

# SOCIALIST

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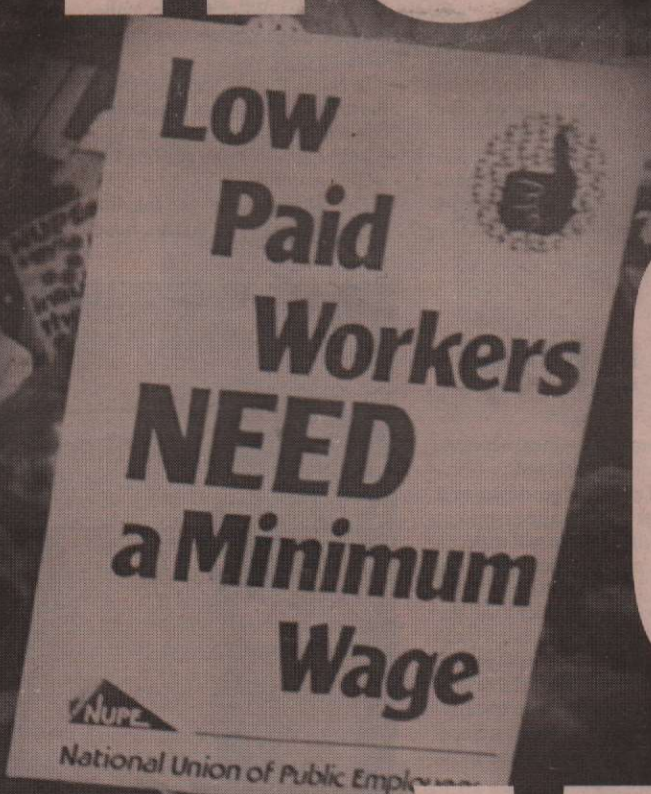


ORGANISER

*It will be socialism or barbarism!*

## DEATH RATE FOUR TIMES HIGHER IN POOR AREAS

# The poor



# die

**A**CCORDING to new research, death rates are rising in the hardest-hit areas of Tory Britain, and are four times as high as in well-off areas.

A study of different areas in the North-East showed a gap between rich and poor which has been widening fast since the early 1980s, and which "is strongly linked with material conditions rather than individual behaviour."

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# young

## Labour must fight for the welfare state!

# End of the Stalinist road

**B**ERT RAMELSON died last month and the words "end of an era" spring to mind. But, in truth, Ramelson's era ended a decade earlier, with the demise of the British Communist Party (CPGB) as a significant force in industry. The take-over of the Party by middle-class "Euros" and, finally, the collapse of the Soviet Empire must have been devastating blows to Ramelson.

Without forgetting for a moment his vile Stalinist politics, it's worth also remembering his achievements. Born in 1910 in the Ukraine, the son of a Jewish fur-trader, he landed up in Canada in 1931. After studying law, he fought in Spain for the Republic, then came to Britain and joined the CP. He had an eventful World War II, commanding tanks in Tobruk, getting captured, master-minding a mass escape from an Italian POW camp and fighting alongside the CP-led Italian partisans.

After the war, he became Yorkshire District Secretary of the CP and set about building the Party's influence in coalfield, against the right-wing machine that then dominated the NUM nationally and in Yorkshire. The young Arthur Scargill got his training from Ramelson and the CP at this time. The Party's influence in the coalfield was confirmed with the election of Sammy Taylor to the NUM Executive in 1959 — the result of painstaking attention to the minutiae of election organisation and the assiduous cultivation of non-CP 'lefts' within the union.

It was this style of operating that Ramelson took with him when he left Yorkshire to become the CP's National Industrial Organiser in 1967. The Party, already had a strong base in engineering, the motor industry, the docks etc. It also had a number of key shop stewards and well placed regional officers in unions like the AUEW and TGWU. What it lacked (since the ETU ballot-rigging scandal of 1960) were any national union leaders who were either members or sympathisers.

Ramelson and the Party's industrial machine concentrated upon getting "left" officials elected, with special attention paid to the two biggest unions, the AUEW and TGWU.

By 1969, success had been achieved with the election of Jack Jones as TGWU general secretary and Hugh Scanlon as President of the AUEW — the so called "terrible twins".

There was nothing wrong, in principle, with putting time and effort into getting "lefts" elected. However, for the CP at this time, such activity dominated and shaped all their union work. More and more, the election of "left" officials became an end in itself. The powerful rank and file organisation of stewards' committees, combine committees, districts and branches that already existed in engineering and elsewhere, was increasingly seen as no more than a stage army for the likes of Scanlon and Jones. The CP dominated 'Broad Lefts' that existed in most major unions became little more than election machines. As one AUEW militant commented a few years later, "Scanlon wriggled to break free from the rank and file pressure. He was assisted by the uncritical support which he was able to muster from those left-wingers (i.e. the CP) who controlled the local organisation. To criticise or even question Scanlon was taken as an act of sacrilege, like farting in church."

This uncritical approach to 'left' leaders and the neglect of rank and file organisation that accompanied it proved to be disastrous not just for the CP's industrial work, but for the class as a whole. Jones and Scanlon became mainstays of the Wilson/Callaghan government's wage-cutting 'Social Contract' of the mid-to-late 1970s: a policy that led to enormous rank and file resentment that the CP was unable (and unwilling) to organise into any effective opposition movement. The direct result was the election of the Thatcher government in 1979. In the same year Hugh Scanlon's chosen 'Broad Left' successor Bob Wright was soundly defeated by right-wing bone-head Terry Duffy. Less than a year later, the CP's leading industrial militant, BL Longbridge Convenor Derek Robinson, was sacked on trumped-up charges and the new right-wing AUEW leadership collaborated with BL management to ensure that he stayed sacked. The CP and the 'Broad Left' were powerless to defend Robinson: the entire edifice of the CP's industrial strategy lay in ruins.

It would be unfair to blame Ramelson alone for this debacle: his predecessors (like Peter Kerrigan) and his immediate successor (Mick Costello) share equal blame.

The 1970s were a tragic, wasted opportunity in the history of British trade unionism. We should learn from the mistakes of Ramelson — but also remember some of the strengths of his approach. Paradoxically, a rank and file based movement that emphasised pressuring "left" officials and calling for a Labour government with "socialist" policies would be much more appropriate now than it was in the 1970s. We should take the best from the tradition that Ramelson represented, cleanse it of its Stalinist politics, and build a serious rank and file movement in the unions. In doing so, we'll be honouring not the old Stalinist who died last month, but the idealistic young Ukrainian who started out wanting a better world.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# NEWS South African after the elections Only the workers can free the workers

**South African socialists of the Workers' List Party stood in the elections against the ANC and the National Party. This is their verdict of the results.**

The euphoric celebrations that broke out in South Africa on May 2nd when the results of the elections became known reflected many of the noble sentiments, desires and dreams that have sustained the oppressed and exploited people during the dark decades of struggle and sacrifice.

Now the people of South Africa have voted for a government of the social-democratic and Christian-democratic centre. For the next five years, a coalition of the representatives of these forces will administer the racial capitalist system of our country by means of a so-called Government of National Unity.

For the moment, the radical forces of socialism and anti-capitalism are held in check. The Workers' List Party (WLP), the only organisation that entered the elections for the national assembly on an explicitly anti-capitalist ticket, has shown that it is a force to be reckoned with in the next phase of our struggle. For the seven thousand votes which were cast for the WLP represent, with very few exceptions, people who consciously cast their vote for the socialist alternative.

They are spread throughout the entire country, although they are concentrated in certain metropolitan centres. Each of them has the multiplication potential of the activist in periods of crisis. This potential may soon have to be mobilised since we believe that it is a foregone conclusion that the dreams of yesterday will not be realised within the framework of

the capitalist system, whether it is called the free-enterprise market economy or the mixed economy. History bears us out in every country of Africa and in virtually all the ex-colonial countries of Asia and Latin America.

We believe that the new South Africa, like the new National Party, will be little more than the old South Africa in a new jacket. We are about to see the racial capitalist system become a multi-racial capitalist system via the co-operation of the black elite of this country.

The WLP entered the elections in order to use the political space provided by the period to promote the movement towards the formation of a mass workers' party. That decision has been thoroughly vindicated since the idea of the mass workers' party has reached every corner of South Africa and it is supported by tens of thousands of people beyond the members and supporters of the WLP.

The inevitable shift from colour-centred to class-centred politics in

the next five years will ensure that many issues will remain to be addressed. The struggle against the system of profits and wages must and will continue as long as that system continues to produce the monstrous social conditions we experience in our own country and in the whole of the non-imperialist world.

Today, even the imperialist "North" is once again riven by the agonies of unemployment, racism and the threat of devastating wars. The WLP is committed to that struggle both here and in the rest of the world. Our first salvo in the war on poverty is our campaign to have the right to work entrenched in any new constitution so that the demand for jobs for all becomes enforceable by law.

Unless these basic human rights — to a job, an empowering education and good health — are realised, the right to vote becomes no more than a mockery and the act of voting no more than a ritual by which "the masses" allow themselves to be manipulated by

the parties with the most money. The people have given to the new government a mandate for change. It is up to the working people of South Africa to ensure through struggle that that change comes about.

Only through the massive pressure of the streets will the parliamentary representatives of the voters be forced to bring about reforms that make a difference to the lives of the majority. To leave it to the chosen leaders is to make the mistake that the urban and rural poor have made in every post-colonial African country. And in most of these countries, the results have been increased poverty, starvation, civil wars and genocide. The experience of Africa has shown that Uhuru is not Ubuntu.

Only the workers can free the workers. Let us roll up our sleeves and tackle the job of dismantling the capitalist system.

On behalf of the National Co-ordinating Committee of the WLP. Johannesburg, 3 May 1994

## Class politics versus ethnic politics

Salim Vally reports from Johannesburg.

**T**HERE ARE a few "surprises" in the results that have come in so far, in particular the National Party victory in the Western Cape and the big Inkatha vote in Natal.

The National Party's Western Cape vote was based on openly "anti-African" racist campaigning amongst "coloured" people. They directly appealed to the fears of "coloured" workers. These fears are not entirely without foundation. For instance, in many workplaces the bosses are sacking

"coloured" workers and replacing them with "African" workers on lower wages. The ANC panders to this prejudice rather than fight it.

These developments mark a big shift in the last decade or so. Back in 1983 a very successful campaign against the "coloured" and "Indian" "tri-cameral" parliaments isolated the NP's supporters in the Western Cape, but this time things were very different.

In Natal, though the votes from the urban areas are not in and that could dramatically change things, Inkatha appear to be heading for a clear majority.

This reflects the fact that Inkatha does have a real social base

amongst sections of the population.

The tragedy is that our "freedom" election has seen a very big and alarming revival in the politics of ethnicity.

The leaders of the ANC — like Tokyo Sexwale, the new regional premier in the PWV area (the main industrial centre) — are already talking down people's expectations.

He says the ANC's promise to build one million homes is just a "policy guideline" and is not "rigid". But if people's expectations are not fulfilled then the dangers of ethnic division will grow greater.

Tony Benn:

## Campaign after 5 May!

**Tony Benn spoke to Socialist Organiser about the need for a clear lead from Labour's leaders on questions of health, jobs and housing.**

I BELIEVE that the tide has now turned in our direction. People are beginning to believe the truth of what we have been saying for years.

Everyone can see the ruin about us. There is real determination to see water, rail and the Post Office in public hands. Working class

people want to see local services, defended and developed.

If the Tories do go down to a big defeat, and Labour makes gains, I think people will expect a positive, clear indication from Labour's leaders about what the next Labour government will do.

If we pledge ourselves to build homes, provide full employment, rebuild the National Health Service and provide a decent education service we will get a tremendous response. People are looking for such a lead.

In the local elections we need to work for a strong, positive vote for Labour.

# The poor die young

From front page

ANOTHER STUDY, also published in the British Medical Journal, showed that men who become unemployed or take early retirement are twice as likely to die in the following five and a half years as those who stay in work.

Joblessness, inadequate social security benefits, and poor housing — all these effects of the Tories' wrecking of the Welfare

State take their toll.

The medical journal concludes: "If risks as great as these [from the wrecking of the Welfare State] resulted from exposure to toxic materials then offices would be closed down and populations evacuated from contaminated areas..."

Yes! This toxic Tory government should be shut down! The campaign to kick out the Tories and bring back the Welfare State should start now!

See page 3-4



May Day with a difference: last Sunday around 10,000 young people demonstrated against the Criminal Justice Bill. The march ended in Trafalgar Square.

The Bill, if enacted, will make trespass a criminal offence. It will restrict the ability of people to organise rave parties, further restrict the freedom of movement of travellers, and severely affect the rights of many people to make their protests, including anti-hunt saboteurs, anti-road development campaigners and so on.

The Criminal Justice Bill — which also includes the proposal to scrap the right to silence — must be stopped!

# Fight for the Welfare State!

**T**HE POST 1945 Welfare State was the fruit of 150 years of working-class political activity. By way of the Welfare State the labour movement created barriers against extremes of poverty, against prolonged homelessness, against the grinding down and 'stigmatising' of the poor. Indeed, after 1945, the very term "the poor" — not to speak of the Victorian notion of the "undeserving poor" — disappeared from common parlance for more than three decades.

Capitalists still robbed and exploited workers and tyrannised over them at work. But outside work the labour movement had won new rights for the working class. People who were old or sick or unfortunate no longer starved to death, or slept in large numbers on the street. And nobody died because they could not pay for medical treatment.

The working-class principle of an equal right to life was proclaimed by the labour movement and embodied in the National Health Service where money could not buy, and the lack of money could not deny you, the best available health care. The rich still could and did buy advantages, but nobody now defended the view that poor people were not equally entitled to the best possible health care.

Perhaps for the first time in human history — revolutionary Russia in 1917 was too poor for it — the principle of equality in one important sphere of social life, in health care, came close to being fully realised.

There were of course, great flaws and contradictions in the labour movement's achievement. This non-means-tested Welfare State was set up in a society that was still a class society, and therefore it brought the educated middle classes and even the bourgeoisie immense advantages too; they could use it with more skill and expertise than working class people did. But this "class-blindness" ensured its universality, where means-testing would have led to the creation of what we now increasingly have: substandard provision and "welfare ghettos" for the poor.

And the labour movement, in 1945 and after, committed the great and fatal error of leaving the capitalist class in control of the commanding heights of the economy and the state. Nevertheless, the reformists who led that movement could truly lay claim to great achievements.

Fifteen years on from the 1945 Labour election victory that made the Welfare State possible, the Labour leaders could convincingly have claimed *lasting* achievements, too. For the Tories, when they came back to government in 1951, did not dare attack the Welfare State, so overwhelming was the support, even



The unions have opposed the rundown of the Welfare State — but piecemeal, sporadically, half-heartedly. Photo: Jez Coulson

among the middle classes, for what the labour movement had done after 1945.

But today, fifteen years after Thatcher's election victory in May 1979, the Welfare State is in ruins. We have had fifteen years of rule by the filthiest gang of Tory barbarians this century. Hordes of young people sleep on the streets of our cities. There is permanent mass unemployment and inadequate provision for its victims. By way of a thousand lacerating cuts, the Tories are bleeding the Health Service — the heart of the Welfare State Labour built — to death. Like an insidious disease they work away, undermining, sapping, destroying the Welfare State, and its crowning glory, the Health Service.

What is happening to the Health Service is typical of what is happening to the whole Welfare State and what has happened to Britain under Tory rule. More and more openly they now proclaim that the poor do not have the right to equal health care — that is, that the poor do not have an equal right to life.

A recent poll of experts on health care produced a prediction that soon now an attempt will be made to withdraw from sick old people the right to

NHS-provided cheap treatments, like dialysis for those with malfunctioning kidneys.

These stone-age, stone-hearted, pebble-brained barbarians are driving relentlessly to bring about the final breakdown of the Health Service and its formal reorganisation into a two-

*"There is widespread, even organised opposition to the destruction of the Welfare State."*

tier structure, with strict rationing in both quantity and quality for the poor.

Their intention is to force those who can afford it — and, soon, anyone who wants *adequate* health care — to go private, leaving the Health Service as a slum for the poor and

the helpless.

Most people in Britain are hostile to what the Tories are doing to the Health Service. But still the Tories do it. That is not surprising. The Tories are the party of big money, not the party of the people, the party of property, not the party of life.

What is surprising is that the Tories get away with it — and have been getting away with it for fifteen years. Of course they weasel and lie! Of course, they deny the facts about the NHS and throw around obfuscating figures and statistics. Of course, their press covers for them most of the time.

Of course, they are slippery, hard to pin down, and harder still to control or bring to book.

After the 1992 election the hypocrite John Major made a public pledge that the Health Service was safe in Tory hands — even while those brutal Tory hands were continuing to tear it apart, piece by piece. You could not find a clearer expression of Tory contempt for the people they claim to represent or of the extent to which transparent official lies now dominate British political life.

Yet, despite the lies and the hypocrisy, people do know what is

happening. There is widespread even organised opposition to the destruction of the Welfare State and a great popular hatred of those responsible for it.

There are many campaigns, though they tend to be, or quickly to become, localised.

Individual doctors, and even the British Medical Association, have spoken out against the Tories' treatment of the Health Service. The Health Service unions have campaigned to defend the NHS. There have been many demonstrations, of which the TUC-organised march of 25,000 people through London last November was a splendid example.

Despite it all, the Tories have not been stopped, or slowed down, or shamed.

The opposition to the Tories has been ineffective because the natural spinal column around which it should organise, the labour movement, has not yet opted for an all-out fight to stop the Tories.

Yet the Tories must be stopped — and the time for saving the Welfare State has now grown very short. Already, health care as we have

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

Karl Marx

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## WE SAY

Unite the left! For unity in action and honest dialogue about our differences.

### Fight for a general election!

THE 5 MAY elections are little less than a referendum on what the country thinks of the Tories. Of course, the Tory press is exaggerating the extent of likely Tory losses in order to be able to claim on 6 May that they did not do so badly after all. Even so, in real terms, the Tories are expected to do very badly, and Labour may do very well.

If this happens a powerful blow will have been dealt against the shreds and tatters of moral authority that remains with John Major and his government. What then?

In the normal course of events, nothing then. The Tories can continue to govern. Discredited, humiliated, bereft of moral authority as the Tory government may be on the morning after the 5 May elections, it is nevertheless entitled to go on ruling. Constitutionally, Major does not have to call a general election until three years from now.

This is a travesty of democracy! Labour should not go along with this farce. It should mount a serious campaign to demand an immediate general election if the electorate spurns the Tories on 5 May. Labour local authorities should openly question and where necessary defy this bankrupt government.

### The Workers' List were right!

ELSEWHERE IN this paper we carry reports from comrades in Johannesburg giving the Workers' List Party's [WLP] assessment of South Africa's first ever non-racial, democratic elections.

We have made a point of supporting the WLP, not the ANC, because the South African comrades are defending the central principles of socialist politics: the political independence of the working class. They defend the idea that in order to free themselves the workers must organise a party on a class basis to defend and promote their class interests and to overthrow their oppressors, the capitalist class.

The rest of the left have — with a few incoherent exceptions — simply functioned as the pointless fifth wheel of the ANC's bandwagon.

They have not been able to distinguish between justified celebration at the fact that the decades long struggle of the black workers and youth has forced the more far-sighted capitalists to accept majority rule, and totally unjustified support for the ANC, whose leaders intend to administer South Africa's racist, capitalist system hand in hand with the National Party and the mineowners.

The WLP did not expect to get a big vote. They knew that they were fighting for every vote and that every single supporter they won was someone who was prepared to support genuine socialist ideas even in the face of a huge — and understandable — wave of pro-ANC emotion. When the ANC/NP coalition starts to attack black workers and youth they will be perfectly positioned to draw the lessons for workers and win them to socialism. Those who were indistinguishable from the ANC and their capitalist backers will not.

### The Tories' barbarous system

LAST WEEK it was revealed that a young woman prisoner was taken from prison to a civilian hospital to have a child delivered — and kept in handcuffs all through the process of giving birth! This incident stretches belief so far that, on hearing it, you wonder if you are not the victim of a hoax.

Yet this is no hoax. This is Tory Britain in 1994. It is all there in that story — the profound, cruel indifference to other people that makes up the core of the Tory philosophy and the learned callousness it produces in a society governed by its high priests.

Presumably the warders were women, yet they seem to have found no natural feelings of a common humanity between them and the prisoner. What planet do they come from?

Doctors and nurses who delivered her baby were no less callous towards her than were the prison warders whose job it is to be callous and punitive. They could most likely have instructed the warders to release her hands. They did nothing. Stony indifference there too.

The hospital has issued a statement telling the world that their only concern was with medical matters! What did they think giving birth in chains to a baby that was immediately taken from her would do to the woman's health?

The warders who thought it proper to keep a young woman in handcuffs while she endured labour pains will not be punished!

In history barbarism appears in the form of fierce, hungry, half-savage warriors who storm the walls of the city, and then pillage and destroy, pulling everything down to their own uncivilised level. In our time barbarism spreads from the very heart of civilisation itself and the chief barbarians wear polite bourgeois masks, like that of Home Secretary Michael Howard. Howard and the other Tories are presiding over a frightening collapse of standards, expectations and accountability in British life, thereby encouraging and goading their underlings to do unspeakable deeds like this.

## THIS WEEK

# Fight for the Welfare State!

### From page 3

known it since Nye Bevan created the Health Service in 1948 is breaking down all over the country — patients are being turned away, wards closed, hospitals destroyed. Time is short!

But *how* can the Tories be stopped? How can they be targeted, pinned down, prevented from doing what the big majority of the electors do not want them to do? How can the democratic will of the majority of the British people be given effective expression against a government hell-bent on ignoring it?

How can the mass of people who oppose the destruction of the Welfare State, and in the first place of the Health Service, be mobilised and set in motion as a force the Tories will have to reckon with?

Ultimately, *only* the labour movement can stop the Tories. But all we have had from the Labour and TUC leaders is sporadic protests, hangdog opposition, the occasional demonstration, and (in the 1992 election campaign) ill-managed stunts.

The Labour leaders' failure as defenders of the Health Service almost defies belief.

They could not have an easier or more popular case to argue, yet they mumble apologetically when they should roar out angry defiance; they squeal in little protests when they should thunder with the indignation felt by many millions of people; they quibble about details where they should take a clear and immovable stand on the great labour movement principle of equal health care for all.

In face of the implacable Tory drive, the response from the labour movement, Labour and TUC alike, has had neither force nor credibility nor consistency. Why?

Why have the labour movement's leaders made so faltering a response to the destruction by the Tories of Labour's greatest achievements, the National Health Service and the Welfare State?

They do not convincingly defend the NHS because they inwardly accept the basic Tory case against the NHS. In a society which spends vast millions on arms, makes tax cuts to benefit the wealthy, and devotes immense amounts of wealth to sustain the upper classes, the Labour leaders go along with the key Tory idea that the cost of full medical treatment on demand for everyone would be prohibitive!

That is why Labour's leaders have not responded as they should have done when the Tories have openly said — and it is now one of their central arguments — that modern health care is too expensive to give to everyone, that is, to the poor, and so can only be made available to those who have

the money to pay for it.

The leaders of the Labour Party thus betray the best traditions of their own reformist current of labour movement opinion!

The reformist leaders of the 1940s would have responded to the ideas which the Tories now openly proclaim as people stung to action in defence of their most cherished and most basic beliefs — their belief in human equality, in human solidarity and in social justice. But *they* were convinced reformists. The present leaders are not even reformists. They have not known how to answer the Tories. Accepting the gruesome Tory argument that "we" cannot afford proper health care for the poor they have mumbled and fumbled. They ask only that the Tories go about it with a little less savagery. The Tories will not oblige them! In the nature of things, the Tories cannot oblige them.

The attitude of the Labour and trade-union leaders has

*Such a single-issue campaign will begin to mobilise and organise the vast headless opposition that already exists to defend the Health Service and the Welfare State.*

been decisive. Without that acceptance of the basic premise of what the Tories are doing — that "we" cannot afford the Health Service or a proper Welfare State — their fight against the Tories would have been fuelled by righteous, invigorating anger and determination, and propelled forward by the determination of millions of people.

Their denunciations of the Tories would have carried conviction. They would have known what they wanted and asked the labour movement to back them in fighting for it. The labour movement would have rallied the British people against the Tories. It is the Tories that would have been smashed up, and not the Welfare State.

Ideas are central here. You cannot fight the Tories if you accept their basic ideas, if you believe that the laws of capitalism and not the needs of the working class are the highest court of appeal.

In order to beat the Tories the labour movement must sort its ideas out.

To oppose the Tories you need conviction. Only the bold proclamation of the principle that life comes before property, that the right to social care, including adequate health care, for everyone is basic and inalienable, can allow the

labour movement to rally, organise and focus the opposition to what the Tories are doing — an opposition which is as widespread now as we enter the 16th year of unbroken Tory rule as it is helpless to affect events.

*Thus the central failure of the Labour leaders in the last 15 years has been a failure of reformist nerve, a moral buckling and bowing-down before the dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Tories.*

And yet the Welfare State and in the first place the Health Service is the question on which everything could be made to turn around in our favour again, the issue on which the Tories and their philosophy are already widely discredited and on which they can be thoroughly routed.

You simply can not express the basic difference in outlook between them and us more powerfully than on the question of health care. On our side we assert, defend and fight for the right to basic state-of-the-art health care for everyone. On their side the Tories brutally deny that right and proclaim that only the rich and well-off can have it, leaving the poor to die or linger in suffering if they can't afford to pay.

This is the real spirit of Toryism, and by opposing it seriously we could turn the tide against them as we did in 1945.

We will never find a more powerful, more clear-cut, more emotion-charged issue than the NHS on which to express the human-beings first philosophy of the labour movement and counterpose it to the savage prattle and practices of the Tories!

The Tories must be challenged! A bold campaign for the Welfare State, with a Health Service based on all-out acceptance of the principles of 1948 — that would rally millions against the Tories. It should be launched immediately.

What can we do? The labour movement must continue to demand of its leaders — Labour and trade-union alike — that they launch a Crusade for the Right to Life. We need not a series of odd, ragged, half-hearted, half-serious, dispirited objections and demonstrations, but a radical crusade that dares reassert the basic socialist idea embedded in Nye Bevan's Health Service — that the right to life is greater than the rights of property, that the right to health care for everyone comes before the right of the well-off and rich to pay less tax.

Many millions already agree with us in their guts even though they may be oppressed by the dominant Tory philosophy and not yet know how to answer it or what to do about it. A revived labour movement must give them the answer!

The labour movement that

created the Health Service had its roots in a powerful governing idea, expressed in the early years of the labour and socialist movement by men such as Henry Hyndman, William Morris, James Connolly, and Keir Hardie, in these words: "A full, free, happy life, for all — or for none." We must recall, apply, proclaim, and fight now for that principle; full, free, state-of-the-art health care, for all or for none!

However, the Labour and trade-union leaders will not launch a crusading campaign. They will not now claim the moral high ground and indict Toryism and all its manifestations. At best they will continue to protest and sometimes march, ineffectively, as the inexorable drive of the Tories to smash up the Welfare State continues and millions are pushed back into the swamps of social barbarism over which the reformist labour movement for a while built its life-enhancing bridges and causeways.

We can no longer wait for these people to act. Those determined to defend and restore the Welfare State must gather our forces and fight with every means necessary — propaganda, demonstrations, direct action — to stop the Tories destroying the Health Service and what is left of the Welfare State.

In the past we have seen powerful movements created by *ad hoc* committees. The most pertinent is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which became an immense force, able even to shape the affairs of the labour movement. It was started by prominent writers like the late JB Priestley and Bertrand Russell, and by left-wing politicians.

We must start to build a single-issue campaign to defend and restore the Welfare State and, in the most prominent place, the Health Service. We must rally the labour movement around the principle which here and now most clearly embodies the philosophy of the labour movement: the principle of proper medical care, housing, education, and pensions or benefits as basic social and human rights.

Such a single-issue campaign will begin to mobilise and organise the vast headless opposition that already exists to defend the Health Service and the Welfare State. It will give integration and coherence and added force to the myriad existing local campaigns. It will become a force within the unions, adding to the weight and strength of anti-Tory, pro-NHS campaigns such as that of UNISON.

As we have said before in *Socialist Organiser*, that is what we need — nothing less will do the job now. It can if necessary be done even, initially, without the Labour and trade union leaders. Time is short!



Fascists celebrate after their election victory

# Which way for the left in Italy?

**Katrina Faccenda reports from Italy on the political situation there after an election which has left the fascists poised to enter government for the first time in 50 years.**

FOR 49 YEARS Italians have commemorated the fall of fascism and nazism on 25 April. True, the "Liberation" has been romanticised, but it was a victory, in which the left was central, over fascism. This year the whole mood of 25 April was different and the whole idea of 25 April as a celebration was under threat.

The right wing which has made huge advances in the recent elections is trying to revise history through Berlusconi's media apparatus. They are attempting to depict the Second World War Resistance movement as brutal oppressors, and the fascists as heroic victims of foreign intervention.

On TV Gianfranco Fini, leader of the neo-fascist MSI/Alleanza Nazionale, described Mussolini as the greatest statesman of his country. From Fini this kind of statement is not really surprising, but much of the press is following behind. The new approach to history was summed up by one journalist writing in *L'Indipendente!* who stated that "Mussolini gave us 20 years of fascism and 50 of anti-fascism — and who knows what's worse."

As a counter to this, the turnout of more than 300,000 for the demonstration on 25 April in Milan was great, but it's difficult to be optimistic about how the left will go on from here.

It's difficult not to make comparisons between the situation here and

Thatcher/Major's victories in Britain. Berlusconi's politics are similar to the Tories', but the far right is far stronger and better placed than in Britain. Like the Labour Party, the PDS have reacted to defeat by contemplating suicide. Although the dissolution of the PDS would leave a short-term vacuum within parliament, in the long run it would be no bad thing. It would finally remove the shelter under which so many right wingers have hidden for so long. It would provide opportunities for "Rifondazione" (the Party of

*"There will be a move towards presidential rule, privatisation of health and pensions, and attacks on the unions."*

Communist Refoundation), which is a serious alternative to the PDS, far more than any left group in Britain is to the Labour Party.

It is unlikely that Achille Occhetto will continue to lead the PDS. He will join Kinnock in the Pantheon of failed sell-out experts. Occhetto will probably be replaced by Walter Veltroni, director of the PDS paper *L'Unita*, or Massimo D'Alema, the PDS parliamentary leader, both of whom would bring a further retreat from class politics.

The left must go on the offensive — not only ideologically but also physically. Already the building of the

Rome-Primavalle section of Rifondazione has been set on fire and some Rifondazione members have been hospitalised by fascist thugs. It's as if the clock has been turned back to 1922, when Mussolini's thugs ("squadristi") rampaged round the country.

Once Berlusconi, Fini and Bossi have settled their minor squabbles, there will be an immediate move towards presidential rule (a federal Italy with a US style presidency headed by Berlusconi). There will be further electoral reform, complete privatisation of health and pensions, and inevitably attacks on the unions.

There are huge possibilities for the left to build. Many public sector workers have had no contracts for over three years and this government will not remedy this.

The three big union confederations, Cgil, Cisl and Uil, are moving towards unification, and the Cgil leadership is becoming further and further to the right of the PDS leadership. These unions have little credibility, having accepted many of the deals which paved the way for Berlusconi's victory.

The editorial of *Liberazione*, Rifondazione's weekly paper, is calling for unity and a change in the nature of their party. The Stalinists may use this as a way to tighten up and isolate the left but a move towards a party which is truly democratic is needed.

With all of its failings, Rifondazione can mobilise left opposition to the new government. Although defeated, the left must not abandon class politics in favour of centre-progressive alliances. The PDS have followed this course for many years, and have now found themselves in complete crisis as a result.

# The conditions of Mexican workers

## LETTER FROM MEXICO

By Pablo Velasco

MEXICO SUFFERED particularly badly during the world slump which started during the 1970s. It spectacularly declared itself bankrupt in 1982, with a US \$60 billion debt.

Since 1985 Mexico has undergone a terrible austerity programme. President Salinas, the IMF's model pupil, has slashed government spending and privatised 300 companies. Inflation is down from 150% to 10%.

But even a cursory glance at the figures shows the Mexican working class that has paid for the capitalist crisis. While Mexico now has more billionaires than any other country besides the US, Germany and Japan, the ratio of Mexican to US wages is one to 10.4. In 1976 it was one to 4.4.

Between 1982-88, manufacturing real wages fell by 31%. The national minimum wage is in real terms 40% below 1975 levels. More than half the population are officially classified as poor (70% of whom live in the countryside).

Unemployment is estimated at 25-30% by private sector economists (officially it is 5%). Ten million children under the age of 15 work in dangerous and unsafe industries. With Mexican capitalism growing at a paltry 0.5% a year, prospects are not good.

Much of the unemployment has arisen out of the so-called "modernisation" programme, mainly privatisations. Last year the oil company PEMEX, the pride of Mexico's nationalised industries since 1938, shed nearly half its workers. In 1983-4, nuclear workers saw their industry broken up and sold off,

and their fairly independent union eliminated. The privatisation of Aeromexico during 1987-88 saw 11,000 workers sacked, activists witchhunted and the company thereby made "profitable and private."

For other workers who still have jobs, there has been a deterioration of health and safety conditions on top of their sliding real wages and the deterioration that goes with the poor nutrition, poor clothing, inferior housing and loss of schooling caused by low wages. The issue of health hazards at work is particularly stark because it is hardly recognised at all by the authorities.

The government claims that there are no cases of occupational cancer in the country, despite the presence of asbestos, vinyl chloride and chromates in factories. Basic protective equipment such as masks and gloves are not supplied to workers, and inspectors, where they exist, have no equipment to test for dust, noise or temperature. There is little in the way of preventive measures and although there is compensation for accidents this is not automatic. Information is hard to get because the government doesn't

collect it, and workers are often too scared of reprisals to report their company.

The situation for women workers is particularly bad. Thirty per cent of women work in the formal economy, but many more work as street vendors, domestic workers or homeworkers, sewing or assembling products. Only in industries like telecommunications, teaching and banking are there contracts for women made by the unions. Consequently many women earn below the minimum wage, and do not have access to the national health system.

There are hardly any day-care centres, even in Mexico City, and it is common to see women working with children on the street, in houses or in factories.

Worse, access to contraception for women is difficult, and Mexican men are notoriously unwilling to use condoms. Women do not have the right to choose an abortion, and sexual harassment at work is so bad that recently the government made it a crime (although it carries no penalty!)

In addition to these economic and social measures of oppression and exploitation, Mexican workers in general are not well supported by their unions (the CTM), when they go into struggle. Because of the insidious role of the ruling PRI, they are often in direct confrontation with the local and national state. An Amnesty International

study in 1991 listed cases of torture of political and union activists by the Federal Judicial Police, and illegal searches, arbitrary detentions, extra-judicial killings and beatings carried out by the army, the police the PRI and the CTM. Many Mexicans see these practices as the normal functioning of the state.

And at the same time, many unions

lack all internal democracy, and are effectively run by gangsters. These gangsters use the law as well as their own physical force to drive out dissidents. Although Article 123 of the Constitution formally endows workers with rights to strike, form unions etc, the state pays the role of arbiter, dividing the labour movement — it has the power to declare strikes "illegal" and to 'recognise' parties for negotiation.

Despite this stranglehold by the PRI-government, some sections of the Mexican bourgeoisie still bray for more, expecting the working class to go on paying for the crisis. This is a dangerous game for them. The market reforms of Salinas have undermined the cosy PRI-CTM relationship and many large sectors of workers, in new industries especially, are outside their stranglehold.

The Mexican working class is large, concentrated mainly in large cities, and has a long tradition of militant struggle, from carworkers to telecom to teachers.

This is the hope and the real potential to end the misery of millions of Mexicans.

*"The Mexican working class is concentrated mainly in large cities, and has a long tradition of militant struggle, from carworkers to telecom to teachers."*

# Sweeping it under the carpet

**A**NOTHER job for Saatchis? Oh no! More horror stories of local government inefficiency — wonderful ammunition for the Tories in the run-up to the local government elections.

A simple job of picking up and disposing of some filing cabinets turns into long and expensive disaster. At 6am dustcart A leaves the depot, only to return 45 minutes later when it's discovered that it does not have the right lifting gear.

Dustcart B is sent, with the right lifting gear, but its compactor breaks down. It returns fixed, and breaks down again.

In the process the lorry reverses into a car belonging to senior Tory Lord Wateham. At 11.30am dustcart C arrives and clears the filing cabinets, unfortunately reversing into and damaging a grade A listed Tudor wall.

The only thing stopping the Tories getting straight on the phone to Saatchi & Saatchi is that this was Westminster Council's privatised refuse collection service picking up the rubbish from 10 Downing St. Or at least some of it.

**W**ILL he ever work in this town again?

**Sun columnist Richard Littlejohn has been censured by the Radio Authority for a reactionary rant on a phone-in programme on London's LBC.**

Showing a lack of originality and wit to match his bone-headed, right-wing ignorance, Littlejohn said that the movement for women's equality had been "hijacked by hatchet-faced shaven-headed dykes in boiler suits who despise men."

Unfortunately, it seems that Littlejohn's stilted filth will be heard again. He has moved on to become a commentator on Sky News, and has a new project lined up on London Weekend Television. It's only to be hoped that his stock of hackneyed right-wing clichés is up to it.

**T**HE abolition of Wages Councils is certainly good news for anyone who is looking for a job but who was previously priced out of the labour market.

Take the ad in Faversham Job centre for a trainee chef: a 39-hour week for £35 a week. That included split shifts, evening and weekend work.

The unemployed should address their letters of thanks to the Tories, but remember to drop a note in the post for the TUC too.

Recognising their important role in doing nothing to stop the changes would be considered good manners.

## GRAFFITI

VIVELA REVOLUCION

By Cyclops

**T**HE accusations flying around at the moment that the Headmaster of Eton in the late 60s and 70s, Anthony Chevenix-Trench, was a drunken sadist who caned up to twenty boys a day are deeply worrying.

In a couple of years time these would-be members of the ruling class will be reaching the age to take seats in the cabinet.

And what will these minds twisted by years of beating dream up? Young offenders are recommended to emigrate to a more humane environment. Singapore perhaps.

**Q**UESTIONS have to be raised about the health of Serbia's national psyche. Two Serb designers have launched a new men's perfume called "Serb." It comes in a bottle shaped as a grenade embraced by a naked woman — the makers claim the figure is attempting to stop the grenade exploding.

Amateur Freudians can draw their own conclusions about the state of the target market's sex life.

**M**ORE stories of NHS inefficiency — it costs £16 a go to answer telephone calls. A case for the internal market?

Probably not, since this is the Department of Health's Patients' Charter telephone hotline for reporting inefficiency and waiting lists. So far the service has cost £3.73 millions, which is an awful lot of aspirin.

It's something that Labour spokesperson David Blunkett might like to raise when he meets the new NHS Chief Executive, Alan Lang. But that could be a very long time away, since Secretary of State for Health Virginia Bottomley, well-known advocate of open government, has vetoed her Labour counterpart's meeting with Lang.

**O**N the principle that an outsider sees everyday events of another culture for what they really are, the evidence of Russian businesswoman Larisa Manotkina is highly informative.

"When I first heard Americans using the expression 'sexual harassment,' I was utterly baffled. I thought it was some kind of custom, like Karaoke."

# Eurovision leadership contest

## PRESS GANG

THE SUN TODAY  
THE GUARDIAN  
SUNDAY PRESS  
THE WORLD

By Jim Denham

**O**VER THE years, the *Sun* has told a lot of lies. Some of these have been the result of sloppy journalism, inadequate checking of facts and the over-riding desire for a "story" at any cost. That's bad enough. But some of the *Sun*'s lies have been blatant, bare-faced untruths that the paper's editors must have known about.

The second category of lie has traditionally been aimed against left-wing Labour MPs, union leaders like Arthur Scargill and black activists. Very occasionally, the Press Commission would rumble into action and rap the *Sun* over the knuckles and a small apology/correction would be printed weeks (or months) after the damage had been done.

Last week, the victim of that second kind of lying was none other than the Prime Minister

of Great Britain. Thursday's *Sun* front page lead announced "I'll pull out of Europe — Major's astonishing plan to save himself and party." This extraordinary "exclusive" by Political Editor Patrick Kavanagh and one Simon Walters, informed us that "John Major is ready to put Britain's membership of the European Union on the line in a sensational bid to save his leadership. He is considering plans to turn the next general election into a historic referendum on Britain's membership."

An un-named "ally" (presumably of Major) is quoted as saying: "If he plays it right, he'll unite the party and Cabinet behind him and against the drive by Brussels to take us over. It would leave Labour and the Liberals high and dry as the poodles of Europe." The same day's *Daily Mail* carried

a remarkably similar story.

Major's Press Office wasted no time in issuing a categorical denial of these stories. So — assuming that the *Sun* and the *Mail* didn't simply cook the whole thing up between them as some kind of joke — where *did* these rumours come from?

An important clue came this Sunday, in that traditional mouthpiece for right-wing Tory dissidence, the *Sunday Telegraph*. For the first time in many years, a national newspaper dared raise the banner of complete *withdrawal* from Europe: "It is interesting to note the sense of release now that this discussion is at last beginning. Could we really be free once more? Could all the tedious squabbling in Brussels cease? Could we be liberated from bureaucratic directives, Common Agricultural Policies, Jacques Delors and all the rest? What heady thoughts!"

Now, the *Sunday Telegraph* has always been a somewhat maverick publication (even by comparison with its daily stable-mate). And it has always been on the "Euro-sceptic" wing of the Tory Party. Its editor, Charles Moore, makes little secret of his contempt for

Major and his pro-European sidekicks like Douglas Hurd. But not until now has the paper dared raise the banner for straightforward *withdrawal*.

And what a time to do it: days before the local elections and just a month before the Euro-elections. Traditionally, at these times, the Tory press rallies behind the leadership and takes its orders uncritically from the No. 10 Press Office. Clearly, something's afoot.

The anti-European banner, once so foolishly brandished by the "left," is now firmly in the hands of the extreme right of the Tory Party. And they reckon, with their friends in the press, that they're onto a winner. The only problem is Major, Hurd and that Brittain fellow ("our" man in Brussels, who's gone native).

There can be no doubt now that the entire Tory press (with the single exception of the *Express*) are now prepared to destroy Major — and the cause they have chosen for his destruction is Europe.

If I were poor Mr Major, I'd be on the alert for quiet meetings between the likes of Patrick Kavanagh, Charles Moore and Michael Portillo.

# Labour needs sex lessons

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Emma Parsons

**L**IKE A latter-day Marie Antoinette, complete with lacquered bouffant, Education Secretary John Patten believes the nation's children to be the innocent rosy-cheeked cherubs he was told of at his mother's knee.

On hearing that school children in Leeds felt the need for some basic information about their sexuality he claimed to be "astounded and appalled." When it became apparent that the school — Highfield School, Leeds — was merely satisfying the children's hunger for knowledge, he effectively declared that they should live in ignorance, as he had done.

There's much more to this controversy, however, than the unsurprising fact that Patten is out of touch with Britain's youth. The Tories leapt on the Leeds case in a cynical attempt to breathe life

into their disastrous 'Back to Basics' campaign. Bereft of any coherent strategy, riven with disunity, and in deep economic crisis, they are on the hunt for scapegoats and the favourite target of the moment is "declining moral values."

The 'Back to Basics' campaign is, of course, led by Tories who really believe that straight-forward, honest and informed sex education is a threat to civilisation; but in society as a whole these people are seen as increasingly cranky.

Even in the Tory cabinet there is a serious disagreement between the Health Department, who are concerned about the increasing number of teenage pregnancies, and the moral puritans who won't accept that this might have something to do with the lack of adequate sex education.

By far the most disgraceful and hypocritical part of this whole episode has been the reaction of the Labour Party. In Leeds, when the story

broke and the school was under most pressure, the Labour council leader John Trickett immediately disowned them. His line was that the Local Education Authority had offered their advice on sex education, the school had rejected it and that is why "problems like this occurred."

There can be few better politicians anywhere of a politician missing the point.

The Labour response simply reinforced the message of the most reactionary Tories.

Trickett's ranting was no local maverick view either.

Five Leeds Labour MPs signed an early-day motion condemning the school and "blaming" the government! They circulated the local press with their cynical bandwagon-climbing opinions and made no attempt whatsoever to investigate the facts or defend Sue Brady, the nurse involved.

Nationally the Shadow Health Spokesperson David Blunkett accused Sue Brady of "crass and inappropriate

behaviour."

The Labour Party have clearly lost sight of the ball in their increasingly boyish little games with the Tories in Parliament. In the interests of scoring a few cheap points about Tory education policies (points which they usually fail to make by, for example, promising to reverse them) Labour not only joined the attack on reasonable and progressive sex education; they helped in the attempt to revive the crazy 'Back to Basics' campaign.

In the meantime, back in Leeds, the parents at the school, the teachers and the governors, Sue Brady's employers, the Health Authority, and just about everyone else are standing firmly behind her.

They don't know what the fuss was about and are keen to get her back in class teaching their children. Labour at least should be standing with them and, even better, should be raising a storm about the emptiness and hypocrisy of the Tories' moral crusade.



Some Brazilian workers are held in debt-bondage, little better off than serfs or slaves

# Brazil: the horror and the hope

**S**TARVING Brazilian slum dwellers have turned to cannibalism to survive. Adilson Soares, caught eating human brain by church missionaries, said: "I ate it because I had no choice. I had nothing else to stop the hunger."

The human remains were found by the starving on exposed rubbish tips. In the city of Olinda 1,200 families live in shacks and live by scavenging from the rubbish on a massive open dump. On the dump dwellers have found part or whole corpses from hospital waste or the victims of murder.

Like the vigilante gangs of off-duty police and shop keepers who roam Brazilian streets to massacre homeless street children, this new and horrible story exposes the savagery of capitalism. There is enough food in Brazil to feed everyone, but the starvation that drives people to cannibalism is not a need recognised by the market.

The market will supply the demand for luxury foods from the rich in the multi-story hotels of Brazil's city centres. The needs of the starving are ignored because they are not backed

by hard cash.

Under this capitalist system, most people live in poverty and misery. In a world where there is enough for everyone to eat millions starve.

Much of the West's development was built on slavery, colonialism and the exploitation of many of the world's poorer nations. Today Western banks are squeezing underdeveloped and developing nations for repayment of debts.

Yet class divisions are decisive. Brazil has its own millionaires, its own industrialists, its own bankers, its own very rich ruling class.

In Brazil's city centres there are flashy high-use offices and hotels while slums with no water or electricity house the workers, the creators of this wealth.

Brazil shows the horror of capitalism but out of this horror is growing a powerful workers' movement. Luis Inacio Da Silva, 'Lula' the presidential candidate of the mass workers' party, the PT, is favourite to win the presidential election in October.

Socialists across the world must do all we can to support the PT in its struggle against Brazilian capitalism.

# MSF: a union for youth?

By Nick, Leicester

**T**HIS weekend's conference (7-11 May) of MSF (the Manufacturing, Science & Finance union) should be attended by large numbers of young delegates.

After all, the industries in which MSF organises have a lot of young workers in them, and trainees and apprentices get free membership of the union.

But of course, it won't be. Most of the people who get to union conferences are older members, who've forgotten what it's like trying to survive on benefits when you're 18, or being forced to live at home when you're 17 because you can't even get benefits!

MSF has got a fairly good youth structure, with regional youth committees, and a National Youth Advisory Committee. The TUC's Youth Charter was based on a campaign initiated by this Committee. But a structure isn't enough. MSF should be campaigning among young people on issues which matter to us — rights to benefits, decent training and education, with real jobs at the end of the courses, fighting racism and discrimination in the workplace, and so on.

Young people will only join MSF, and get involved in its youth work, when it shows itself to be active, and worth joining and promoting. This year's conference should put youth recruitment and youth campaigning high up the union's agenda, and

young MSF members should hassle their branches' delegates to make

sure the whole union wakes up to the needs of its young members.

**Youth UNITED against racism**

**National Conference**

11.00-5.00 Saturday 14 May

Davenant Centre, Whitechapel, East London

• **Fighting fascism**

• **Ending police harassment**

• **Stopping racist attac0.ks**

**7**  
**YOUTH FIGHTBACK**  
**Rebellion**

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

**Editor:** Mark Sandell

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

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

**Youth Fightback is...**

## 25,000 at May Day festival

By Tunde, Battersea

**E**VERY YEAR the First of May marks the celebration of workers' rights and international solidarity.

In London, Wandsworth and Battersea Trades Council organised a big festival in conjunction with the South East Trades Union Congress, other trade unions and the Anti-Racist Alliance.

The day was excellent! Up to 25,000 people, mostly youth, came to give their support to the festival.

Community and political stalls were side by side, and local Labour Party members gave passers-by "Vote Labour" stickers.

It was great to see so many people present, particularly young people coming out to celebrate workers' rights and trade unions.

# Fighting the racists Sheffield says no to racism!

Leonie Kapadia, who chaired the mass rally against racism in Sheffield on Saturday 30 April, reports

**T**HIS WEEKEND Sheffield well and truly said No to Racism! After five months' work building for the Sheffield Against Racism and Fascism demonstration, our efforts were rewarded ten times over.

Over 750 people went on the march itself and during the rally a lively crowd of approximately a thousand people filled Barkers Pool, in front of the City Hall Steps, and cheered on the speakers.

Amrit Wilson spoke at the rally about the jute workers in India who have been left to starve by the Sheffield Football Club boss and former factory owner Reginald Brealey. Emteaz Hussain, who is involved in the campaign, went on to rouse the crowd with chants of "Brealey Out! Brealey Out!"

Ahmed Wahab spoke on behalf of the Javad Iqbal Defence Campaign. Javad, a taxi-driver, was sentenced to five years in jail recently for assaulting a passenger who refused to pay his fare. This sentence is drenched in racism. Similar cases involving white taxi drivers have not led to such savage sentences.

The Mayor of Sheffield, Labour councillor Qurban Hussain, spoke, as well as Roger Barton, Sheffield's Labour MEP. Mark Serwotka, an Alliance for Workers' Liberty member from Sheffield, spoke for the CPSA outlining their successful campaign to removed BNP Chesterfield organiser Simon Chadwick from the benefit office he was working in, where had had access to personal information on claimants. The crowd greeted this news with cheers.

The entire demonstration took place without incident. A couple of boneheads were spotted at one point, but they soon disappeared.

After the demonstration the Alliance for Workers' Liberty held a meeting about how to beat the racists.

An AWL member from Tower Hamlets UNISON branch spoke about the union's attitudes to the election of Derek Beackon in Millwall.

Mark Osborn put forward a socialist solution to end racism and fascism — our approach stood clearly out as the only logical and sensible way to beat the neo-nazis.

More than twenty people signed up to canvass for Labour against the BNP in Rochdale in the run-up to the local elections.

In the evening Sheffield Against Racism and

Fascism held a social at the Everyone's Centre in Sharrow.

On Sunday 1 May we took a minibus to Rochdale and took people out onto the street to canvass and to deliver leaflets for Labour candidates standing against BNP members in the local elections. We managed to persuade some sceptical first-time voters to vote Labour. We also stressed to some young people that with Beackon being elected by only 7 votes it was essential to make sure that this did not happen in Rochdale.

The AWL's role in all this activity has been paramount. Without *Socialist Organiser* and the AWL this demonstration would probably not have happened, and most people involved know that. Our strength has shown through, and hopefully dealt a blow to the neo-nazis



Marchers demanded jobs and homes for all, confidence in Sheffield. A continued campaign of activity by Sheffield Against Racism and Fascism will keep it that way.

**Sheffield Against Racism and Fascism will meet on 9 May at 7.30pm at the SADACCA. We will discuss the way forward and the issues SARF should be tackling. Come along, give the campaign your support and put your ideas forward.**

## All these workers must stay!

# Racist plot behind police swoop

By Garry Meyer

**70** BLACK PEOPLE, mainly employees of Southwark Council, were arrested early on Wednesday morning, 27 April, by police and Home Office officials. Six people have now been deported and 18 others may yet be deported.

For these raids, which were codenamed "Operation Elgar", Home Office officials compiled a list of staff who have African sounding names and then used this list in order to select their targets. This the Home Office explains as "six months of intensive investigations".

Margaret Nester, a Labour Councillor who has been working to defend those deported and detained, explains: "I heard that there was a white woman who works for Southwark Council who has an African sounding name and immigration officers and police went to her home. They went into the home of another lady who works in housing and ransacked it. Then they asked for her passport and National Insurance number and after seeing it they said to her 'sorry, we made a mistake.' That woman needs a public apology."

Margaret was particularly concerned about the conditions that people were being held under:

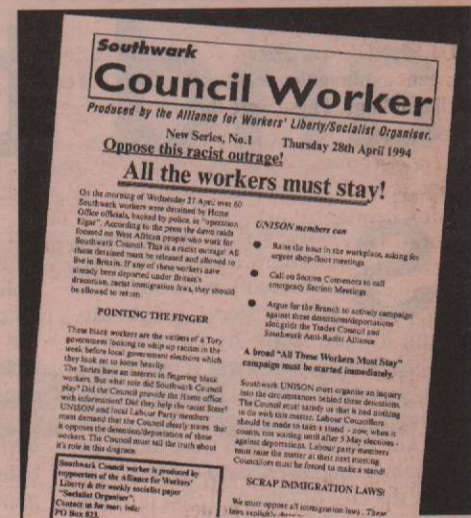
"We went down to the cells [Peckham police station.] There was a mother and baby in one cell, father, mother and a child in another cell, mother and son in another cell. Everybody was really distraught."

Thelma Mills, who works for Southwark Council, explains what happened to her: "I was at work and my daughter, half scared out of her wits, phoned me up to tell me that two police officers, four immigration officers and a van full of police had almost broken down the front door. She was so scared that she had to get out of the house and call me from a phone box."

"They left when they heard my daughter's Liverpool accent, saying that they had made a mistake. I wonder what might have happened if my daughter had a West African accent or if nobody had been there to answer the door."

These raids were planned so as to fuel racial tension in the run-up to this week's local elections. Simon Hughes, the Liberal Democrat MP in Southwark, was quoted in the press as saying: "for every illegal immigrant employed by Southwark Council, a legitimate local job seeker is deprived of a job." Southwark is a Labour-controlled council, and the racist Liberals are hoping to gain some wards or even control in the elections.

Issues of our Southwark Council Worker Bulletin were produced on Thursday 28 April and Tuesday 3 May. Hundreds of copies were distributed of each issue and workers were asked to sign a petition opposing the deportations of African workers. The UNISON branch reprinted most of the first issue as the official union response to the crisis.



## Workers of the world, unite!

### WHAT WE SAY

**ONE OF TWO** things: either we accept the State's right to refuse entry to people born in other countries, and to remove those that are here illegally; or we advocate the abolition of all immigration laws and campaign on it.

The AWL believes all immigration controls should be scrapped.

The case against this policy is this:

- These laws are racist in two respects. They explicitly discriminate against black people, focusing on denying entry to black West African, South Asian and Caribbean people.

The enforcement of these laws is carried out by a racist state, which — as in Southwark last week — targets black people.

If white workers allow black people to be discriminated against, we all lose. The labour movement becomes weaker.

- The history of immigration law should be known to every worker. Black workers were encouraged to come to Britain to work in the lowest paid jobs during the 1950s boom.

When the boom slowed down, the British ruling class began to close the door. After 1962 a series of laws were passed which clamped down on immigration, in particular on black immigration.

- One effect of immigration laws is to reinforce the largely artificial distinction between "us" and "our interests" and "them" and "foreign interests".

British workers have far more in common with workers from Nigeria, Jamaica and India than we do with the Tories and the British capitalist class.

If British workers support legislation which discriminates against black or foreign workers, we will undercut the international workers solidarity which is very necessary for struggles in Britain.

The world market is now so integrated that international workers' solidarity is not just a nice idea, but something which must increasingly become central to the development of our movement.

Trade unions and workers' political parties must make links abroad to counter the international ruling class which moves capital around the world at will.

Multinational capital can only effectively be combatted by a working class united across national boundaries.

- British workers must side with immigrant workers. If we do, we will be stronger. If we do not, we will all be weaker.

But will substantial immigration undercut British workers' living standards? Not if we fight together!

Our labour movement must fight not only for the abolition of immigration controls, but also for a cut in the working week, with no loss of pay, so that every worker in Britain has a job. We should make sure the British ruling class pays out.

In this way we all gain, at the expense of the bosses. And we unite, rather than allow different groups of workers to be played off against each



Southwark Anti-Racist Alliance took a protest petition to 10 Downing Street. Photo: Garry Meyer



# Ideas For Freedom

## Workers' Liberty '94 Friday 8- Sunday 10 July

Caxton House, Archway, North  
London

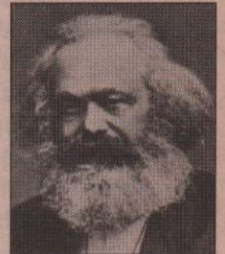
GUEST SPEAKER Neville Alexander, a leader of the South African Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), and a Workers' List candidate in the recent elections, will be speaking on Saturday 9 July at Workers' Liberty '94



## This year at Workers' Liberty...

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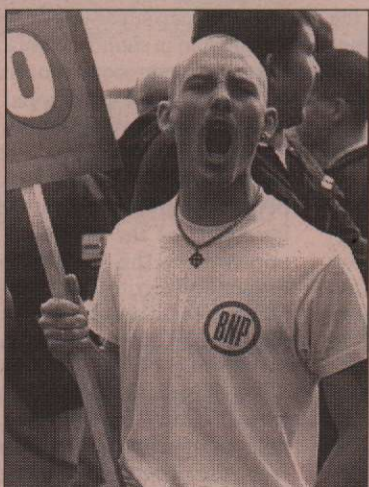
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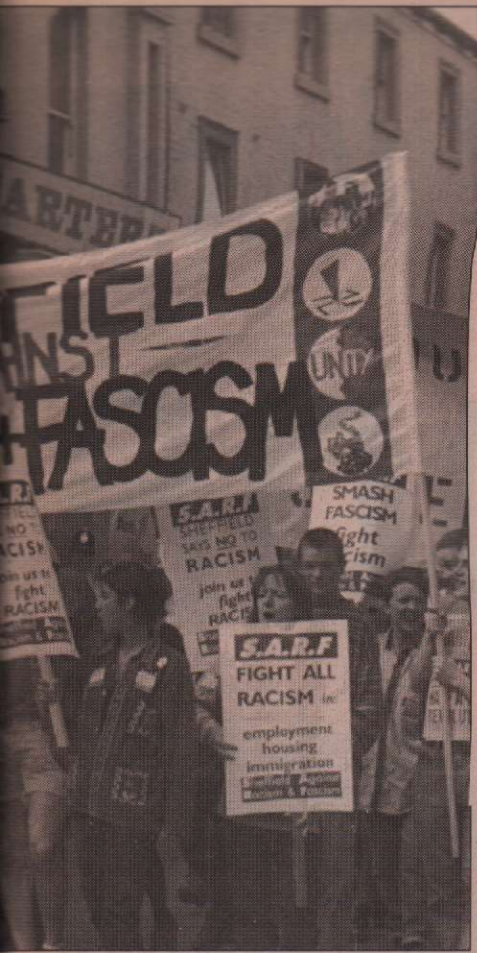
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Undercut racism. Photo: Paul Lashmar.

## Taking on the racist arguments

### IN THE WORKPLACE

DEFENDING African workers in Southwark meant explaining our case on the steps of council buildings. These were the arguments we had to tackle.

"These workers were here illegally. They should be deported."

Just because the police and the press say these workers were here illegally does not mean they were actually "illegal immigrants"! The Sun and the police lie!

But suppose some workers were breaking immigration laws. Does that matter?

Lots of laws are bad laws and not worthy of respect. Millions of people did not pay their poll tax and broke the law. They were right to do so.

The poll tax was an anti-working class law passed by the Tories. The deportation of these workers is racist and anti-human!

"But these laws must be respected because Britain would become overcrowded if millions moved here."

The population density in Britain is not high. It is ridiculous to suggest that if a few million extra people moved to Britain we would be packed like sardines in a can.

Do you mean that our services would become overstretched?

"Yes. Why should we pay for foreign workers using the Health Service and the benefits system?"

Who is suggesting that you pay for anything? We should not allow ourselves to be divided — black from white and British from foreign-born. And we can unite by demanding jobs, health, education and housing for all workers. We should demand the British capitalists pay any cost.

37% of the wealth in Britain is owned by 5% of the people. The bottom 50% — people like us! — own just 8%.

We should demand that the working week is cut to 35 hours with no loss of pay. We need a minimum wage and houses build or renovated for all those who need them.

Who pays? Make the rich, not other workers, pay the cost! Besides, workers from all over the European Community can now use the Health Service and no-one complains about this. Isn't the talk of "immigration controls" just a coded way of talking about black people?

If Southwark Council workers allow the state and the council to pick out 70 black fellow-workers for victimisation, then who will be next? Trade union activists on a picket line? Typists? We must stand united!

# The labour movement in Russia

# Trade unions

**For half a century "trade unions" in the USSR were police-state labour fronts of the fascist type whose prime function was to help control the working class.**

**Advocates of free trade unions were persecuted and jailed.**

**Strikes were savagely suppressed. The collapse of the central Stalinist bureaucracy has seen a mushrooming of independent trade unions, and also great changes in the role of the old pseudo-trade unions which have survived the once all-controlling Stalinist state.**

**This article by Boris Kagarlitsky and Renfrey Clarke has been reproduced from the US-Soviet Workers' Information Committee bulletin and has been abridged.**

IN THE seven years since Mikhail Gorbachev proclaimed his "policy of openness," countless aspects of Russian life and society have changed beyond recognition. The Soviet Union has disintegrated. The Communist Party, after expiring, has been reincarnated; after being banned, it has been restored.

The labour movement in Russia cannot boast of dramatic successes. Nevertheless, it is striking that the trade unions should have proven viable when other institutions have collapsed, and when times have not exactly been favourable for the labour movement in the West.

The traditional Soviet trade unions concerned themselves with questions of social welfare; organised workers' leisure-time activities (in particular, providing facilities for children); helped provide workers with consumer goods; and at times, consulted with enterprise managements on questions related to industrial safety.

The leader of the trade union at an enterprise was in effect an unofficial deputy director with responsibility for social matters.

The miners' strikes of the summer of 1989 showed that the old trade union structures were unable to cope with the challenges presented by the new conditions.

In most cases, the strikes were not accompanied by a mass exodus of members from the official union, or by attempts to form new union bodies. The miners in most cases continued to regard the existing union as worth belonging to, but quite irrelevant to labour conflicts. Workers' struggles were seen as the province of strike committees, which in the course of 1989 and 1990 arose in all the coal mining regions of the USSR. But as the months passed, the leaders of the strike committees came to understand the potential of the trade union as an organisational form. A section of the activists in the miners' movement took leading posts in the traditional union bodies. Eventually, other activists began establishing a new union.

The first generation of activists in the independent labour movement held numerous hopes that turned eventually into cruel disappointments. The leaders of the workers' committees took a suspicious attitude to the intelligentsia, but were readily co-opted by government apparatchiks and local populist leaders who used the miners to further their own intrigues. Within a few years many leaders of the strike committees became prosperous business entrepreneurs and state officials.

The slogan "The Workers' Movement Should Stay Out of Politics!" was used to justify a refusal to pursue an independent working-class political course, and later, to bind the workers' committees to the policies put forward by Yeltsin and his neo-liberal associates — policies

that were anti-worker in their very essence.

The emergence of alternative trade unions represented the first serious challenge to the "traditional" structures. Large numbers of "alternative" trade unions arose after 1989 and attracted worker activists who were dissatisfied with the bureaucratism and inactivity of the official trade union structures. The largest of the new organisations was the Independent Union of Miners (NPG). Somewhat earlier, the Association of Socialist Trade Unions (SOTSPROF) had been formed. The word "socialist" in this name was later tactfully changed to "social,"

*"The miners' strikes of 1989 showed that the old trade union structures were unable to cope with the challenges presented by the new conditions."*

and then dropped entirely. This reflected the organisation's political evolution. The left socialists and anarcho-syndicalists who had been active in SOTSPROF during its early days were purged from the leadership.

The new trade unions immediately launched a furious struggle against their traditional counterparts, which they saw as their main adversaries. Before long the "alternative" union leaders, who had originally acted as oppositionists criticising the old unions for their links with the state, themselves began appealing to the government in hopes of winning support against their rivals. The anti-communism of most of the "alternative" union federations drove them into the embraces of extreme neo-liberals.

After the collapse of the USSR, when the Russian government set its sights openly on broad privatisation and the construction of capitalism, the leaders of the "alternative" unions gave their backing to any decision made by the Russian authorities. They ignored the fact that many of these decisions were openly hostile to workers' interests.

It is not surprising that the new trade unions failed to win the majority of workers to their side. Even where a significant exodus from the old unions took place, people were in no hurry to join the new organisations. Political purges, splits and financial scandals in the "alternative" unions began attracting publicity. Press reports spoke of the NPG having received money from the Russian government for the purpose of organising the anti-Gorbachev strike in the spring of 1991. NPG members publicly accused their leaders of corruption and of misappropriating money. Analogous scandals took place in

SOTSPROF and smaller organisations.

As the conflict grew between the Russian authorities and the leadership of the traditional trade unions, the "alternative" unions began to enjoy increasing government support. In the Russian Trilateral Commission on Labour Relations, the number of places allotted to the "alternative" unions was out of all proportion to their membership. The leadership bodies of SOTSPROF were provided with office space in state buildings (for example, in the Moscow Soviet), and the state-owned mass media gave these unions generous publicity. The "alternative" unions also received substantial support from the American trade union federation, the AFL-CIO.

During the 1992 strike by teachers and health workers, representatives of SOTSPROF appealed to workers in these sectors — admittedly, without success — to refrain from joining the stoppage. After two years, the "old" and "new" unions had effectively swapped roles. The "alternative" union organisations merged increasingly with the authorities, while the traditional unions took on the role of an independent opposition force.

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the traditional unions themselves. The All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions was abolished, and the General Confederation of Trade Unions was established to take its place. After the collapse of the USSR, this was transformed into an "international association". The Russian unions set up the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR) headed by Igor Klochkov. The traditional unions continued to play the role of consumer co-operatives and of a "safety net," helping their members solve everyday problems that ranged from buying cheap sugar to finding places for children in summer camps; in conditions of acute economic crisis, these functions of the traditional unions were valued more and more highly. At the same time, the unions took on new and unfamiliar tasks. New people, many of whom had never been part of the old bureaucracy, appeared in the leadership of the branch and territorial organisations. Some of these new leaders were people who had been active in the strikes of 1989 and 1990.

The changes in the trade union followed a contradictory course, but for millions of people who were suffering from the economic crisis and from the government's policies, the FITUR remained the sole all-Russian structure through which something at least might be achieved. The most radical renewal took place in the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions (MFP). The MFP's new chairperson, Mikhail Shmakov, immediately let it be known that he intended to turn the federation into an influential social force, capable of defending its positions against the authorities and the leadership of the FITUR.

Shmakov, who turned 45 in 1993, is a typical representative of the new generation of union leaders who took

up their posts between 1989 and 1992. As these people came to prominence, rapid changes began to occur. The new leaders sought to break as rapidly as possible with the past of the "official" trade unions. They brought with them a new style and new ideas. Radical left activists who earlier had been making furious attacks on "the old trade union bureaucracy" were soon to be found among the consultants and officials of the trade unions.

One of the first such people to go to work for the trade unions was Andrei Isaev, a prominent Moscow anarchist and organiser of some of the first opposition meetings in 1987 and 1988. As chief editor of the MFP's newspaper *Solidarnost*, he transformed it in the space of a few months from a dull and unpopular organ into a lively and original publication. The print-run of *Solidarnost* leapt from 5,000 in August 1991 to 30-40,000 in 1993. The readers came to include not only union activists and officials, but also members of the intelligentsia searching for an alternative to the liberal experiments.

In an effort to define the position of the trade unions, Isaev advanced a thesis on the need for a "left conservatism." "We weren't bad revolutionaries," he wrote in *Solidarnost*. Now, however, it was time for leftists to become conservatives. In order to defend the welfare state and the real social conquests of the Soviet period, leftists had not only to challenge the new authorities, to protest and to summon people to struggle, but also to reaffirm historical traditions.

After August 1991, when the Communist Party was suspended and the structures of the USSR collapsed the trade unions remained almost the only mass organisation in the country. More than 80 per cent of union members remained faithful to their organisations despite the changes that had taken place. The FITUR and the regional federations retained their property and incomes. Compared with the chaos and corruption prevailing in Russia, the trade union bureaucracy, which was accustomed to precisely observing traditional norms, seemed a model of honesty and efficiency. However, the trade union leadership lacked both a clear strategy and a full understanding of its own strength.

At first the FITUR leaders were ready to give critical support to the Russian government, while the MFP leadership called for a more radical and independent course. But as the social costs of the reforms became obvious, the FITUR officialdom underwent a radicalisation. The trade unions fought for the indexation of wages, and for the setting of the minimum wage at a level equal to the subsistence minimum income. Privatisation, accompanied by job losses and often, by the shutting down enterprise union organisations, aroused acute dissatisfaction among unionists.

The authorities held talks with the trade unions, and made various concessions on matters that were not crucial to the government's pro-capitalist strategies. However, the wage



Boris Yeltsin

# ssia

# under Yeltsin



Workers' strength: general strike in Yerevan, capital of Soviet Armenia, calling on Gorbachev to unite Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia

indexation law adopted in 1991 was not observed. Moreover, the Finance Ministry made a deliberate practice of refusing to provide state-owned enterprises, and even other government departments, with the funds they needed to pay wages on time. This could not fail to radicalise the trade union movement.

While striving to end the dominance of communist ideology in the trade union movement, the FITUR leaders constantly stressed that the unions needed to stay out of politics and to keep their distance from political parties. Nevertheless, the heightened conflict with the government showed that trade unions could not remain apart from the political process. At a mass meeting of MFP activists in October 1992, Andrei Isaev called for "a new course and new reforms," which the trade unions needed to advance in place of "the failed reforms of the liberal Gaidar team."

The concept which Isaev and other labour movement radicals put forward involved a mixed economy with a strong state sector capable of becoming the "locomotive of development." A further element was an agreement between the government, enterprise managements and the trade unions to ensure control over prices and wages.

The FITUR leadership faced the problem of finding political allies willing to aid its struggle for a new course. Klochkov and a number of other trade union leaders spoke out in support of the initiatives of the centrist Civic Union. Meanwhile, many trade union activists were involved in moves to establish the Party of Labour. The trade unions joined with the Civic Union in campaigning to preserve

functioning industries and economic links between regions of the country, and in calling for the development of the internal market. However, the Civic Union rested above all on enterprise managers, while the task of the FITUR was to defend the interests of hired workers. The Party of Labour sought to formulate a programme that expressed these interests, calling for the defence of the public sector, for full employment, and for social welfare provisions.

*"The left socialists and anarcho-syndicalists who had been active in SOTSPROF during its early days were purged from the leadership."*

Meanwhile, the trade unions and the government in the summer of 1993 were effectively at war with one another. In the Urals region factory whistles sounded and defence plant workers gathered for mass meetings, while in Rostov Province in the south coal miners held a one-day warning stoppage. In the Maritime District in the far east, a general strike took place on August 10. Ships that had not been unloaded lay in the ports and sounded their sirens. The crews of foreign ships replied with their own sirens, expressing solidarity with the

strikers.

The main issue behind these struggles was the violation by the government of the general wage agreement that had been negotiated with the FITUR. At the meetings, workers demanded not just the observance of this document, but that the government should resign. In the first ten days, one and a half million people took part in collective actions.

Unlike earlier waves of strikes and demonstrations, the struggles during the summer of 1993 were led by the trade unions and took place on the scale of the country as a whole. For the first time since 1905, workers were mounting protest action simultaneously in the most diverse sectors and regions, advancing general, all-Russian demands.

The success of the traditional unions in drawing millions of their members into action in the summer of 1993 took the government by surprise. Still, the fact remained that the union leaders and activists were operating without a clear strategy and programme of action.

However much the FITUR suffered as a result of "trade union bureaucracy," its most dangerous malady was arguably spontaneism. The demands which the trade unions were putting forward in mid-1993 were ones which had arisen spontaneously from below; the higher echelons of the union leadership simply recorded these demands, summarised them, and presented them to the government. The strength of the collective protests was in large measure the result of the responsiveness to rank and file sentiment. But the failure to develop a consistent analysis, and the lack of a coherent political project,

represented crucial weaknesses.

Relying largely on trial and error, the unions consistently lagged behind the development of events. The FITUR let almost a year go by without declaring its opposition to the government's course. While the MFP immediately found a niche in constructive opposition, the all-Russian union federation tried to maintain a line of critical support for the reforms. This was while Gaidar and his team were implementing a programme

*"As the social costs of the reforms became obvious, the FITUR officialdom underwent a radicalisation."*

which had been dictated by the International Monetary Fund, and which required the smashing of the trade unions as effective organs of workers' self-defence. Labour movement activists in Russia discovered the price of these errors from their own experience.

In the course of 1993 the FITUR repeated the path which the Moscow unions had traversed in 1992. Meanwhile, the MFP had become far less radical. The MFP leaders had become hostages of their own success. With their determined actions in

1991 and 1992 they had won concessions from the city government, but now they were having to concentrate on preserving their gains and on "not rocking the boat."

The events of October 1993 resulted in a serious defeat for the Russian trade unions. Labour struggles practically ceased while the political conflicts in Moscow were being fought out. After the parliament was overthrown the government confiscated the social welfare fund from the trade unions, and in some regions the authorities tried to seize union assets.

The collective actions in August had to a significant degree unfolded spontaneously, and in September they began just as spontaneously to abate. In August it had been possible to foresee two scenarios: an optimistic one, in which the unions mastered the situation and became an important social force, and a pessimistic one in which the unions lost control over events and became incapable of effective action. Everything developed according to the pessimistic scenario.

After Yeltsin's Decree no. 1400, which declared the parliament dissolved, Klochkov was faced with a choice. If the trade unions failed to threaten strikes in favour of the constitution, no-one would take their declarations seriously. But if the unions called for strikes, they would not be able to organise them successfully. The result was the adoption of an ambiguous call for protest actions "up to the use of strikes"; this failed to bind anyone to a concrete course of action, and frightened nobody.

Seeing that the FITUR was helpless, the authorities launched their next onslaught, stripping the unions of control over the social welfare funds and threatening the FITUR with dissolution.

The Russian government does not appear to want the complete abolition of the FITUR, since there are numerous everyday problems which the authorities are simply unable to solve without the help of the trade union apparatus.

However, the government succeeded in intimidating the trade union leaders. After the bombardment of the "White House," panic broke out among the union officialdom. A congress of the FITUR was held, and a new leadership was elected. MFP leader Shmakov became chairperson of the all-Russian federation. Shmakov and his colleagues stressed the need for moderation, while at the same time striving to bring the situation under control.

Will the attempts to reform the FITUR prove successful? The pressure for the renovation and democratisation of union structures will increase, and to the extent that this process goes ahead, the effectiveness of workers' action will multiply.

*This article was taken from the March 1994 issue of the US-Soviet Workers' Information Committee which can be contacted c/o PO Box 1890, Stuyvesant Station, New York, New York 10009.*

# Life in the nightmare city



BBC2  
Sunday 24 April

Alan Johnson  
reviews  
*Arena Special*  
on Cindy Sherman

**C**INDY SHERMAN, born 1954, is a New York artist best known for her "film stills" — still images posed to look as if they were taken from an ongoing narrative. The subject of the stills is always herself in a bewildering variety of situations/characters/identities: a prospectus of stereotypical media images of women.

Firstly, her work is a sideswipe at the notion, popular today on the right and amongst some radical feminism, that there is some womanly "essence." By presenting such a catalogue of feminine identities she is denying that any is the "true self," that there is a "true femininity." The fracturing of personality into splinters is her subject.

Secondly, her work is a critical commentary upon the mass media and, more recently, upon the art-historical tradition itself, and the ways both have represented women. She forces us



Untitled film still 1979

to think about the way the mass media build up such images/identities, and how difficult it is to think or live or define ourselves outside their terms. One of the first generation which grew up "watching TV all the time," Sherman says: "Any woman from that period was some kind of role model. It frustrated me ultimately in terms of what was expected of me as a young girl turning into a woman."

Thirdly, more recently, her work is a struggle to capture the fragility of the alienated individual life in the modern metropolis. Often frightened to leave her New York apartment, she is obsessed with the *unease* of the city, and with the horrors our culture churns up but buries beneath the sitcom and the soundbite.

What makes Sherman better than most is her refusal to celebrate the advertiser's world. I think it is this critical relationship to the "mega-visual tradition" which led the art critic, Robert Hughes, so often the scourge of the new media artists, to say: "Probably the only American artist of this generation who managed to introduce a real shudder of feeling into media-based work was Cindy Sherman, enacting her parade of gender caricatures, bad dreams and grotesqueries for the camera."

Sherman's work records the pressures women face. As Judith Williamson has put it: "So many of Sherman's women look as if they were trodden on by men, fate, or a B-movie plot." But no escape is offered by Sherman in the work itself. This is a protest without answers. She can see the way surfaces are socially constructed and form identity but she seems to see no escape from surfaces. As such it is typically, if you want to put it this way, "postmodern."

The attempt to use forms, styles and materials of the "mega-visual tradition" in art is controversial. When the critic Peter Fuller was still a marxist he argued a persuasive case against it. Art could be radical, he said, because



Untitled 1985

of its expressive potential. This potential enables art to "participate in the construction of what Marcuse called 'the cosmos of hope'."

In other words, art could be "a form of materially realised social dreaming" in which existing conditions are attacked and alternatives held out. Consumer capitalism threatened to "monopolise and banalise" our social dreams to the purpose of "selling us vodka and bath salts." The mega-visual tradition was the means to do this. Its uses by artists such as Andy Warhol and Pop Art were not radical

in any way but stood for a *collapse* "open armed before the mega-visual tradition" of consumer capitalism.

Sherman uses the forms of mega-visual culture to tell a tale about the sickness beneath the gloss. For example, she produced a series of "centre-fold" images, using fake body parts, to force the viewer to question their relationship to such images: "They were meant to resemble in format the centrefold but in content I wanted a man opening up the magazine to look in expectation of something lascivious but then feel like the violator that

they would be."

She does not simply trade in what Fuller called "the banalising lies of the mega-visual tradition," she leads us — by using her own body as a form of expression — to precisely the heresy that the mega-visual tradition does offer only "banalising lies."

Sherman's work does not participate in the "cosmos of hope" — which Marcuse saw as art's radical potential. There is no "social dreaming" in her work. But she does remind us that the society in which we live today is a nightmare.

## The state of English cricket

### THIS SPORTING LIFE

By Gary Scott

**N**OBODY COULD doubt that English cricket is in a sorry state. Under the management of Keith Fletcher England have only won two out of thirteen games. They have lost ten games, and one of those defeats was against the Sri Lankans.

An article in the *Guardian* by Matthew Engel examined the various reasons offered by journalists to explain England's demise. These include: the archaic structures of the game, the impact of the one-day game, the impact of foreign players, and social factors — kids preferring to play with computer games, kids being unable to play on the streets, etc.

The *Guardian* journalist blames one-day cricket. He reckons it forces "young players who are still developing their batting and bowling techniques to switch constantly between utterly different modes of play."

In this year's *Wisden* the former Australian captain Ian Chappell considers all this "codswallop." "If young players are taught properly," he

says, "the smarter ones learn to adapt their thinking."

I agree with Ian Chappell. In fact, I would go further and say that one-day cricket has been the saviour of the professional game. It has vastly broadened the game's appeal and encouraged more people to play. Far from one-day cricket hindering the development of young players, young players who have to improvise and learn new skills ought to improve.

Establishment figure Micky Stewart, concerned at the weakness of cricket leagues in the country, has proposed setting up a London league. I believe cricket has to develop at the grass roots; it can't be forced on people. People have to want to play!

Stewart's proposal seems to me to be a bit Maoist. I have visions of teenage boys wearing shell suits being rounded up and herded into cricket nets to play cricket at the point of a gun.

One of the commonest reasons given for the demise of English cricket is foreigners taking the place of young players in league teams. In Somerset laws have been brought in to restrict foreign players.

Foreign cricketers have been playing in the leagues for decades. CLR James writes in *Beyond a Boundary* about West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine, playing for Nelson in the Lancashire League in 1929. He was welcomed by the

Lancashire crowds, as have been other West Indian players up to the present day. I would suggest that foreign cricketers have aided the development of young English cricketers. West Indian batsman Jimmy Adams has played in the same team — Eppleton — as promising young Durham cricketers Jimmy Daley and Sean Birbeck.

Blaming foreigners, apart from being xenophobic, is also hypocritical. There were no complaints from Somerset when Joel Garner and Viv Richards were winning them trophies. After Brian Lara scored the highest number of runs by a batsman in a test match, Warwickshire Cricket Club were inundated with phone calls — not from people complaining about a foreigner coming to play for them, but from people wanting to join the club.

The reason why England lose so many games is quite simple. The teams they play against play better cricket.

In countries like India and Pakistan cricket is much more popular and played by many more people than it is in England. Other teams play with much more flair and exuberance. They play much more innovative and attacking cricket.

In *Beyond a Boundary* CLR James identifies a period in English cricket when the game was played this way. It was the period between 1890

and 1914 — the Golden Age.

Towards the end of his life the two English cricketers he most admired were David Gower and Ian Botham, throw-backs to the Golden Age.

CLR also identifies a state of mind in English cricket as it was played in the fifties. He calls this state of mind "the Welfare State of Mind": playing safe. Nowadays we have the Welfare State of Mind made worse by Majorism: spinelessness and indecisiveness.

Having said this, however, I don't think the picture is as bad as it has been painted by cricket correspondents. While many cricket correspondents and establishment figures whine about the decline of English cricket, they ignore a number of positive developments.

Cricket may not be played much in London and may be in a sorry state in public schools and universities, but outside the Home Counties it is thriving. Simon Hughes has written of a cricket "renaissance" in Yorkshire. Durham Cricket Club, with a membership of over 6,000, is one of the best supported clubs in the country. Glamorgan's membership more than trebled after last year's success.

Many more women are playing cricket now than ever before. While England men were being hammered by the Aussies, England women were winning the World Cup.

# The Buddha of Utopia



Matt Cooper  
reviews

*The Little Buddha*

Directed by  
Bernardo Bertolucci

**E**VERYONE knows one — those people who used to be on the left, but who as their lives wore on, made peace with the system. To meet a social or psychological need to appear as dissenters, these people often turn to some sort of irrationality — they develop a wear-on-the-sleeve green fetish, or become single issue campaign groupies, or worst of all fall into the intellectual twilight of mysticism.

Bernardo Bertolucci, once a self-styled Marxist and maker of some decent political cinema, notably the epic *1900*, sadly seems to have fallen into the last category. This is a double loss, since Bertolucci's political demise is paralleled by a decline in his film-making talents.

Bertolucci's new film, *The Little Buddha*, is a reflection of the filmmaker's new-found identity as an "amateur Buddhist". Its only redeeming feature is that Bertolucci has not lost his touch for sensual and sumptuous use of light and colour.

The story follows a Buddhist priest, Lama Norbu (played by Ying Ruodung, in the film's only acting to rise above the ordinary), in his search for the reincarnated soul of his dead teacher who, it seems was a very important Lama indeed. One of the main candidates in this quest is a young boy in Seattle, Jesse (Alex Wiesendanger). Invited back to the priest's

monastery in Bhutan, Jesse's parents inexplicably agree. Dad (Chris Isaak) accompanies the son — leaving mum (Bridget Fonda) at home.

Intercut with this story is the child's view of the myth of Prince Siddharta (Keanu Reeves) on his path to becoming the Enlightened One — Buddha. The Prince lives a cosseted and insulated life, surrounded only by youth and beauty. When he accidentally stumbles upon death and suffering, the young man finds compassion and dedicates himself to ending the torment of human existence through a lot of meditation, compassion and belief that all things are transitory.

The film is an overly glossy and dull advertisement for a kitsch New Age version of Buddhism.

Possibly the film might have communicated some insights into the human condition by using Buddhism as a foil, but it doesn't even try.

Jesse's odyssey is meant to shadow that of Siddharta. He leaves his comfortable Seattle home to witness the cruelty and suffering of life in a poor Himalayan state. However, Bertolucci's Buddhism is very amateurish. Bhutan appears more beautiful than Seattle. There is neither death nor suffering on show in either city. The film supplies a picture postcard both of Bhutan and Buddhism — one that could be lapped up by, well, Western materialistic culture.

*The Little Buddha* neither enlightens nor entertains. It merely evangelises for a vacuous New Age pseudo-religion refined from Buddhism, a "designer religion" to fill the empty lives of the middle classes of West Coast America and beyond. All opportunities to use its folklore as metaphors for modern existence are missed, creating a film that is nothing more than bland twaddle. A serious film about Buddhism might have its problems: this is unbearable.



Dealing with human suffering — by lots of meditation

*John Locke: rebel against absolute monarchy*

## Founder of liberalism



Geoff Ward  
reviews

*Citizen Locke*

Channel 4  
Saturday 31 March

**T**HE DRAMA *Citizen Locke* was screened as part of C4's "Bite the Ballot" series, looking at the workings of democracy.

With John Sessions playing the part of the 17th century empiricist philosopher, John Locke, the pro-

gramme was a sort of John Locke for beginners with a love interest thrown in.

The action was set on board the ship returning him back to England from his exile in Holland.

His lover, Lady Mordaunt, goaded Locke into expounding his political ideas — seemingly because they turned her on.

John Locke is credited with writing the founding text of liberal political theory — his *Second Treatise*.

In its day the work was considered seditious, and initially Locke published it anonymously. In it Locke attacked absolute monarchy and

defended the idea of just revolution against tyrannical rulers. He argued that people have certain inalienable rights and that there should be no taxation without representation — dangerous stuff, considering not many people then even had the right to vote.

Locke had felt safe to return after Parliament had rebelled against Catholic King James II (who wanted to restore absolute monarchy), replacing him with the Protestant William III (who accepted a limited monarchy under parliamentary control).

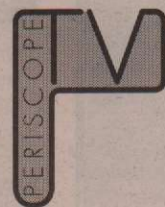
The programme offered us only a

few brief snapshots of Locke's ideas, and so it couldn't fully convey the radical changes that took place in his views.

In dialogue between Locke and a young midshipman we got a hint that by then he was evolving ideas which were whittling away some of the foundations upon which the *Second Treatise* was based.

This drama was set in February 1689. After his return, all traces of democratic argument seem to have disappeared from Locke's public life, and he ended up calling for the restoration of England's ancient constitution.

All criminals great  
and... great



Fred Bloggs  
previews  
the week's viewing

A FIVE-PART SERIES on the Watergate scandal begins on Sunday 8 May, BBC2, 8.50pm. Newly uncovered evidence shows what everybody knew already, that Nixon was up to his neck in corruption and dirty tricks. While the people who broke into the Democratic Party headquarters where convicted, all Nixon had to do was resign the presidency.

*Horizon* on Monday 9 May, BBC2, 8pm, looks at the discovery by Professor Gerald Fleming in 1991 of secret plans for the construction of the Nazi concentration camps. If this information had been available earlier, not only would it have made the Holocaust revisionist historians' work much harder, it might also have led to the guilty being punished.

### Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY meetings

**LEICESTER**

Monday 9 May  
 "How to beat the fascists"  
 Speaker: Mark Sandell  
 1.00, Leicester University

**GLASGOW**

Tuesday 10 May  
 "Where we stand: the politics of the AWL"  
 7.30, City Halls

**LANCASTER**

Tuesday 10 May  
 "After the elections, what next for anti-racists?"  
 Speaker: Mark Osborn  
 1.00, Student Union

Tuesday 10 May

"Where next after the elections?"  
 Speaker: Mark Osborn  
 7.30, Farmers Arms

**MANCHESTER**

Wednesday 11 May  
 "Where next after the May elections?"  
 Speaker: Mark Osborn  
 7.30, Unicorn pub, Church Street

**LEEDS**

Thursday 12 May  
 "Can we make Labour fight?"  
 7.30, Adelphi pub

**NOTTINGHAM**

Thursday 19 May  
 "How can we beat racism?"  
 7.30, ICC, Mansfield Road

## Should boxing be banned?

# It's not too dangerous to be legal

THOSE IN favour of banning boxing will use the death of Bradley Stone to strengthen their argument. Another death in the ring does not change the basic arguments but only illustrates what everyone in the debate agrees on — boxing is dangerous. But so are many other things,

including virtually all sports, smoking, crossing the road, etc. Clearly we are not in favour of banning everything dangerous. Presumably the difference with boxing is that a higher proportion of competitors suffer long term or permanent damage than competitors in

other sports. But many thousands of people take up boxing as a professional or amateur sport but suffer no long-term health effects. If the argument against boxing is a health one, then some sort of line needs to be drawn marking out when something becomes too dangerous to be

legal and the argument needs to be extended to other activities that fall the wrong side of the line. Opponents of the sport also use a crude economic argument. Because boxing is hyped up and run in the interests of the capitalist promoters and lulls working-class youth into the

ring with an expectation of wealth and glory, they say we are against it. This sort of argument can be applied to virtually all activity in capitalist society. And in any case most youth who take up boxing probably don't expect to be the next Mohammed Ali. For most youth it is something to do that is exciting.

Mark Sandell in his letter last week drew an analogy with drug gang warfare, saying, "the fewer working-class people who try to get out of poverty by battering other working-class people, the better." This is simply not what happens in boxing. Boxers see their sport as a competition between two consenting people to see who is better at their sport. It is not a fight to the death and is not at all like a shoot-out or a cock-fight where death is the aim. Most boxing bouts do not end in a knock-out or injury.

Personally I don't like the sport. I would like to see it made safer and control taken out of the hands of the promoters, but those that take part in it get something out of it and it is not fundamentally about beating shit out of your opponent.

Those that oppose boxing do so on the basis of making moral judgements on what they see in the news (i.e. the big headlines) and not on the basis of what goes on in the overwhelming majority of boxing competitions or even what the competitors feel about their sport.

Boxing is brutal and does show a bad side of capitalist society, but it is not fundamentally different from many other activities.

Richard Love, South London

# Delirium à la carte

**EYE ON THE LEFT**

By Glen Fiddich

"BREATHTAKING" is the most charitable term to describe the analysis of the South African elections contained in the current issue of the Scottish Socialist Movement Bulletin.

Author of the article in question is one Brian Heron, a long standing IMG and *Socialist Outlook* supporter. Despite being a good few sandwiches short of a full picnic-hamper, Heron fancies himself as a theoretician.

Hot on the heels of his recent whacky suggestion that the labour movement in Scotland should proclaim UDI comes his startling analysis of last week's South African elections.

According to Brian, international finance capital was quaking in its boots at the prospect of the elections: "The City of London and its ageing yuppies scowl at the meaning of April 28th.

Madison Avenue, Park Lane and the Boulevard St. Germain are not ringing with cheers."

Of course, I do not pretend to be as well acquainted as comrade Heron is with the tittle-tattle and the winebars of the Boulevard St. Germain. Nor do I share his access to the after-dinner banter in the gambling casinos of Park Lane.

I am aware, however, that the Johannesburg stock exchange hit record levels in the run-up to the elections. I also note that last Saturday's *Guardian* reports: "Investors are set to back South Africa. At least £15 billions of foreign investment is expected to pour into the country once the general election has been completed successfully."

Indeed, with Brian Heron's heroes in the ANC pledged to preserve capitalism and contain working-class militancy, is it any wonder that investors round the world want the elections to run according to plan?

It may well be, however, that comrade Heron's blue-chip

acquaintances in the Boulevard St. Germain do not share in such enthusiasm. In which case, I for one will not be entrusting them with my investments portfolio.

"The meaning of April 28th," Brian continues, "is that great difficulties can be overcome by great movements of great people."

Amongst the "good questions" left unanswered by the elections of 28 April are: "Which class rules the state, the government and inside the South African economy?"

Anyone possessing even a minimal acquaintance with the pro-capitalist policies of the ANC will be able to provide Brian with a ready answer to this question.

Brian's own answer to his question is: "That is for April 29th. Today we join the cheer of hope and triumph for the victory of April 28th that is echoing round the world."

In other words: let's not bother about working-class politics during the elections. Let's be uncritical cheerleaders for the ANC today, and think

again about politics tomorrow.

If only the bourgeoisie displayed such a carefree attitude towards elections as does comrade Heron!

Fortunately, not all South African socialists decided to liquidate their politics for the duration of the elections in the manner of comrade Heron. Candidates of the Workers' List Party stood on a platform of independent working-class politics.

Amongst the supporters of these candidates were the South African co-thinkers of *Socialist Outlook* — which makes it a trifle disloyal on the part of Brian not to even mention them, let alone call for a vote for them.

But I suppose that's the price you have to pay if, in the manner of comrade Heron, you're trying to jump into bed with a collection of nondescript Scottish Stalinist splinter groups.

All in all, after reading Brian's article what are you left to say apart from: "Garçon, make mine un double!"

## Who was Jesus Christ?

# Jesus of Nazareth?



By Rob Dawber

MATTHEW (2:23):

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

This comes at the end of Matthew's account of Mary and Joseph fleeing Israel with the baby to escape Herod and returning on hearing of his death.

Mark (1:9): "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan."

Luke (1:26): "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth."

As with Matthew, this is part of Luke's account of the birth of Jesus.

And the first mention in John is (1:45):

"Philip findeth Nathaneal, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Nowhere in the Old Testament is there a town mentioned by the name of Nazareth, least of all Luke's or Matthew's "city." Nor is such a place mentioned in the Talmud or the writings of Josephus, the only other records we have. If there was such a place at that time it could only have been an insignificant village. And it is as a village that Julius Africanus, a Christian writing in Palestine in the 3rd Century, mentions it. Otherwise it isn't until the 4th Century when pilgrimages to Israel began apace that Nazareth appears in the records, growing into the city that it is today.

Yet the name 'Jesus the Nazorean' had to be explained by the Gospel writers, as did the fact that followers of this

person were likewise known as Nazoreans, Nazarenes or other variations such as Nazorites. The 'Acts of the Apostles', following on from the four Gospels, uses these names. It would be odd for the adherents of someone to be named after the hometown or temporary residence of that someone, but it would seem that the Gospel writers, writing outside Israel and ignorant of Palestinian geography, couldn't come up with anything better.

In the Old Testament, in the Book of Numbers, Chapter 6, there is an account of the "vow of the Nazorite":

"And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazorite, to separate themselves unto the Lord."

It continues with an account of how the Nazorite will separate 'himself' from wine, strong drink, grapes, vine trees and not cut his hair. Various rules are laid out, laws of sacrifice specified, and details of what the Nazorite may and may not do at

certain times and in certain situations. All of this revolves around the idea of 'separation'. It concludes:

"And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel: and I will bless them."

The Book of Numbers is one of the first five books of the Old Testament, held by believers to be the Law or Torah and written by Moses himself — but that is another story.

The word Nazorite or Nazorean comes from a Hebrew root 'nozrim,' meaning to keep or guard knowledge or secrets. Thus the name presumably reflects this strict observance of the law of Moses, God's Law, practised by this group. Interestingly enough Jesus is recorded in the Gospels as saying:

"Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus thus believes that the scribes and Pharisees are not observant enough. And that Jesus was a member of a fanatical Jewish sect that practised

strict observance of the Law, and on that basis condemned the scribes and Pharisees, is altogether more credible as an explanation of the name Nazarene than the idea that he and his followers were named after a 'city' for the existence of which, at that time, there is no evidence.

The Nazarenes weren't the only Jews around at that time prepared to sacrifice their lives and livelihoods, living in poverty, for what they believed to be a fight for the realisation of God's Law on earth. There were Zealots, Essenes, Sicarii ('Dagger Men'), Ebionites, Mandeans and other messianists. These weren't necessarily different groups with a defined membership but more probably varying names for those prepared at different times, as political fortunes changed, to make a sacrifice for the Kingdom of Heaven. Listed in the Gospels as among Jesus's disciples is one Simon Zelote as well as a certain Judas Iscariot — a version of Sicarii.

Next week: what does "Jesus Christ" mean?

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# UNISON should take the lead in the public sector fightback

## PUBLIC SECTOR PAY

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON

THE PAY REVOLT threatened by the TUC has so far come to nothing. The TUC at one point came close to calling a public-sector-wide day of action in April. But despite huffing and puffing the TUC backed off.

Last month the TUC suppressed

its own opinion poll which showed that 55% of the public would back a public sector wide one-day strike.

In this situation it is essential that the lead is taken by the TUC's component public sector unions.

UNISON, at its Local Government Conference at the start of March, was dominated by discussion on cuts and pay and the need for a day of action as the starting point for a fightback.

A proposal initiated by Socialist

Organiser supporters for a national ballot on a one day strike over cuts and the pay freeze was narrowly defeated on a card vote.

In its place the Executive supported the idea of a "day of action against cuts and pay freeze. Where a legitimate trade dispute exists branches are encouraged to ballot the whole of the membership on strike action for that day".

This proposal was motivated in order to defeat our proposal for a one day strike. Despite this it

should be used to build as effective a day of action as possible. It is a step forward that UNISON are now publicly committed to a day of action.

The problem is that since Conference passed the motion nothing has been heard. Now the TUC is talking about a day of action — on a Saturday!

UNISON activists need to push branches, shop stewards committees etc. to ask the Service Group Executive what happened to the

day of action?

Motion:

"This Branch/Steward's Committee/Meeting expresses concern that nothing has appeared to be done to carry UNISON's policy to organise a day of action over cuts and the pay freeze.

At the start of March at UNISON's Local Government conference, a proposal for a "day of action against cuts and the pay freeze" was passed. Such a day of

action would be based on branches balloting for strike action where "a legitimate trade dispute exists". This would be part of a "nationally co-ordinated campaign."

This is conference policy and we call on the Service Group Executive to implement such policy. UNISON should approach other public sector unions for support. If other public unions are lukewarm over such a day of action we should proceed with it as a UNISON day of action."

## USDAW conference defeats witch hunt

### SHOP WORKERS

By an USDAW member.

LAST WEEK'S annual conference (ADM) of the shop workers union USDAW could have seen the issue of conference sovereignty become the basis for a substantial challenge to the actions of the right wing Executive Council. The conference began positively when an attempt to witch hunt a left wing member of the Executive Maureen Madden, failed. She had been attacked for criticising the decision to support OMOV at last year's Labour conference despite a vote to the contrary at the USDAW ADM.

In her opening address President Audrey Wise, Campaign Group MP for Preston, stated "stifling criticism is not a democratic act". She condemned General Secretary Garfield Davis for his behaviour towards left members of the Executive. This start put the issue of conference sovereignty and accountability on the agenda.

However, when it came to a discussion of the decision of the Executive to support OMOV the potential was not realised. The Broad Left didn't manage to capitalise on the anger caused by the attempted witch hunt, and the right won the policy debates on the second day of conference. A motion welcoming OMOV was passed.

Motions calling on the Labour Party to remove VAT on fuel, upgrade pensions by £10 a week every year and "fight on clear

socialist policies with the interests of working class people their prime consideration" were defeated. However policy was passed on health and safety, free prescriptions, the NHS, fire regulations and safety in the workplace. These are all issues the left can organise around.

Labour leader John Smith's speech to conference was mainly an election "party political". He reaffirmed Labour pledges to full employment and the minimum wage, and to spend the £5 million from council house sales on homes and jobs. Smith was forced to address the needs of working people in his speech, and he showed none of the support for businesses he is so keen to put forward in other arenas.

Many delegates were not fooled. As one stated, "Smith is trying to get in with the CBI but he knows that come election time he has to come back to the unions".

The applause he received was for the Labour of the trade unions and workers, not for Smith and his true policies.

There is a lot of potential for the left in USDAW. 150 people attended the Broad Left fringe meeting and in last year's election for General Secretary the Broad Left candidate, Terry Savage, gained 40% of the vote, showing a definite dissatisfaction in the ranks of the union.

The problem is the lack of organised socialists to put forward a clear alternative to the leadership. With effort this union could see a turnaround.

## Firefighters need national action

COUNCILS UP and down the country are attempting to attack firefighters' jobs, terms and conditions. A mass demonstration in Liverpool last month gave a glimpse of the kind of action that can force particular councils to

back down, but if the Tory government behind the cuts is to be beaten then the firefighters union FBU — which holds its conference next week — should call a day of national strike action with emergency cover.

## NCU: vote Broad Left!

By a central London BT engineer.

MEMBERS OF the BT and post office engineers' and clerical union NCU are currently voting for their national executive.

It is vital that the Broad Left slate maintains control of the executive.

Despite the fact that the Broad

Left has missed several opportunities over the last year, a return to right wing control would be a disaster.

What's more the reappearance of management's threats to introduce Saturday and Sunday working shows more than ever the need for a fighting lead from the top of the union.

## MSF: The bankruptcy of business unionism

By an MSF member

MSF CONFERENCE this year (on 7-11 May) will once again be focusing more on internal questions than on mounting campaigns or fighting for members' rights.

Partly, this is a deliberate manoeuvre — the leadership of MSF, keen to develop the union as a new "finance and services" organisation, will be using conference to begin a process which they hope will see the end of strikes and demonstrations altogether.

And partly it will be the result of the members' — quite justified — anger and resentment that MSF's delegation to last year's Labour Party conference were key players in the stitch-up which saved John Smith's face in the OMOV debate. Many MSF branch officers are now angry: as their members realise they can have no input into the selection processes in their

Labour Party constituencies, someone has to explain to them that it was the MSF delegation's votes which caused things to happen this way.

Last year's MSF conference, of course, voted overwhelmingly against the OMOV proposals, and several motions have been submitted this year, criticising the subsequent U-turn made by the delegation in their numerous hotel-room meetings. Several members of that delegation, unhappy with the way their mandate was ignored, are expected to use this year's conference to expose the pressure which the MSF leadership subjected them to.

The other side to the debate about union democracy will come with the launching of the "consultative exercise" for MSF on 'Into the 21st Century', the strategy document released recently by the Lyons leadership. The idea is to make MSF a new kind of

super-union, with lots of financial incentives, insurance deals, cheap holidays, and so on, but with no democracy, campaigning or membership involvement at all. The style of such a union was illustrated by the so-called corporate campaigning practised by Lyons in the Zurich Insurance dispute. Hailed as a huge success by the union hierarchy, the tactic actually failed to win any form of protection for the workers at Zurich, and failed to secure collective bargaining rights, or true union recognition. The only concession wrung out of Zurich by the high-profile advertising campaign, and the personal letters to Zurich's customers, was the "right" to individual representation in hearings, etc., by someone who could be an MSF officer!

There will inevitably be a wrangle over the union's finances again. The shock for members of discovering that MSF has the largest debt of all UK trade unions, of

something like £19 million, was not calmed much by the assertion in this year's accounts that the long-term debt has been massively reduced — by taking additional short-term loans!

The MSF left, which has recently begun the essential task of reuniting itself around a campaigning platform, will hopefully be continuing that process at conference. Left candidates have been heavily defeated in this year's round of Executive elections, and unified activity is essential if next year is to be an improvement. But criticism of the current leadership, and opposition to the business unionism of 'MSF Into the 21st Century' is not enough. What MSF members need, whether in the health service, in industry, or elsewhere, is a union that fights to protect their interests, that organises to defend them, and that supports them when they take action. MSF in 1994 is a long way from that sort of union.

## Civil Service union conferences

### CPSA

By Trudy Saunders DHHQ

MOST DELEGATES to this year's CPSA conference will be hoping for a resounding victory for the Unity slate in the Executive elections.

If that happens it will make it easier for the rank and file to push for national strike action to defeat Market Testing. If it doesn't happen, it will be a setback but not the end of all our hopes for a fightback.

The left can still push for the union to be committed to a serious strategy on the issue. That means backing the motions calling for a three day national strike and total non-co-operation as preparation for all-out action.

The left should also push for a serious campaign to actively fight for this year's pay claim, linking the claim to the defence of jobs and opposition to "Market Testing"

### NUCPS

By a conference delegate

APART FROM jobs and Market Testing the other main issue at this year's NUCPS conference will be the question of merger with the tax workers' union IRSF.

A merger makes complete sense. There is no rational industrial or

political reason to oppose it. But there is room for improvement in the proposals that are currently on the table.

Firstly, the NUCPS leadership should make it absolutely clear that they are prepared to address all the concerns of activists from the IRSF who have problems with the particular proposals under discussion but not the idea of merger itself. In particular, the IRSF Broad Left — which can stop the merger happening if it campaigns against it — should be treated with respect and its wants addressed.

Secondly, the merger should be so designed as to facilitate a follow up merger with CPSA at the earliest possible opportunity and to undermine any attempt by the CPSA right wing to block it. That means reserved places for support and clerical grades in the new union structure so as to prevent the domination of the union by executive grades. (This is rightly a central worry of the IRSF Broad Left.)

Finally, the merger should be between the rank and files of the two unions, not just the full time apparatus.

The NUCPS leadership should use the merger discussion to press the IRSF leadership to call action to defend jobs and oppose Market Testing.

That way the merger will be more than just a means to solving NUCPS's present financial crisis.

## Strike at Glasgow Royal set to go ahead

### HEALTH SERVICE

Porters and domestic staff at Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Rottenrow Hospital are to go on strike from Thursday 5th May. A postal ballot resulted in a 92% majority for strike action in defence of pay and conditions.

In the second round of competitive tendering to take place at The Royal, management accepted a tender from Executive Healthcare which saves them £300,000. The saving comes from cuts in wages and conditions. Under the new tender porters' wages will be cut from £3.60 to £3.20 an hour and cleaners will lose 27p, going down from £3.22 to £2.95 an hour. Porters will also lose a weeks' holiday and overtime pay is to be abolished.

The workers are furious. In 1989 they took cuts in pay and conditions to protect their jobs, and now they are seeing the same thing happen again. This time the 250 workers aren't just accepting everything being thrown at them. They intend to defend their pay and conditions.

The GMB have successfully argued that Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations apply. These protect the wages

and conditions of workers transferring from one employer to another. The tender from Executive Healthcare ignored TUPE and therefore easily undercut the other three. The GMB are now calling for the tendering process to be rerun.

Since the massive strike vote there has been overwhelming support for the workers' action. Ambulance staff have pledged support and UNISON and the RCN have instructed their members not to cover for the workers who will be on strike. Management at the Royal are complicit in the attacks on the workers although publicly pretending the dispute has nothing to do with them. The existing contractors are set to bring in scabs on May 5th.

Given the mass support throughout the labour movement in the west of Scotland and pledges of solidarity from other health workers, the workers at Rottenrow and the Royal can defeat the market onslaught on their terms and conditions.

• Messages of support and donations to: Hugh Swan, GMB Scotland, 113 Woodside Crescent, Glasgow G3 7UJ. Tel: 041-882 8641 Fax: 041-332 4491

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**Civil service unions  
must call national  
action to defeat  
Market Testing**

# Strike to save jobs

By Mark Serwotka, CPSA DSS Sheffield.

**T**HE LEADERSHIP of all the main civil service unions — CPSA, NUCPS, IRSF and IPMS — have seriously failed their members who must fight to defend jobs, pay, terms and conditions against the Tory government.

The Tories are determined to destroy tens of thousands of civil service jobs in the next few years. They will do this through "Market Testing", privatisation or plain old fashioned job cuts.

"Market Testing" means putting civil service work out to private contractors who will cut staffing levels unless the "in-house bid" is cheaper. This leads civil service managers — sometimes with union support — to take responsibility for making the same cuts as the contractors in order to win the bid.

The conferences of CPSA and NUCPS both start next week. They will be followed one week later by the conferences of the tax union IRSF and the civil service technician and specialists union IPMS.

All civil service union conferences



Market Testing can be defeated — by strike action

should demand that the leaders call mass national strike action to defend jobs and to stop Market

Testing.

Last November's civil service-wide strike against Market Testing was

incredibly well supported. It showed that the membership of the unions will respond to a clear lead on this issue.

What is needed now is more co-ordinated national strike action with the aim of forcing the government to withdraw the whole Market Testing programme.

This action would have more likelihood of success if the national leadership did its job properly and recognised that a successful campaign must be based on a number of demands which link together the key issues like Market Testing, privatisation, the pay limit and jobs. Branch and section strikes should be seen as part and parcel of a national fight-back not as an alternative to it.

The national leaders also need to recognise that members want an escalating campaign, not just a series of one-day strikes once a year!

Ultimately, it will probably take all out strike action to defeat Market Testing. The government are deeply committed to it as a means of cutting civil service jobs.

We say this not so we can indulge in a bit of breast-beating but because we think it is necessary to tell civil service workers the truth.

## Help us campaign for the Welfare State!

Over the last few weeks *Socialist Organiser* and the *Alliance for Workers' Liberty* have been campaigning hard to beat the Nazis and to get Labour elected on 5 May.

This week we launch a turn to campaigning to bring back the Welfare State - for people, not profits; for need, not greed.

The weekly *Socialist Organiser* will be vital for facts about what the Tories are doing, arguments on why and how to fight back, and

information on activity across the country.

In their campaign *against* the Welfare State, the Tories have the support of the mass-circulation press and TV, with their endlessly-repeated claim that "the country can't afford it". Our fight back needs money and resources.

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