the population.

The population of the area is 77% African (of which 90% are Zulu speaking, while the remainder are mostly Xhosa speaking and live in the urban areas), 11.3% Indian (mainly the descendants of indentured labourers brought to work on the sugar plantations before the Zulu speaking Africans could be forced to

This strategy — in its original form — failed. The turning point was probably the murder of SACP leader Chris Hanu a year ago. This led to a huge wave of protest including a massive stayaway which revealed the mass support the ANC still had. It also put Mandela and the rest of the ANC leadership in a pivotal position to hold back and channel that protest. Talks were called off — but only for a short interval. When they resumed, the ANC leadership was immensely strengthened and DeKlerk decided to name the day for the election.

The National Party no longer had the slightest hope of winning an election against the ANC on the basis of a coalition government with Buthelezi and others. What's more, the ANC leaders had already offered DeKlerk the promise of a guaranteed coalition government to last till at least the year 2000.

So, although the original ruling-class strategy has not quite worked out, they have arguably got more than they originally dreamed of from the ANC.

**Despite the fighting the ANC could still make some sort of deal with Buthelezi.**

The ANC have already made deals with other Bantustan leaders like Bantu Holomisa of the Transkei. What's more, the ANC leaders originally advised Buthelezi to go into homeland government politics. They gave Inkatha their blessing when it was set up in the mid '70s and Buthelezi has made a point of Inkatha using the ANC's colours.

The ANC has even set up a special sub-section for Chiefs and headmen — Contralesa, the Congress of traditional leaders.

Though socialists should support the use of force — even by the SADF — to ensure that the elections take place in Natal KwaZulu, it would be a mistake to think that Inkatha and what they represent can be defeated by force alone, even by working-class and community self-defence against the warlords, vital though that is. In the final analysis, Inkatha will only be defeated by removing the economic conditions out of which warlordism grows.

Decent homes must be built by the state in order to break the control of the vigilantes and gangsters who extract "rents" from the squatter camp dwellers. The power of the chiefs and headmen to distribute land and collect taxes must be broken and their legal status abolished, along with the Zulu monarchy, and instead replaced with the collectivisation of agriculture under democratic workers' control linked to a massive job creation programme in the cities. This will alleviate the problem of land hunger in the countryside.

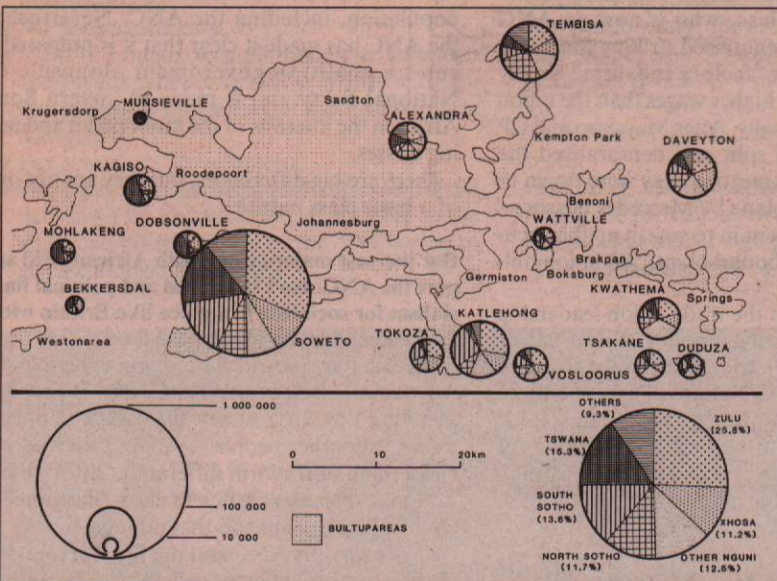
Finally, socialists should support the right of any compact section of the South African people — such as the Zulus — to self-determination if the majority of them want it and so long it does not involve the forced subordination of others.

become wage workers), 10% whites and 1.5% coloureds.

About 1.5 million of the total African population of 4.7 million live in the urban areas.

Some 75% of South Africa's Zulu speaking population live in KwaZulu/Natal. The great bulk of the rest live in the main industrial area around Johannesburg.

In opinion polls a clear majority of Zulu speakers have consistently opposed the declaration of an independent state and, instead, supported the ANC.



"Ethnic" composition of the African working class on the Witwatersrand, the main industrial area in South Africa. Note that Zulu speakers make up over one quarter of the working class. (Both Zulu and Xhosa are Nguni languages). This multi-tribal working class has very little in common with the people who lived on the Witwatersrand before the late 19th century. It is drawn from all over South Africa.

## Tribalism and workers' unity

**A**PART from the thin layer of the white labour aristocracy — foremen, overseers and bureaucrats — there are four different geographically and historically formed parts of the working class in South Africa.

In the Western Cape, where light industry predominates, the vast bulk of the urban working class is made up of so called "coloureds" — a purely formal category including the descendants of Malay slaves, those of mixed European/African ancestry, and descendants of the original Khoisan population. The Khoisan were wiped out as a distinct people their social vulnerability as a sparsely distributed herding and hunting people, and their susceptibility to western diseases, notably small pox. The Khoisan's fate was similar to that of the Australian Aborigines and North American Indians. Only isolated groups of "Bushmen" survive.

The black working class in this area is relatively small and in its vast majority Xhosa speaking. Tragically, the thuggish tactics of ANC "comrades" has helped drive large sections of the coloured working class into the arms of the National Party, who have played on anti-African bigotry very effectively.

In the Eastern Cape — home of the depleted car industry — 97%, that is to say the vast bulk of the African working class is Xhosa speaking. But there is a substantial layer of "coloured" skilled workers and artisans.

In Natal — which has a long tradition of working-class militancy, particularly amongst the African dock workers, and which was the birthplace of the independent unions in 1973 — some 90% of the African working class is Zulu speaking. Quite a large part of the Indian population is made up of skilled workers and artisans.

It is only in the countries' mass industrial area around Johannesburg, the Witwatersrand, that there exists a significantly mixed African working class.

Generally the apartheid regime failed to impose a really rigid system of tribal divisions on the working class in this area. There was much mixing.

Nevertheless, the hostel system designed for the control of migrant labour did take its toll. It has been from the hostels that Inkatha vigilantes have launched their attacks. Tragically this has created a situation where many class-conscious Zulu speaking workers won't go out in to the townships for fear of being attacked as suspected Inkatha members simply because they are Zulus.

This in turn helps the Inkatha-led agitation about the ANC's desire to create a Xhosa-dominated state. (Mandela is a member of the Xhosa royal family. Many other ANC leaders are Xhosa speaking. Xhosa and Zulus are the two largest "tribal" groups.)

As the migrant labour system is most developed on the mines, with workers recruited, policed and controlled by the induras and/or tribal representatives it is, not surprisingly, on the mines that the fiercest inter-tribal faction fighting takes place. These divisions are encouraged by those self-same liberal capitalists like Anglo American who are now prepared to endorse the ANC leaders.

Though civil war amongst the Zulu speakers of Natal is already taking place, a full-scale tribal civil war is not yet a possibility. Nevertheless, workers' unity can overcome divisions only if it is based on a struggle for jobs and homes for all. Otherwise the capitalists will pit "coloured" against black and Xhosa against Zulu.

# Better than average sex, drugs and rock 'n roll

Matt Cooper  
reviews  
*Backbeat*

Directed by  
Iain Softley



Three of the Fab Five: George Harrison, Stuart Sutcliffe and John Lennon, photographed by Astrid Kirchherr

"SEX, DRUGS and rock 'n roll" is a film cliché, the last refuge of the cinematic bankrupt, or near bankrupt. Add the opium of nostalgia, a film about the Beatles' early days, playing seedy Hamburg clubs, and you seem to have the complete recipe for a myth-expanding pile of tacky commercial junk. *Backbeat* is better than that.

The film follows the Beatles as they learned their trade in the seedy clubs of Hamburg, playing and performing a white European version of black American R'nB. *Backbeat* focuses on the relationship between John Lennon and the "fifth Beatle", Stuart Sutcliffe. Central to the film's success is Ian Hart's portrayal of Lennon. Hart trades on a passing resemblance to Lennon and an adequate vocal impression of him to project a thoroughly believable performance.

Hart's Lennon is sensitive and thoughtful, but also insecure, gauche and ill at ease with his own ambition. This is much better than accepting Lennon's own media image as a wise-cracking working-class hero who is cynically in control.

The main problem with the film is that Steven Dorf plays Sutcliffe as a wooden adolescent whose main talent is to look pretty. Lennon was, reportedly, attracted to Sutcliffe because of his charisma and repelled by McCartney because of his superficiality. But Dorf provides not even a hint of this charisma.

This relationship between Sutcliffe and Lennon gives the film a rites-of-passage flavour.

Lennon is portrayed as having a hero-worshipping teenage crush on

Sutcliffe.

When Sutcliffe falls for the German photographer and beatnik intellectual Astrid Kirchherr (Sheryl Lee), Lennon is jealous of both Sutcliffe and Astrid (because she has Sutcliffe). He has to learn to adjust himself, to become an adult.

The film barely manages to convey all this: Dorf is simply unconvincing,

lacking any of the qualities which attracted Lennon to Sutcliffe, and the intellectual aspect to their relationship consists of Sutcliffe painting a picture and Lennon and Sutcliffe going to jazz clubs where the men wear berets.

Not unsurprisingly, the soundtrack saves the film. Pop purists might complain that the Beatles were never as

good as this soundtrack, which is a technically perfect copy of the less perfect originals. The sound here owns more to the early 1990s than to the early 1960s. Nevertheless the band does fuel the film where the plot fails it.

Its achievement is limited, but *Backbeat* is a cut-above-the-average Rock 'n Roll film.

## "Bliss was it to be alive"

Bob Royale  
reviews *Keeping My Head — the memoirs of a British Bolshevik*  
by Harry Wicks

Socialist Platform £5.95

**K**EEPING My Head combines autobiography and social history of the British labour movement from the First World War to the Second World War. These momentous events are framed within an account of the life and times of Harry Wicks, a Communist Party activist in the '20s and a pioneer of British Trotskyism in the '30s.

A constant theme and tension throughout Wicks' life was the conflict between party dogma and the interests of the working class as a whole. It was Wicks' good fortune that when there was a conflict

between dogma and class, class always came out on top.

The sections of the book dealing with Wicks' formative years describe a labour movement that was pluralistic. Fabian elitism coexisted with ILP romanticism; mixed with the "scientific Marxism" of the SDF.

The labour movement that Wicks became involved with was multifaceted and self-contained. Members of this movement were educated in the full sense of the word, workers were provided with a cultural and intellectual world view as well as a perspective on current political events.

The most interesting passages of the book concerns Wicks' experience within the British Communist Party. This experience can be described as initial enthusiasm, followed by total immersion in the workings and demands of the party, followed by horrified realisation that the Communist Party at a national and

international level was leading the working class into the abyss.

So highly thought of by the CP was Wicks that he was selected to attend the Lenin School in Moscow in the late '20s. There is a moving passage in the book describing the absolute condition of degradation that orphans of the civil war had to endure. They survived as street urchins with only a cardboard box to call their home. So much for the workers' state!

During his three years at the Lenin School Wicks realised that expediency rather than proletarian internationalism was the guiding principle of the Comintern. Just as Stalin sacrificed the struggles of workers in the west to the foreign policy needs of the Soviet State, so active communists such as Wicks were pressed to become mere ciphers of the Kremlin.

After his return from the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1930s Wicks rapidly realised that the real

interests of the working class could not be protected by the CP. Wicks then embarked on an odyssey of nearly fifty years that took in the Balham Group (the seed-bed of British Trotskyism), joining Trotsky in Copenhagen, where he served as a bodyguard, and a host of ad hoc initiatives which he hoped would promote the real interests of the working class.

In the 1970s he joined the International Socialists (now the SWP), but broke with them when they started expelling critics wholesale.

Although Harry Wicks died in 1989 without seeing the establishment of socialism anywhere, he had the satisfaction that throughout his life he had struggled for the economic, political and intellectual emancipation of the working class. It is this tradition of working-class self-emancipation that the Alliance for Workers' Liberty upholds today.

## Letting the racists off the hook

TV  
REVIEW

Geoff Ward  
reviews *Timewatch: racism or realism?*  
*A History of Immigration*

BBC2  
Wednesday 6 April 8.10pm

**T**IMEWATCH last week offered a brief history of British immigration policy followed by a studio debate involving Enoch Powell, BNP founder member John Bean, and old civil servants.

From the '50s both Tory and Labour governments set about removing British citizenship from 700 million 'Commonwealth' people. Recently uncovered secret government reports on subjects like crime, inter-breeding and work use racist arguments to argue for immigration controls.

From being initially welcomed as 'willing hands' to fill Britain's labour shortage, black and Asian people were soon scapegoated for crime, unemployment and inadequate housing provision.

This is fascinating but, the debate which followed wasn't so satisfying. Powell — now with an old man's piping voice, which he used to lie shamelessly about his record — and Bean were allowed to get away with far too much.

Even the best of the liberal anti-racists conceded the need for immigration controls.

Labour's last Home Secretary Merlyn Rees (1976-79) was brutally candid. He admitted that immigration controls were a device to keep out black people. He thought existing controls should be implemented differently and seemed to be groping towards the idea of 'non-racist' immigration controls.

But legislation designed to exclude black people cannot be anything but racist.

Jonathan Dimbleby, in the chair, asked Powell if he sympathised with Bean's policies and Powell evaded the question, instead muttering about "the British characteristic of humbug." In fact Powell had favoured the formation of a Ministry of Repatriation.

As Tory Health Minister Powell had welcomed West Indian nurses to Britain, but on this programme he claimed that these nurses were only coming over for training! It was not, he lied, Heath Ministry policy to recruit them.

Powell argued that the issue revolved around this country not having a definition of its own nationality like other countries.

Yet what he really objected to was that the 1948 British Nationality Act had granted citizenship to people from the British Empire. This old bastard — and John Bean, too, of course — should have been given a rougher ride.

# 75 years since the founding of the Communist International Revolutionaries and

This week we publish a second extract from "Soviet Russia as I saw it in 1920" by Sylvia Pankhurst.

Pankhurst had led the left wing of the movement for votes for women in Britain. She became a leader of the revolutionary opposition to World War 1, and of the early Communist Party (then, before Stalinism, a genuine revolutionary party).

In the first extract Pankhurst described revolutionary Russia's combination of terrible hardship and poverty (it was still fighting a civil war against the Russian right wing and several invading armies) with hope. One revolutionary talked to her "of his long exile in London, and compared the dull visionless life of a British worker, mentally starved though perhaps comparatively well-fed, with the desperate hungry struggle, lit by tremendous hopes and dreams, that has brought Soviet Russia where it is."

In this second extract, Pankhurst describes two of the main issues to be debated at the Second Congress of the Communist International, which she had come to Moscow to take part in.

The Communist International had been set up as an international league of revolutionary parties by a conference in Moscow in 1919. The Second Congress, in 1920, was the first opportunity for real debate on its strategies and policies. All sorts of elements from the left wing of the labour movement — radicals from the old Social-Democratic parties, anarchists, revolutionary

unionists — were represented there. The Russian Bolsheviks commanded great prestige, but used it to argue ideas, not to issue the sort of bureaucratic commands which were later, under Stalin, to convert the Communist International to mechanical reciting of Russian foreign-policy priorities dressed up in "Marxist" jargon.

**T**HE PASSAGES in dispute dealt with the British Communist Parties and declared that they should affiliate to the British Labour Party and make use of Parliamentary action.

Lenin evidently does not regard either of these questions as fundamental. Indeed, he considers that they are not questions of principle at all, but of tactics, which may be employed advantageously in some phases of the changing situation and discarded with advantage in others. Neither question, in his opinion, is important enough to cause a split in the Communist ranks.

I am even inclined to suspect that he has not been influenced by the belief that the course he has chosen is that which will appeal to the majority of Communists, and will therefore cement the largest number of them in to united action.

As to the question of affiliation to the Labour Party (a question that may presently arise in similar form for decision by the Communist Parties of Canada and the United States), Lenin

says:

"Millions of backward members are enrolled in the Labour Party, therefore Communists should be present to do propaganda amongst them, provided Communist freedom of action and propaganda is not thereby limited."

When, afterwards, in the Kremlin, I argued with Lenin privately that the disadvantages of affiliation outweighed the advantages, he dismissed the subject as unimportant, saying that the Labour Party would probably refuse to accept the Communist Party's affiliation, and that, in any case, the decision could be altered next year.

So too with Parliamentarism: he dismissed it as unimportant, saying that if the decision to employ Parliamentary action is a mistake, it can be altered at next year's Congress.

When, however, it is argued that Communists should not go into reformist Labour Parties or bourgeois Parliaments, because they may be affected by their environment and lose the purity of their Communist faith and fervour, Lenin replies that after the proletarian

conquest of power, the temptation to weaken in principle will be much greater. He argues that those who cannot withstand all tests before the Revolution will certainly not do so later. He is for attacking every such difficulty, not for avoiding it: he is for dragging Communist controversy out into the market-place, not closeting it amongst selected circles of enthusiasts.

He does not fear that Communism will be postponed or submerged by the advent to power of reformists. Convinced that reforms cannot cure or substantially palliate the capitalist system, he is impatient for the rise to power of the Reformists in order that their impotence may be demonstrated. When I talked with him in the Kremlin, he urged that the British Communists should say to the leaders of the Labour Party:

"Please Mr. Henderson, take the power. You, to-day, represent the opinion of the majority of British workers; we know that, as yet we do not; therefore we cannot at present take the power. But you, who represent the opinion of the masses, you should take the power."

In those days, news had come that Councils of Action had been set up to stop Britain declaring war on Soviet Russia in support of Poland.

Lenin declared that we should inform Henderson that he must no longer scruple to seize power by Revolution, since he and his Party had already committed themselves to that by setting up a Council of Action charged with the work of bringing about a general strike in the event of further war measures by Britain against Russia. As Henderson, Clynes and their colleagues had frequently themselves declared, such a strike would be a revolutionary act. The Labour Party was now committed to it.

Lenin said that the creation of the

Councils of Action was due to a wave of revolutionary sentiment in the British masses, which had forced their Labour leaders to take some sort of action. That the declarations of the Council of Action failed to satisfy Communists, and that the Council was inactive, merely meant that the wave of mass feeling had not yet gone very far and had largely subsided.

The feeling of the masses rises and falls, he argued, in irregular tides; it does not remain at high-water mark.

"We in Russia," he said, "seized the power at the moment the masses were prepared to rise. When they receded from us, we were obliged to hold on till the next wave of feeling brought them back to us."

Lenin argued, that in order to explode the futility of reformism and to bring Communism to pass, the Labour Party must have a trial in office. Therefore British Communists should affiliate their Party to the Labour Party and come to arrangements with it for the formation of a joint Parliamentary block and the mutual sharing out of constituencies.

In addition to the Thesis under debate, Lenin had prepared and had translated, ready for the Conference, a book called *The Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism*. This book was intended to confound and convert those of us who disagree with its author. We assert that the Labour Party will in any case come to power, that the British Communist Party cannot dissociate itself too early and too clearly from the Labour Party's reformist policy, and must by no means enter into alliances or arrangements with it. We believe that Communists can best wean the masses from faith in bourgeois Parliamentarism by refusal to participate in it.

The passages in Lenin's *Thesis on Trade and Industrial Unionism*, and Zinoviev's *Thesis on Unionism* were also the subject of hot debate.

Lenin and the other Russians of his school, regarded the Unions primarily as agglomerations of workers providing opportunities for Communists to win the masses for Communism. The dissentients, who belong to the highly industrialised Western bourgeois

democracies, are unable to detach themselves from the view that an industrial organisation is an organisation for fighting the capitalist employer. Moreover, they are most of them influenced by the view that, if the industrial organisations which the workers are developing for themselves under Capitalism do not actually become the organisations which will administer industry under Communism, they are at least a training ground for preparing the workers in the shops to administer Communist industries on Soviet lines.

The Western industrialists engaged in the daily struggle for existence under Capitalism, feeling the constant pressure of rising prices and the perpetual encroachments and demands of the employing class, regard the old Craft Unions as out of date and inefficient for the task of



Lenin argued Communists should affiliate to the Labour Party

protecting the workers' interests, and are impatient with the Trade Union bureaucrats who think on the old sectional and palliative lines. The Western industrialists strive to substitute Industrial Unions for Trade Unions, and Shop Committees and government by the rank and file for the Union bureaucrats.

All this seems of small moment to the Russian Communists. They have abolished the capitalist employer in Russia; and they wish to see him abolished throughout the world. To them there is little merit in securing improved conditions for the workers under Capitalism. They are only interested in the Shop Committees and extra Union organisations, in so far as it can be demonstrated that these organisms develop a revolutionary consciousness amongst the workers.

As for the Trade Unions, the concern of the Russian Communists is to make revolutionaries of the Trade Union members, rather than carry on a fight with them to set up a newer form of industrial organisation which may be more efficient in making the conditions of capitalist wage-slavery less intolerable.

The Russians have sounded the depths of the proletarian democracy, towards which the Western industrialists are striving.

The Western Industrialists also have discovered that because a man has been a worker in the factory, he does not necessarily remain a democrat when he leaves the bench and becomes a Member of Parliament or a Trade Union official. But they proceed on the theory, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that a man must be filled with disinterested and intelligent proletarian solidarity if he has been elected by a shop Committee.

The Russian Communists who have lived through the Revolution and know how frail a plant is opinion, which depends purely on environment, regard the vague unconscious proletarian solidarity on which the Western industrialists stake their faith, not as a driving force, but as material which the forces of conscious Communists may drive and manipu-

*"Revolutionaries in countries far from the Revolution are apt to underrate the magnitude of the task of breaking down the established order of society and building up one that is new."*



Sylvia Pankhurst with her mother Emmeline in suffragette days and before she became a revolutionary socialist

# the Labour Party



1920 miners' strike in Britain: strikers fight the cops

late. The material provided by the rank and file organisation may be more responsive to Communist manipulation than that of the old Trade Unions, because the workers therein are more energetic and politically conscious. But the workers in Trade Unions are also part of the proletariat, and they are more numerous than those in the workers' committee movement.

The Russians insist that the members of Trade Unions must also be won for Communism, for making the Revolution and for building Communism after the Revolution is made.

The Russians urge that one cannot wait to begin making Communists of the Trade Union members till they have joined the I.W.W. or the Shop Stewards' Movement. Therefore they urge the Communists to remain in the Unions.

**T**H E RUSSIAN Communists are realists; they develop their theories out of their experiences. In their revolutionary struggle, they have had to use and to contend with great masses of people. Revolutionaries in countries far from the Revolution are apt to underrate the magnitude of the task of breaking down the established order of society and building up one that is new.

The Western industrialists contend that the Russians are unable to judge the old bureaucratic Trade Unions of Western countries, and that they fail to understand how they are interwoven and allied with the capitalist system. Moreover, the British Shop Stewards and the American "Wobblies" are obsessed by another

idea; they distrust the politician who wears a black coat, however Red may be his Communism. Their distrust of the theorist, the scientist, the administrator is only less than their distrust of the capitalist.

They insist on control by the manual worker at the bench; they will tolerate no talk of waiting till he is cultured, and they do not believe anyone is to be trusted even under Communism, who is not strictly controlled by the rank and file.

The Russian Communists who have stuck unswervingly to their posts and their theories, at times in spite of the fickle and impulsive swaying to and fro of mass opinion, are mainly concerned with converting the masses to Communism and securing that the mechanism of Society shall be under Communist control. They know that unconscious unawakened masses cannot exercise effective control, therefore the masses must be awakened.

Whatever the merits of the rival contentions might be, the Theses of Lenin and Zinoviev, and indeed all the Theses and resolutions coming from the Russian Communist leaders, because of their great achievements, were certain to be adopted at this first anniversary of the founding of the Third International. The Russians, although the 60 delegates of their Party

had between them but five votes, like the British, could steam-roller anything they chose through the Congress.

We, who were in opposition on certain matters, nevertheless argued our case in spite of the hopelessness of the task, and Lenin argued against us, as though our defeat had not been a foregone conclusion.

The Congress meeting in the Czar's Throne Room the following evening, allowed me to extend to twenty-five minutes the allotted five minutes in which I had to accomplish the stupendous task of replying to a Thesis and book of Lenin and several days of speeches.

## Notes

**Henderson:** Arthur Henderson, then leader of the Labour Party.

**Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism:** this pamphlet of Lenin's is better known under the title, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*.

**"Industrialists":** not factory-owners, but advocates of industrial unionism!

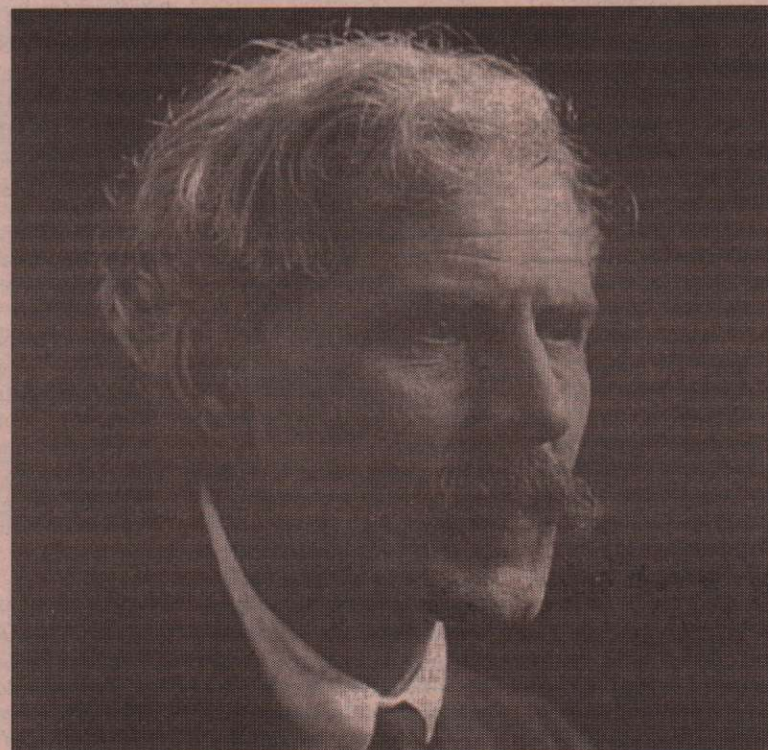


Keir Hardie: co-founder of the Labour Representation Committee

At that time many revolutionary-minded workers in America, Britain and some other countries saw as central the reorganisation of the unions on the lines of one union for each industry, uniting all workers regardless of skill, trade or specialty, in place of the old trade or craft unions. Some ("syndicalists") saw, or tended to see, the development of such industrial-union organisation as the road to socialism: once the industrial unions were strong enough, they would take over their industries from the capitalists. They were often, as a result, hostile to parliamentary-political activity, and sometimes even hostile to activity in the existing trade unions.

The IWW ("Wobblies") was an American revolutionary-industrial-unionist movement. The Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement had developed in Britain during World War 1 among engineering workers, and many (though by no means all) of its leading activists were "industrialists" or that way minded.

The Bolsheviks strove to draw such people into the Communist International, but argued for parliamentary-political activity and for activity in the existing mass workers' organisations, whether they were trade or industry-based.



Ramsay Macdonald would lead the Labour Party into terrible betrayals of the workers

Who was Jesus Christ?

## Was Jesus born in Bethlehem?



By Rob Dawber

**W**HY IS IT considered important whether Jesus should have been born in Bethlehem?

As the Gospel of John puts it (7:40-43):

"Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said,

Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

So there was a division among the people because of him."

It is important to note what matters here in determining what constitutes the measure of the Christ (Messiah). He is to come from the line of David i.e. the line that has provided all previous Kings of Israel, and be born in David's city, Bethlehem.

In the argument briefly reported in the quotation above there are some who dispute that the Messiah must necessarily be of that line and therefore be born in that city, because the Prophet before them seems to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah while not fulfilling the other conditions.

Apart from everything else the notion of the Messiah is tied up with the political question of the monarchy.

The argument here is not whether or not Jesus was born in Bethlehem or was of the line of David but whether these things were necessary for him to be the Christ (Messiah).

If it had been believed that he had been born in Bethlehem and of the line of David then the proper response would have been to assert that he did fulfil these conditions. The objections to claims that he was the Messiah would then have been dismissed by his supporters. No such assertion is made.

So, based on the Gospel of John, we can conclude that the Messiah is seen as someone in line for the throne of Israel and Jesus is not in that line.

John knows of no claim to Jesus being born in Bethlehem while Mark, meanwhile, assumes that he comes from Galilee.

What did Matthew and Luke do about this "division among the people because of him"? They asserted that he was indeed born in Bethlehem of the line of David and then invent the different genealogies already mentioned to prove his claim to being the Messiah! And Luke is far more inventive than Matthew.

Next week: Matthew assumes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

## Alliance for **WORKERS' LIBERTY** Meetings

### LEEDS

Thursday 14 April

#### "Ten years after the miners' strike"

Speaker: Karen Waddington  
7.30, Adelphi pub

### LANCASTER

Wednesday 27 April

#### "How do we get socialism?"

The AWL debates the SPGB  
7.30, Farmers Arms

### MERSEYSIDE

Wednesday 27 April

#### "How do we beat the fascists?"

Speaker: Elaine Jones  
6.30, Edge Hill College

#### "Italy: a warning for us all"

Speaker: Gail Cameron  
7.30, Unemployed Centre, Wallasey

### LONDON

Wednesday 20 April

#### "Italy: a warning for us all"

Speakers: Steve Myers (CAFE) and John O'Mahony (editor, Socialist Organiser)  
7.30, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road

### SHEFFIELD

Thursday 28 April

#### "South Africa in crisis"

Speaker: Tom Rigby  
7.30, SCCAU, West Street

### LEICESTER

Thursday 28 April

#### "Labour Must Fight!"

7.30, Castle Community Rooms

### GLASGOW

Thursday 21 April

#### "Israel and Palestine: what's the solution?"

Speaker: Jim Kearns  
7.30, Partick Burgh Halls

### MANCHESTER

Wednesday 11 May

#### "Where next after the May elections?"

7.30, Unicorn pub, Church Street

### EDINBURGH

Wednesday 27 April

#### "South Africa in crisis: what should socialists say?"

7.30, Trades Council, Picardy Place

## Boxing debate

# Banning would cause more deaths

## Boxing can be safer

I AGREE with Mark (SO594) that boxing inflicts death and injury on those who box, but boxing is a competitive sport.

Boxing, however, is not the sport responsible for most sporting deaths and injuries in Britain; horseriding is.

Equestrians are compelled by law to wear protective clothing in order to reduce the incidence of injury and death.

Boxing and equestrianism, however, are not the same sort of sports. Unlike horseriding, boxing is a contact sport.

But there are contact sports in which the competitors are not bashed to death. Judo, karate and other martial arts are as competitive as boxing, yet they are fought on a points system: you are penalised for direct hits resulting in injuries.

Fencing is potentially the most dangerous sport, yet competitors in fencing are covered from head to foot in protective clothing.

Boxing, even professional boxing, could be made a lot safer if competitors wore

protection, if there were fewer and shorter rounds, and if a doctor rather than a referee decided when a fight should stop.

This, of course, would change the culture of modern, professional boxing.

So what?

The culture around professional boxing is disgusting. It has a lot more to do with making money for promoters, bookies and TV companies than with the sporting aspect of boxing.

A ban on boxing would force it underground, as barekist boxing is already underground. This would result in even more deaths and injuries than the present form of boxing.

Surely as socialists we should argue that boxers need to organise themselves and fight for better safety, better medical intervention, and for protective clothing.

Boxing is disgusting for what it has become thanks to the intervention of big capital.

Yet boxing is a sport which can and should be made safer for those who want to compete in it.

Garry Meyer,  
Brighton

## LETTERS

I AGREE with what Mark from South London says about boxing in SO594; but I disagree with the conclusion that boxing should be banned.

If we accept that boxers are "gladiatorial wage slaves" we should relate to them as we would any other wage slaves. We need to understand why people take up boxing and we need to work out a programme that can enable them to fight against exploitation.

Mark's article goes some way towards understanding why people box. It is mostly working-class lads who take up boxing. In Latin American countries, where people are forced to live in desperate poverty, lads turn professional at an earlier age and

have more contests than European boxers. Boxing is a possible escape from poverty.

Once we understand why people box we need to look at ways in which the welfare of boxers can be improved.

Calling for a ban on boxing does nothing for the boxer. Capitalist governments are not going to ban boxing and even if they did boxing would go underground. This would take boxing back to the days of barekist fighting when there was no limit to the amount of rounds fought and no medical safeguards.

Already, barekist fights are being staged in some parts of the country. Their number would increase if boxing were banned.

Over the years boxing has become gradually safer. The number of rounds has been reduced from fifteen to twelve for World Championship contests. These days contests are stopped much sooner than they have been in the past. Head guards are now used in amateur contests. These developments, however limited, should be encouraged.

We should support initiatives like the boxers' union set up by Barry McGuigan. We should support any initiative that reduces the control boxing promoters have over the running of the sport. The involvement of the medical profession should be increased.

Gary Scott,  
Newcastle

## Anti-racism

# Don't wait for the next demo!

THE TUC anti-racism march on 19 March was a wonderful example of some kind of unity and I support it wholeheartedly.

However, I am very concerned that many of the people who "showed up" for this demo do not take the essence home with them, to their street, etc.

The confrontation with racism is a day to day if not hour to hour experience and however

much overt publicity demos like this get, I cannot help thinking of many middle-class trendies going home feeling self-satisfied and basically forgetting about the whole issue until the next demo.

This is an issue for the working class. Without freedom from racist bigotry (and middle-class trendy complacency) there can be no workers' liberty.

Mick Bennett,  
East London

## Obituary

# FA Ridley (1897-1994)

By Al Richardson

FRANCIS Ambrose Ridley, who died in a nursing home in Muswell Hill in the morning of March 27, occupies a unique position in the history of Trotskyism in Britain. It was the organisation he founded, the Marxian League, which in 1929 was the first to disseminate here the writings of Leon Trotsky after his exile from the Soviet Union, and many pioneer Trotskyists in Britain (Hugo Dewar and Gerry Bradley, among others) as well as in Sri Lanka (Colvin R. de Silva and Philip Gunawardena) gained their first training from him.

He debated with such prominent personalities as H.G. Wells, Harold MacMillan, Marcus Garvey, and Anton Pannekoek. For years he was elected on to the National Administrative Council of the ILP with a vote second only to Jimmie Maxton, and was one

of the select few placed on Hitler's death list in the 1940 invasion plans. He was the main theoretician of the ILP during and after the war.

Ridley came from a distinguished family (he was a descendent of the Protestant martyr Bishop Ridley) but he was almost wholly self taught.

After failing a course for a licentiate in Theology at Durham University, he turned his back on the official education establishment and became an avid student in the best school in the world, the National Library in the British Museum.

He never regretted his lack of formal academic training, for there was still a healthy tradition of working-class study long before the expansion of state-dominated higher education, nearly all of whose output in the inter-war years were defenders of the power and privileges of the ruling class.

He set himself to contribute towards a counter-culture for working people. He used to

observe that when he first gained his British Museum reader's ticket, the majority of readers there were also writers of books, and you had to sign a form stating that you were neither engaged in study for a formal degree, nor were working for a private company, in stark contrast with today.

Whilst his writing included a broad range of humanist and philosophical productions (one of his earliest was a pioneer science fiction novel, *The Green Machine*) he will always be remembered for his general propaganda for socialism and the Marxist analysis of history. Here his output was unequalled, with over fifty publications to his credit, including *Spartacus* (1962), *Julian the Apostate* (1937), *The Assassins* (1938), *The Jesuits* (1938), *The Revolutionary Tradition in England* (1948), *At the Cross Roads of History* (1935), *Next Year's War* (1936), *The Papacy and Fascism* (1937), *Pope John and the Cold War* (1961) and (with VS Anand)

*The Cato Street Conspiracy* (1977).

One major production, *The Rise and Fall of the English Empire*, sadly remains unpublished in manuscript, but today's readers can get a good idea of the range of his thought from two books issued in 1988, the collection *Fascism down the Ages: From Caesar to Hitler* (Romer Publications) or *The Assassins* (2nd edition, Socialist Platform).

For over a generation he was a major secularist speaker and debater, either in the open air at Hyde Park Corner, or in Conway Hall. His forthright opposition to imperialism gained him many friends who later became heads of state in the newly independent countries, who followed their official appearances in Buckingham Palace with a visit to his rather humbler circumstances in a block of council flats in Herbrand Street. The appearance of their official limousines in what is still a slum amazed his neighbours and

amused his friends.

Ridley was very much an outsider and a loner, and did not function well in an organisation. The lack of a stable Marxist culture and the distorting influence of Stalinism in Britain made Ridley's theoretical contribution innovative, and accounts for the fact that at times it appears eclectic and aberrant. He believed that the National Government was evolving towards a fascist state in the early thirties, a strange if original parallel to the Communist Party's "Third Period" at the time, and he was still soft on Stalinism as late as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

But who can say that he was far wrong when he pointed out that the German Communist Party was a write-off long before Hitler came to power, that its British counterpart was a sectarian joke and an irrelevance, or that Trotsky should have founded a Fourth International half a dozen years before he did?



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Why we publish Socialist Organiser

# Stop the nazis on 5 May!

By John O'Mahony

**T**HE COMMUNITY Council which runs the Isle of Dogs in East London consists of just 5 councillors. One of them is the British National Party fascist Derek Beackon, who won his seat in a by-election last year. If the British National Party wins two extra seats in the Isle of Dogs in the May council elections, then it will win control of the Isle of Dogs Community Council. That is, an openly racist and openly fascist organisation will run an area in which thousands of black people live.

The borough of Tower Hamlets, has devolved many of its powers to the "Community Councils".

Derek Beackon is Britain's first fascist councillor for a long time. The BNP fascists are now organising with everything they've got to make him the first of many. Forty-six fascist candidates are standing in the May elections (see box). Eight BNP candidates are standing in Tower Hamlets and six in neighbouring Newham.

A BNP victory in the Isle of Dogs would be a nightmare for black people and secure a bigger base than fascism has had in this country for more than half a century. It would also give a tremendous boost to fascism in other parts of the country. That is why the labour movement must mobilise to stop the BNP on the Isle of Dogs and vigorously oppose fascist candidates wherever they show their ugly faces.

Three things are necessary:

- Immediately, volunteers are needed to canvass on the Isle of Dogs.
- Immediately, the labour movement must actively back those targeted by the fascists and support and help them to defend themselves.
- In the longer term, the labour movement — trade unions and Labour Party alike — must be turned towards the work of offering the white working class people in areas like



the Isle of Dogs a real alternative to the fascist liars and demagogues, who scapegoat immigrants and black communities for the social problems created by capitalism. Those people driven to the BNP now by despair and because they feel that their tra-

ditional labour movement organisations do not have answers for their problems. We need to give them socialist answers.

But first things first: the BNP must be stopped. Go to the Isle of Dogs and help win it for Labour on 5 May!

**T**HE RIGHT WING won the Italian elections two weeks ago for a number of reasons. Not the least of these reasons, of course, was the rottenness of the leaderships which control the Italian labour movement. But a big immediate reason for the victory of the right was the sheer power to manipulate people which Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's Rupert Murdoch, brought to the right wing alliance.

The leader of this block of right wing organisations owns no fewer than three TV stations! He used them without scruple. As election day got closer, popular TV presenters would plug their boss's political organisation even in programmes dealing with sport.

It was all grossly unfair and it went a long way towards making a mockery of the whole electoral process.

And yet, grotesque as the Italian election campaign was, it was only an extreme or concentrated, example of how things are in every capitalist country.

The capitalists own the media — or their state does. "Public opinion" is shaped and moulded to support, tolerate or endure the capitalist system. The news is slanted. Serious critics of the capitalist system are shut out from access to it.

Those who want to present readers with a radically different view of our society can only do it, against very great odds, they can produce a publication like Socialist Organiser.

The difficulties involved in doing this are enormous. The millionaires can buy resources and even talent. A paper like Socialist Organiser has to rely on the devotion of readers and staff and it depends for its effectiveness on self-sacrifice and determination.

Yet, if our ideas are to survive and ultimately prevail, there is no other way. We must present the truth to our class and sustain a politically coherent defiance of all the powers that rule our world. Unless we can do that now, and expand our work steadily, then socialism will not prevail.

So once again we have no option but to appeal to our readers to become active supporters or if you are a supporter to be more active, energetic and committed in your support.

We need more people to write for and sell the paper, we need donations of money, one-off donations and commitments to make a regular donation, however small.

The Berlusconi and the Murdochs will not rule forever, but right now they rule. And right now we need your help to fight them.

Send your donations (cheques payable to "WL Publications") to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## Fascist candidates on May 5th

District/Ward	Candidate	Party
<b>SUNDERLAND</b>		
Silksworth	Kevin Scott	BNP
<b>HULL</b>		
Ings	Michael Cooper	NF
<b>DERBY</b>		
Mackworth	Graham Hardy	NF
<b>HALIFAX</b>		
Todmorden	Christian M Jackson	BNP
Illingworth	Robert Mitchell	BNP
<b>ROCHDALE</b>		
Baldstone	Ian Baker	BNP
Newbold	Janet Appleyard	BNP
Smallbrg/Wardelworth	Ken Henderson	BNP
<b>WALSALL</b>		
Brownhills	Alan H Humphreys	NF
<b>CANNOCK</b>		
Chadsmoor	Andy Carmichael	NF
Pye Green Valley	Paula Carmichael	NF
Canook South	John Law	NF
<b>SANDWELL</b>		
Prince's End	John Lord	NF
<b>BIRMINGHAM</b>		
Bartley Green	Louise Ann Holland	NF
Oscott	Keith Axon	BNP
Kingstanding	Robert Jones	NF
<b>DUDLEY</b>		
Lye & Wollescote	John Robert Stokes	NF
Silhill	Norman Thompsonson	NF
<b>READING</b>		
	Graham Coles	BNP
<b>CHESTNUT</b>		
Rosedale	David James Bruce	BNP
<b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>		
St James	Victor Dooley	BNP
St Peters	Paul Maxwell	BNP
Millwall	Derek Beackon	BNP
Millwall	Alan Smith	BNP
Millwall	Gordon Callow	BNP
Globe Tn./Holy Trinity	David Michael King	BNP
Globe Tn./Holy Trinity	Linda Miller	BNP
Globe Tn./Holy Trinity	Edward McHale	BNP
<b>NEWHAM</b>		
Custom Hse & Silver Tn.	Kevin Vincombe	BNP
Custom Hse & Silver Tn.	Vincent Parker	BNP
Custom Hse & Silver Tn.	Jeff Edmonds	BNP
Beckton	Michael Davidson	BNP
Beckton	Peter Heart	BNP
Canning Tn. Garage	Henry Vincombe	BNP
<b>SUTTON</b>		
SE Hiller North Wood	Jenny Oliver	BNP
<b>LEWISHAM</b>		
	Anthony Johnson	NF
<b>HOUSLOW</b>		
Heston East	Warren Glass	BNP
steworth	Phil Andrews	IC
<b>BARKING &amp; DAG</b>		
Thamesview	Gary John Hewitt	BNP
<b>REDBRIDGE</b>		
Goodmayes	Paul David Botby	BNP
<b>GREENWICH</b>		
Sherard	William Albert Hitches	BNP
<b>HAVERING</b>		
Hornchurch Airfield	Oliver Tillet	TW
Elm Park	Graham Williamson	TW
<b>EXETER</b>		
Polsoe	Gary Needs	NF
St Thomas	Bill Ablett	NF

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