

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Inside this week



Postal workers take on the Tory laws



The left and the Labour leadership

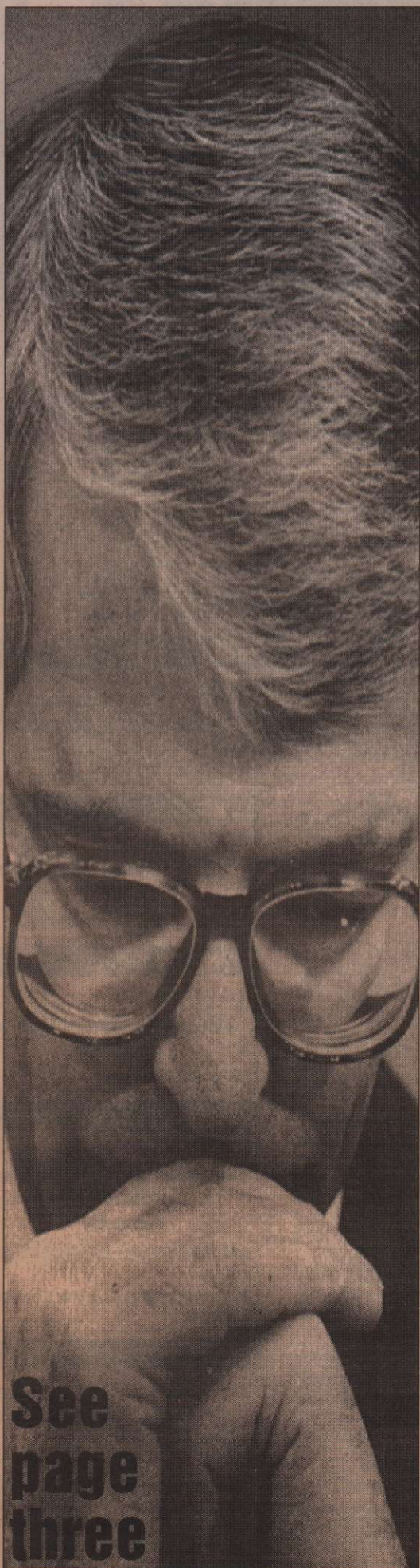
Twenty five years after Stonewall

page 5

centre pages

page 14

Voters tell Governement
"You have no right to rule"



See page three

Finish off the Tories!

LABOUR MUST FIGHT!

The Tory press

Lies, excuses and hypocrisies

POLITICAL FRONT

By Jackie Cleary

A RICH VARIETY of Tory whittings and excuses has been put out to explain John Major disaster at the polls on June 9th. One of those explanations is very revealing.

It begins with a question. How has the Labour Party achieved broad acceptance as an alternative government without the presence of the "irreplaceable" John Smith? The death of Labour leader John Smith on the eve of the elections did not — so the explanation goes — hinder but actually helped Labour. How? Because the fullsome tributes to John Smith helped change the "image" of his party in the eyes of many voters.

They began, for the first time in 15 years, to 'perceive' Labour as 'moderate', 'respectable' and 'acceptable'. Now, this is probably true, though how big a factor it was is debatable and we think it is a small one. But what a lot this Tory apologia tells you about the way the system works and the way the Tories see it as working!

They have a thorough-going dead-hand monopoly control of the mass media and they use it as a weapon of political war. There have been times during the last 15 years when papers like *The Sun* have used it according to the precepts of Doctor Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister.

They misrepresent not only the left, but even the right wing led Labour Party. They distort what it says. They lie about what it stands for.

Spineless little time-serving men and women, motivated in politics above all else by petty career self-interest, are presented as leftwing incendiaries or "loonies".

The press spread scare stories about "the cost" of even timid proposals for change. Serious political proposals are trivialised, demonised or misrepresented so as to rule out the discussion they merit.

An acid rain of sneering, baiting and snob-appeal dismissal is rained down on the great central ideas of the labour movement. An idea such as the labour movements base-line principle of "solidarity" is presented variously as 'old hat', as vicious, as something for workers who don't know how to "look after No.1", as a mugs game to inhibit the strong and enterprising so as to hold them to the level of the "natural" losers.

The imbalance in the means of communication and opinion forming is so gross that it's operation undermines and poisons democracy — but this is not something that can be discussed in the mass media!

And then a chink appears: John Smith is built up to undermine his predecessor Neil Kinnock. John Smith dies. There is a ridiculously exaggerated — and scarcely sincere — period of public mourning. Some of the truth about the real tame right-wing, pink Tory, nature of the Labour Party glimmers through.

It probably did aid Labour on 9 June, though not, we think, fundamentally. But what a comment on British democracy now is the assertion that John Smith's eve-of-poll death helped his party because it forced the media, bound by its own rituals and hypocrisies to tell the truth about Labour, for once.

Ishtaq Ahmed is not the bedsit murderer!

By the Ishtaq Ahmed Campaign

MR AHMED'S case is that the Prosecution portrayed him as a rich Asian landlord who murdered his tenant. The Prosecution could give no motive. Mr Ahmed did not have a fair trial.

The deceased had spent part of the night in the bedroom of his room-mate's fiancée. The Prosecution said that the deceased was found in his room by his room-mate when he returned home from work. The house was full of tenants. Some of them heard a bump from the room above. Who did it?

Mr Ahmed has always protested his innocence. The murder room was supposed to be secured by the police, but it was entered after the

arrest of the defendant and someone wrote on the walls that Mr Ahmed committed the crime. Who did this?

Why did the whole investigation just centre upon this man?

The trial judge would not allow the jury to see a videotape of an interview with one of the main prosecution witnesses who said that his evidence was untrue. Why not?

All of these questions and others will be put before the Court of Appeal. Mr Ahmed asks for your support. Mr Ahmed's appeal is going to be heard on Monday 27 June at 10am at the Criminal Appeal Office, Royal Courts of Justice, London WC2A 2LL.

• For further information contact Bashir on 0734-589087.

Abolish MI5!

STELLA RIMINGTON, head of MI5 and controller of at least 2,000 officers and a budget of over £150 million, used the Dimbleby television lecture to justify the role of the secret state.

The Guardian said, "Mrs. Rimington painted a picture of a security service which was accountable, adaptable and a respecter of individual liberties." Yes, and Rimington was lying. MI5 should be abolished.

Remember it was Stella Rimington

who helped the Tory government beat the miners — she was responsible for spying on the NUM during the strike.

MI5 is an anti-democratic and direct threat to all those — in the first place the labour movement — who seek to fight for a better society. MI5 is there to defend the status quo and in the first place, as Rimington said, to defend the state.

£150 million would be much better spent on a house building programme or on the cash-starved NHS.

Bangladeshi writer faces death threat for "insulting Islam"

Defend Taslima Nasrin!

By Sarah Wellings National Union of Students Women's Officer elect

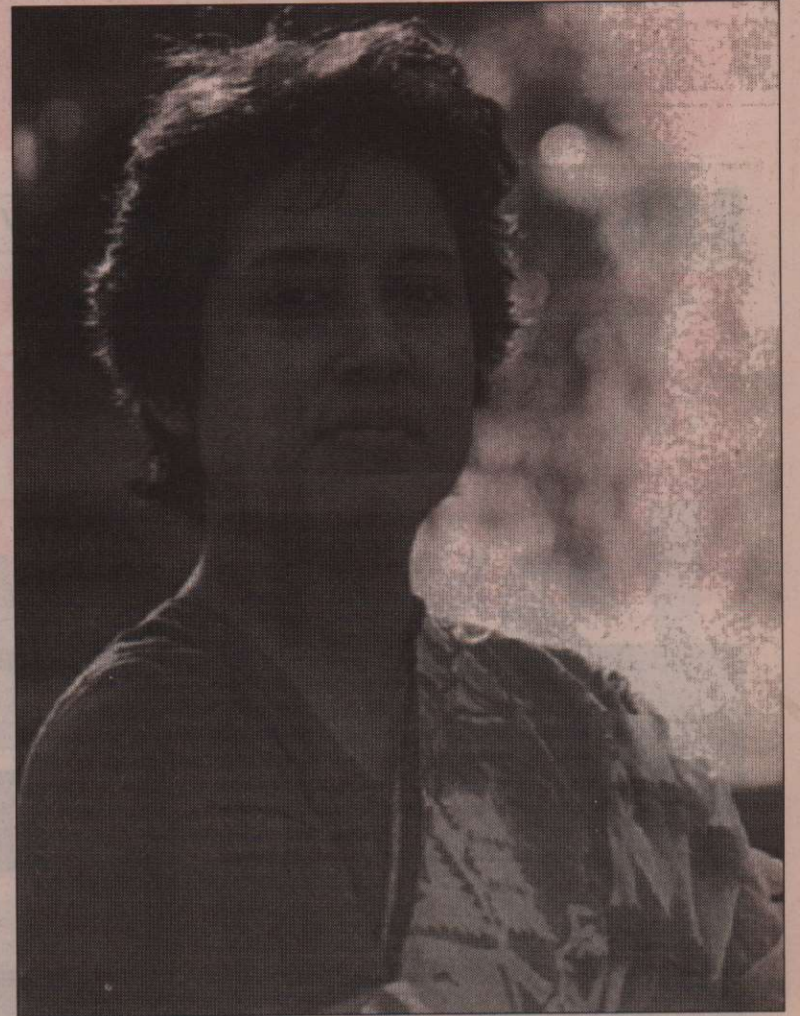
BANGLADESHI writer Taslima Nasrin is in hiding. The chief magistrate of Dhaka, the capital, has issued a warrant for Nasrin's arrest for "insulting Islam". A group called *The Rising Faithfuls* have issued a death threat. A Muslim religious leader has offered money to the person who kills her and last week 4,000 marched in Dhaka under the slogan "Death to the Infidel".

Nasrin's crime? She was quoted in an Indian paper as saying "the Koran should be revised thoroughly." In other words, the Koran, which Muslims believe was spoken directly by God to Mohammed, should be changed. Nasrin says she was misquoted.

Taslima Nasrin is a feminist. One of her 21 books has been banned. "Shame" was suppressed because the government said it offended Muslims and lied about the sufferings of the country's Hindu minority.

Nasrin was raised as a Muslim but has renounced her faith — under Islamic law this is itself a crime punishable by death.

Nasrin is probably now in hiding in Dhaka. You can help her by writing to protest at her treatment to the Bangladeshi Embassy, write to: the Bangladeshi Government, 28 Queens Gate, London SW7.



Taslima Nasrin

Release Kalunga Lemba!

KALUNGA LEMBA, a refugee from Zaire, has been in prison for 15 months. He is now being held in the hospital wing of Pentonville jail, London.

Kalunga's appeal against deportation has been refused despite a report from the Medical Foundation for the Care of the Victims of Torture which found 37 scars on his body consistent with

beatings and whippings.

Kalunga Lemba was active in opposition to Mobutu's Zairean government.

You can help by writing to Charles Wardle, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1, demanding Kalunga's release.

• Contact his asylum campaign by phoning 071-474 5262.

Anti-Nazi League holds conference

Sincerity and centrism

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Mark Osborn

BY THE final session of the ANL's first conference — Saturday 11 June, London — a large, warm, sticky puddle had formed beneath Paul Holborow's chair, and was slowly dribbling off the stage and onto the floor of the hall.

Evidently Paul's sincerity had overflowed, leaving a nasty stain on the carpet.

Carefully stepping over the unpleasant mess, Ed Whitby, from Sheffield Alliance for Workers' Liberty, moved our position — one of only 4 motions on the agenda. Ed called for the ANL to work for Labour in elections and to base anti-fascist work on the mass organisations of the working-class — the Labour Party and the trade unions. The ANL also called for one united, democratic anti-racist movement.

We did not win the vote. Perhaps 200 of the 300 in attendance were

SWP members, and they would have voted for absolutely anything the SWP asked them to vote for.

Their case against voting Labour, in a nutshell, was: it will alienate people (presumably the Tory MPs who sign ANL statements etc.); it is difficult to argue with BNP voters on the doorstep in East London, because Labour councils make cuts, so we should talk about workers' unity instead. This is about as near as you can come to classic "centerism" — avoiding the concrete issue, preferring bland and ineffectual generalities.

Very few trade unions were present — the official labour movement continues to line up with the Anti-Racist Alliance.

Finally the conference was invited to rubber stamp a steering committee.

The only other point of interest was that Rahul Patel — now consigned to a minor role in the ANL, after a piss-poor, post-Millwall TV appearance — managed to get through the whole event without hitting anyone. Patel beat up an AWL supporter last summer. Stupefying!

Alliance for

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Meetings

MANCHESTER

Thursday 16 June

"What leadership does Labour need?"

8.00, Unicorn Pub, Church Street.

YORK

Thursday 30 June

"How to defend the Welfare State"

7.30, Priory Street, City Centre

GLASGOW

Thursday 30 June

"What leadership does Labour need?"

7.30 Patrick Burgh Halls

LONDON

Wednesday 22 June

"Trotskyists and the Labour Party — can the left vote for Prescott?"

Speakers include Sean Matgamna and Al Richardson

7.30 Calthorpe Arms, 252 Gray's Inn Road, Kings Cross

LEEDS

Thursday 7 July

"How to defend the NHS"

7.30pm Adelphi

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has branches in many towns, for details of our work in your area phone 071-639 7965

The Tories have lost the right to rule



The Tories have no right to continue with their anti-working class policies

THE RESULT of the elections to the European Parliament ensnare Britain in a political anomaly that threatens to reduce democracy in this state to a joke. Consider how things now stand.

The Tories have received a ringing slap in the face from the electorate, but the electorate is powerless to dismiss them.

The party that governs Britain won little more than one vote in every four votes cast, yet it remains the party of government.

In this election, the Tories lost all moral or political right to rule the people of Britain, yet they retain the legal right to govern the people who, last Thursday, rejected them resoundingly.

And they can go on governing Britain for three years more, before they are legally obliged to call a British general election. This is democracy? Well, yes, as it happens, it is. This is bourgeois democracy.

If the Tories had a commitment to real democracy they would feel honour bound now to call a general elec-

tion. They will do nothing of the sort. They will hold on, hoping things will get better in the three years before they are obliged to face the electorate again. They pulled it off in '92, remember?

They rose then from what looked like certain defeat — having thrown Mrs Thatcher's political blood in the eyes of the voters — to a comfortable victory.

The situation after the election makes a prize ass out of British democracy, but if the Tory patriots can gain any advantage for themselves from that, be sure they will put advantage above democracy.

But it is not only the Tories who are ensnared by the European election results. Labour is ensnared too. Labour has just received a tremendous endorsement — little less than 1 in 2 of those who voted. Now what? Nothing!

In this election, Labour incontestably won the moral right to govern Britain. But Labour will not be forming a government. It must continue as a hamstrung opposition.

Labour must go on letting itself be condemned to the impotence and frustration of the opposition bench-

es in the Commons for the next three years, or until such time as the Tory government — which has just received its worst election defeat in one hundred and fifty years — sees some advantage to itself in allowing the people of Britain to elect a new British government.

*"The vote on 9 June
should be the signal
for a new push to get
the Tories out."*

Labour may find itself forced to watch as the Tories go on discrediting democracy and misruling the country, but if that is "legality" and "respectability", be sure Labour's leaders will suffer it, as they have suffered every other outrage the Tories have perpetrated for 15 long years.

Isn't it ridiculous? If the Tories have lost the moral right to rule — and they have, in spades — then why should Labour behave in such a way

that they help the Tories "put over" on the electorate the undemocratic pretence that, even after the European elections, the Tory Party continues to have the moral right to govern Britain?

A serious opposition would now systematically withdraw co-operation from the Tories in Parliament. If Labour did that then it would be very difficult for the Tories to go on ruling. They will be forced to call a general election.

The left — even such pillars of the Labour left establishment as Tony Benn — have long demanded of the Labour leaders that they break off collaboration with the Tories in Parliament. Now that the electorate has taken away the Tories' moral licence to rule, an end to collaboration in the Tory mismanagement of Britain is the least that the Labour leaders should do if they want to keep faith with those who voted Labour last week.

Labour Party and trade union branches should raise a loud clamour to demand that they do this. The vote on 9 June should be the signal for a new push to get the Tories out.

Not alone do governments like John

Major's Tories discredit democracy, oppositions do it too. Labour, led by the right and by turncoat ex-lefts, has demonstrated that for the last decade.

Not only the possibility of greater parliamentary opposition is boosted by the moral and political catastrophe suffered by the Tories in the European elections. The climate is now better than for a long time for an eruption of direct action opposition.

By what right do those Tory cheats, thieves, rip-off specialists and spivs continue to ban trade unions from taking solidarity action?

By what right to they continue to deny benefits to unemployed girls and boys of 16 and 17?

By what right do they continue to loot public property?

Why should we let them go on hacking and chopping at a British society which they have already made into the cheap-labour hellhole of western Europe?

They have no right to go on doing these things! This message from the European elections will filter through to more and more workers, and they will begin to fight back. Last Thursday's elections opened a new era in British politics.

"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

Why the serious left should back Prescott

THE ELECTION for Labour leader now being organised brings something new to British politics. Its nearest equivalent is the 'primary' election in the USA, in which the registered voters of the main parties vote to select the candidate who will then carry the party's colours into the broader election.

Up to 5 million members of the Labour Party and affiliated trade unions have the right to vote in this election, and perhaps 1 million of them will vote. The labour movement is voting to decide on the candidate for Prime Minister it will present to the electorate in the next General Election. Nothing like this has been known in Britain before. We are in a new situation. The serious left should assess that situation with clear eyes and an awareness that it cannot be 'business as usual.'

For the left to voluntarily abstain in this 'primary' is for the left to brand itself as impotent or unserious.

Of course the left is unhappy with the situation created by 'OMOV' (one member, one vote) under which this election is being held. We have repeatedly explained in *Socialist Organiser* why we are unhappy with it, and we can only summarise our reasons here.

In an election where most voters are not active participants in the labour movement, there is immense pressure from the media exerted through the inactive members on the active hardcore of the movement. The media had Blair elected and were campaigning for him even before John Smith was cold.

'Electability' — that is, what is likely to appeal to the broadest mass of the electorate and especially to last-election Tory and Liberal voters — is erected as the supreme criterion for candidacy. Policy is pushed to the sidelines and 'political beauty contests' take over.

One consequence of this is that the real policy decisions will in fact wind up being taken by narrow cliques and faceless bureaucrats. This apparent democracy, which seems to promote mass participation, tends in reality to turn into its opposite precisely where it matters, in the taking of the key political decisions. It actually reduces the numbers really taking part in the real political process. In this, the method Labour is now using to elect the new leader partakes of all the faults, shams, frauds and contradictions of bourgeois democracy in general.

Labour's new system has faults that are peculiar to itself too. The rule that only candidates have the backing of 12.5% of the Parliamentary Labour Party can stand in an election involving the whole labour movement is grossly undemocratic.

But right now this is the system we have. To choose — if there is a choice — to boycott it, is to choose to stand aloof from the political processes of the labour movement itself. In principle, it is the same as boycotting mainstream Parliamentary politics, only worse: here it is our own movement and its processes that we would be boycotting.

Do we have a choice? We think that the left does have a choice, even though the situation is far from one we might choose for ourselves. What can we do?

We can work to inject a serious degree of policy debate into the election at rank and file level. We can organise around specific policies to demand in the name of those so organised from the best candidate a commitment to these policies. (See centre pages.)

In that way at the very least we will help create a ferment of ideas. And there is right now in the labour movement a demand for ideas that will allow us to surmount and uproot Toryism.

Of course each of the three candidates has played a terrible part in labour movement affairs. But even so there are important differences between them.

Prescott openly appeals to the bedrock working-class layers of the party and the trade unions. He calls for a minimum wage and for a firm Labour commitment to reduce unemployment. He thus reopens issues in the labour movement the Blair camp would like to exclude from discussion. When Prescott talks vehemently about "them" and "us" when confronting Tories like Michael Heseltine he is raising the spectre of that class conflict which the Tories and right-wing Labour want to pretend is dead and buried. When he talks proudly of '1945' and calls for the restoration of the Welfare State he is saying some of what needs to be said. Even though Prescott helped OMOV through Labour party conference, he does stand for continuing Labour Party trade union links. Blair does not.

But it is not a matter of picking and choosing the lesser evil, or weighing a good policy point here against a bad policy point there. For the serious left it is a matter of organising the rank and file in the party and the trade unions around specific, albeit limited, policies to demand a commitment to those policies from those who would lead the labour movement, and in the first place from left-talking Prescott.

To do that is both to make propaganda for those policies and to refine in terms of those policies the support which many bedrock labour movement people instinctively give to John Prescott. It is, if we can do it, to organise broad left-wing caucuses in the Labour Party and in the unions to fight for such policies — against Prescott himself where necessary. None of it depends on either trust or illusion in John Prescott.

Abstention cannot in this situation be serious working-class politics. Neither can support for publicity-seeking non-candidates such as Ken Livingstone, whose politics are actually quite right-wing.

It is a pity that the Parliamentary left has not proved itself able to put forward a serious candidate. But that's how it is. Much can still be done, despite the shortness of time, if the left organises. The key issues of immediate working-class politics can be brought to the forefront of the political discussion this election is generating among the bedrock members of the labour movement.

That is why a broad left-wing campaign to stop Blair and back

Ideas for Freedom

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FEATURING

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Debates include: "How do we win peace in Ireland?" with Sinn Fein and "Should socialists support the PLO-Israel peace deal?"

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• "Fascism, free speech and no platform" John O'Mahony (editor of *Socialist Organiser*) discusses with Tim Gopsill (editor of the *Journalist*) and Steve Myers from the Campaign Against Fascism in Europe • "Should we ban boxing?" — a debate • A short course on the politics of capitalist crisis introduced by Martin Thomas • A forum on building rank and file groups in the unions • Stalinism and music • "What is the role of left-wing papers?" Jill Mountford of the AWL debates the Editor of *Tribune*, Mark Seddon

Additional sessions include

- The politics of the world cup
- An introduction to the politics of war — the example of World War One

SATURDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• The AWL debates Sinn Fein on peace in Ireland • Neville Alexander and Tom Rigby from *Socialist Organiser's* Editorial Board discuss the struggle for socialism in South Africa • Hillel Tickin and Bob Arnot examine the crisis in Russia • Cathy Nugent and Avedon Carol from Feminists Against Censorship discuss "Women, sex and pornography" • Clive Bradley defends Modernism • Rob Dawber asks "Did God write the Bible?" • Alan Johnson and Caroline Henry present a short course to introduce Marxism

Additional sessions include

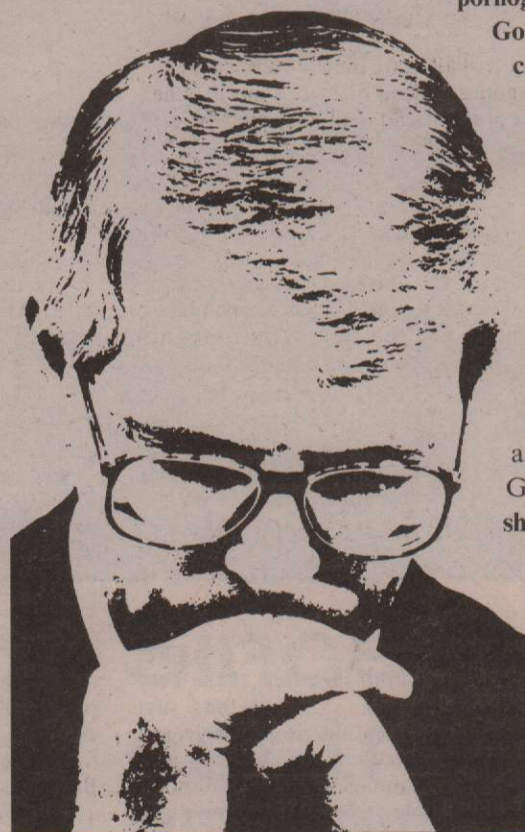
- Crime — why do people do it? What should socialists say about it?
- Are legal strikes possible any more?
- Is pop music dead?
- The AWL, "entryism" and the LP
- A short history of black people in Britain

SUNDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• Professor Meghnad Desai debates Martin Thomas on "Is full-employment possible?" • Neville Alexander and Sean Matgamna look at how the international left can work together • Gail Cameron and Tony Greenstein debate the Israel-PLO peace deal • Jon Pike asks "Why should socialists be bothered with philosophy?" • Paul Field looks at South Korean capitalism and unification • Janine Booth discusses Lesbian and Gay struggles after Stonewall • *Revolutionary History* run a series of discussions about the roots of the Cliff, Healy and Grant Tendencies

Additional sessions include

- A history of contraception
- A short series to introduce Marxism — Does socialism mean state tyranny? Why workers' revolution?



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Liverpool postal workers' message to the labour movement

We can fight and we can win!

THE RECENT Merseyside post office dispute, which the workers won, was the longest unofficial industrial action the 1990s have seen so far. It is a tremendously important experience for the labour movement. It shows that workers can and will take action even in the most difficult circumstances, despite the fact that legally watertight strikes are almost impossible to organise now. It shows that, despite the enormous burden on trade unionists, who risk criminal charges for unofficial action, workers who fight can, nevertheless, win. John Ireland who is the branch secretary of the Merseyside Amalgamated branch told the story of their strike to a fringe meeting at the NCU conference in Blackpool.

ALTHOUGH OURS is not a dispute that has been widely reported in the press it is a significant dispute.

It was only six days — six long days — but it was the longest unofficial strike or industrial action since the miners' strike of 1984-5.

It is the first dispute that I've been involved in as a trade union activist and to my knowledge it's the first dispute that's been totally membership-led. This is the story.

One of our members has a speech impediment — a stutter. He'd had a long-running dispute with his supervisor. They had worked together, then one of them got promoted to supervisor. They hated each other's guts. Two people don't have to get on in a working environment, but *no one* should use their supervisor status to conduct a personal vendetta against another person.

One night he is sorting mail in the Post Office. The supervisor asks the guy with a stutter why he's in the work area with a cup of tea. This guy's stutter gets worse with stress and it takes 10-15 minutes to explain what had actually occurred, that he had a perfect right to be where he was and that no discipline was necessary.

As the supervisor leaves the office he says: "You have to explain where you were and appear before me on Thursday, when I will be disciplining you."

The fellow gets more and more agi-

tated. He believes he has already given an explanation and the supervisor is only having a go at him because he doesn't get on with him. His stutter gets worse.

The supervisor then begins to laugh at the guy. This was akin to total humiliation. He laughed in his face. The member in question lost control. He went to strike the supervisor. He didn't strike him although the supervisor maintains that he did. It has been proved he didn't. This was, in my opinion, a tremendous show of courage. If someone was doing that to me I would have knocked his head off, and I think I would have been justified.

The supervisor took our guy upstairs to the late shift manger and began to institute the disciplinary proceedings to suspend him.

The two union reps told the manager not to suspend our member and proved that he had been baited and belittled by the supervisor. The manager said he had no choice but to suspend the individual when the supervisor was saying he had been struck. The manager took no notice of the union reps.

During the break, other people in the office found out that the member had been suspended. People said they would not return to work after their break unless the suspension was lifted.

The manager, faced with this situation, just went ahead and suspended him. Then he went home. He was the only person who could reinstate our member. That couldn't happen because he had gone home to bed.

At 1am in the morning, the union rep attempted to speak to the area manager who was in bed. The manager said he wouldn't speak to him until he returned to work, and he put the phone down.

At 8am the next morning, there was a meeting where the members were told that unless they returned to work management would not lift the suspension and wouldn't even discuss the case. Not while we were outside the building. We told them that they'd have problems because the early shift were already out the door.

Later that day, at 12 noon, we were called to a meeting with management where we thought we could construct an agreement with the local manag-

er. All kinds of promises were made, including a pledge that there would be no disciplinary action. They also warned us that if the dispute went to a divisional and national level it would be used as a stick to beat the union, because we were totally outside the law. So we were.

But the union reps saw no point in calling a members meeting and saying: "Look, you're in breach of the law, get back to work." Every one of them knew they were in breach of the law — the supervisor had already come into the canteen and told them.

At 2.30 we asked for an adjournment of the meeting. At that point I was told that Royal Mail had already requested an interview with a judge to get an injunction at 3 o'clock, which would forbid us to strike. We were being kept in that room with management until after 3 o'clock so that Royal Mail could secure an injunction that could be faxed to Merseyside and presented to us straight away!

We had no choice but to withdraw from the meeting, and call a mass meeting of our members that night. They decided that they would continue the unofficial industrial action.

Royal Mail then said they were going to send our work around the country, send mail to sorting offices all over the place and distribute it to the sorting offices in the Liverpool area by other methods. That would be scab mail and we knew our trade union comrades wouldn't touch it.

The next day proved us right: the different offices said they weren't having it and that they were going to come out on strike too.

"You either defend the interests of the members or you knuckle under."

At the end of the second day, we had one major sorting office and 32 satellite offices on strike — about 2,600 people.

After 11 union officials, including myself, had been sent injunctions, the General Secretary, Alan Johnson, decided to come down and instruct the members — against the wishes of the branch committee — to go back to work.

He came to a mass meeting attended by over 2,000 people and put the case for going back to work. He said that if we went on with the strike for another minute we'd have no money and the union would be finished. We'd be dragged into every court in the land, he told us. As far as he was concerned, that was it, game over.

The strikers saw it differently: "Well thanks a lot Alan, but there's somebody here who has been victimised... and we still have no assurances as to how this person will be treated. Thanks, but no thanks. We're going to continue with the action." That was our attitude.

So, over the weekend we worked to spread the dispute. We went over to Manchester to picket and succeeded in turning the vast majority of workers away. They would not cross our picket.



Despite the laws, we can win!

On Sunday morning, we had a meeting of the strike committee to discuss the dispute. Royal Mail said they couldn't back down, but if we would call off the strike our victimised member wouldn't be dismissed. Alan Johnson thought that was enough. I didn't. At the strike committee I argued against accepting. I said that if we went back to work, Royal Mail would see our weakness and would decide to put the boot in on us.

But we did go back to work. The argument was that if we had gone on until Monday, Royal Mail may have sacked the 10 people who had been served injunctions. We would have been a union fighting an all out head-to-head battle with Royal Mail, and that would have caused us major problems. In my opinion, Royal Mail wouldn't have done that.

I know they could have used draconian laws: that there are laws in Britain which say that if you go on strike you can be sacked. But I know too that that is not always the end of it. Look back to what's happened in the past in this sort of situation.

When the five Pentonville dockers were jailed the government was quickly forced to back down and let them out of prison. I'm not saying that it's the same situation, but it could well have developed into the same situation.

But, as I've said, I don't think Royal Mail were prepared to go for that.

On Monday morning, we put the arguments for returning to work to the members, and they returned to work.

The victimised member has now been given two years suspended dismissal and Alan Johnson himself is going to do the members' appeal. I'm sure that Alan will get it reduced, but I don't know for sure and no one in our union knows.

We have been told that if Royal Mail keep our member on suspended dismissal the region will be given leave by the national union to ballot our members. The legal opinion is that if you have been on unofficial (illegal) industrial action you can never make that action legal. That

has never been tested in law, but we know that when some judge makes a ruling in some chamber somewhere it will very quickly take on the force of law.

In the last couple of weeks we've seen walkouts in Bristol. That was a 24-hour action. The branch secretary and a senior official are now under threat of dismissal from the employer. If they're dismissed for leading unofficial action, we can't legally defend them. They've got no right to an industrial tribunal.

The union has two options here. Either it lets people go down the road or it acts to defend them. Whatever that action is, it can't be legal, because we can't go on strike in defence on somebody who has been dismissed for leading unofficial industrial action!

In Liverpool, the union was saying it couldn't afford to go on strike. Unfortunately now they are trying to take us to court. Two firms are suing us for £250,000 each. Royal Mail are suing us for damages in excess of £200,000. They will probably win.

You've got two choices as trade unionists. Here is the laws and here is the members. It's a choice between the membership and the money. The point has to be made that it is the members' money.

It's got to a stage where you have no choice. You either defend the interests of the members or you knuckle under.

Trade unionists, we have to start to say "we won't obey it," because even if you do obey it, even if you do go back to work, even if you don't defend your members, the law will still crush you and you will still get the sack.

The trade union movement has to draw up a charter of what it wants from the next Labour government. That's not going to be easy. We are going to have to put pressure on them to deliver even the most modest of reforms. Well then, let's put pressure on them!

• John Ireland was speaking in a personal capacity.



Liverpool postalworkers took on the state in the last Post Office dispute

Keeping bad company

WHAT You Already Knew Confirmed Department.

Failed local government Tory candidate in Ealing, Christopher Foster seconded a candidate for the Euro-Elections in London West, Bill Binding. Nothing odd in that, you say. Binding was an NF candidate! You have to be very careful who you drink with at your local Conservative Association nowadays.

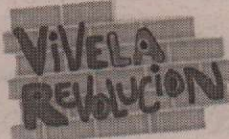
GUARDIAN of British culture Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber has hit back against critics who suggest that his work is meaningless. The phantom of the operetta is threatening to build a 280 foot modern gothic tower in the grounds of his home at a cost of £30 million. It will be used to house his pictures and will be open to members of the public (who will have to tug their forelocks and doff their hats saying, "that Sir Andrew, 'e's a real gent" before gaining entry).

For three months a year, that is. The man whose main contribution to twentieth century theatre is to prove that a musical can be performed on roller skates stated: "The rest of the time the paintings would be in my house. I don't want the house hung with replicas all the time." Quite, and for the rest of us postcards of the works will be available from the gallery shop at a very reasonable price.

STEVEN Norris, Minister responsible for co-ordinating London's transport policy, plans to do away with restrictions on HGVs in London. Why? Companies who have lobbied for a Deregulation Bill include United Biscuits (£140,000 to the Tories in 1992 and £40,000 in 1993) and Sainsbury's. Yes, Tim Sainsbury, the Trade and Industry Junior Minister responsible for guiding the bill through parliament is a member of this family, and yes, he does have a major shareholding.

Other companies with an interest in road haulage include John Swire and Sons who gave the Tories £221,000 in 1993. Duncan Black, their

GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

chairman, is also chairman of the Government's Transport Deregulation Task force. Another interested member is Graham Millar of Yougers plc, who gave the Tories £413,000 in 1993. Everyone has their price, and on this latest estimate the Tories' price for a big-sized favour is somewhere in the region of £914,000. Meanwhile, the rest of us will have to pull the sheets over our heads and think of something to do until it is time to get up when the early-morning lorries rumble by outside.

Has Ken Livingstone got some principles after all? The former Lord Red Ken of the Cheese (and several other) adverts, has turned down the chance to earn another fat advertisement paycheque for a TV commercial. Why? Was the fee for his recent introduction to "Gerry Healy: the whitewash job" so big as to make extra fund-raising superfluous? Hardly, Healey's store of Libyan gold must have run out some time ago. The official reason given by the Livingstone camp is that the ad involved kissing Edwina Curry. This can't be right either. The once and future Lord Red Ken took £40,000 a year kissing Rupert Murdoch in the place which does not see much sun, when he wrote a weekly column for the Sun. Can anyone explain this mystery to us?

ABULLET proof Ford Scorpio due to pick up Michael Howard from the conference of the Association of Police Officers was stolen in West Yorkshire last week and was found later minus all of its wheels. Following reports that two blond-haired middle-aged men were seen driving the car away, sixteen black youths are being questioned by the police...

"Thick Paddy" is not a joke



WHEN Trevor Macauley won compensation of £5,900 last week, for unfair dismissal he caused something of a political storm.

Mr Macauley was sacked from his job as a machinist in a Derbyshire foundry when he complained to the management about the constant anti-Irish abuse he was getting from other workers. He was labelled a troublemaker with an attitude problem and told to go.

His legal fees were paid by the Commission for Racial Equality and he won his case. Compensation was granted on the basis that the anti-Irish jibes amounted to direct racial discrimination which the company failed to stop and also on the basis of injury to feelings.

None of the controversy that has blown up since has been about the light-minded sack-happy attitude of the management of this firm. It has all been about Mr Macauley's inability to take a joke.

Those who dismiss this man as someone who cannot take a

joke a. have a very odd sense of "humour"; b. have no understanding of the effects of constant and persistent bullying on a person's ability to work.

Constantly being called a "thick Paddy" is not a joke. It is verbal harassment. It is not designed to display wit and humour but specifically to wear down and depress the person on the receiving end. It is, like racial and sexual abuse, a consciously insulting and abusive act. When it is constant, it is both physically and mentally exhausting and can deprive you of your confidence, peace of mind and ultimately, as Macauley found out, of your right to work.

This, at least in relation to sexual harassment, has been recognised by the labour movement. Almost all trade unions have policy and procedures on dealing with it. The lessons from the fight against sexual harassment, however, have obviously not been applied to other forms of abuse.

Well okay, it may not be a joke, strictly speaking, but using the law, the argument goes, is too heavy-handed. Passing laws won't stop it. That's true. As with racial, sexual and other forms of discrimination, just passing laws does not stop people being racist or sexist.

Even labour movement policy, important though it is, does

not immediately help someone being harassed on the shop floor. You can't use a piece of paper to hit the man who's putting his hand up your skirt in exchange for extra overtime over the head and expect him to stop.

Using the law sets down a marker. It gives an important guideline about what is to be considered unacceptable behaviour. The people affected, or those representing victims of abuse, can use it to build on and to organise around. Law on its own is of little use. It is a small starting point.

But, anyway, in this case a man had lost his job. If the union or his workmates were not going to help him defend it, what is he supposed to do? Go quietly? Because some witless English bastard needs a victim to make himself feel big? No way!

But, the argument continues, if everyone uses the law because their feelings are hurt we won't be able to say anything anymore. We won't be able to open our mouths in case we hurt someone. Doesn't this smack of PC gone mad?

The fact is, if you can't open your mouth without insulting someone, you are a poor individual altogether. If, in an age of world travel, education and enlightenment you cannot talk to someone of another race,

or sex, someone with a disability or openly non-heterosexual orientation without being worried that you might say something insulting, then you must consider yourself a very superior being indeed, a self-delusion proved by the very fact that you think it at all.

To fight prejudice is not just "politically correct". These words are now widely used to sneer at any attempt to fight for equality or freedom from abuse. The PC movement has been used as a stepping stone to hold positions of power or to become unelected spokespeople for whole sections of society, purely on the basis of being a member of an oppressed group.

The student movement has shown this up more than any other section over the last few years. There clocking up oppressions as credentials, entitles you to take up seats on committees, speak for everyone and, most damaging of all, deny others the right to speak if they don't happen to have enough cred points.

Such actions have thoroughly discredited the genuine attempts to counter abuse and have given the prejudiced easy ammunition to shoot them down.

Trevor Macauley's case goes some way to redressing the balance and should his success should be applauded.

Merchandising the World Cup

THIS SPORTING LIFE

By Duncan Morrisson

YOU ARE almost certainly aware that the Football World Cup finals begin in the USA on Friday of this week. There will be TV coverage throughout the competition. You will also be aware that England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are all to take no part in the finals. All of them failed to qualify.

As with all major modern sporting events, the 1994 World Cup will start with a ridiculously overblown opening ceremony. In the midst of the dancing girls, the astronauts, the heads of state and other dignitaries, the footballers will almost be lost. Why anyone bothers to watch this nonsense, let alone attend it, is a mystery. Still, with the expensive white elephant out of the way, the football can begin.

It's been a difficult time for the British sports press. Having finally got Graham Taylor's head for his disastrous management of the England team and its campaign for World Cup qualification, and with none of the "home teams" qualifying, they were left with the prob-

lem of how to approach this World Cup.

How? With two simple approaches. Firstly, adopt the Irish team. The closest neighbour to the UK, the Irish team also benefit from having Jackie Charlton as their manager, who not only is English but is, in fact, a 1960 World Cup hero. Not only that, but most of the Irish team play their league football in England and frankly, well, most of them are English and have qualified to play for Ireland through an anomaly.

This ridiculous nationalistic justification is good enough for the British press to clutch the Irish to their hearts, after patronising them a little with talk of what a big chance this is for a little nation.

The second approach the British press are likely to adopt to the World Cup finals is that of football purists. Unchained from the burden of having to follow England's fortunes, the press will discover that what is really important is the way "the beautiful game" is played. Of course they are right.

We would all prefer to see flowing, passing football. However, there is some hypocrisy here. If England were playing, it would not matter how they win, as long as they win.

Finally to top off this odd mixture of nationalism and football purism, there will undoubtedly be a patronising semi-racist view of the African teams competing. These could emerge as strong footballing powers at the World Cup.

This World Cup will mark a new height in the commercialisation of sport. The competition and many of the teams themselves are endorsing a multitude of products.

For instance, Mac Donalds are the official burgers of the World Cup, Coca Cola are the official soft drink, Budweiser the official beer, and Guinness (surprise, surprise) the official beer, or rather porter, of the Irish squad. Oddly enough, a diet of beer, fizzy drinks and burgers is hardly what you'd recommend to an aspiring footballer. But, then again, in honesty this rubbish has very little to do with football and an awful lot to do with capitalism.

There will also be, no doubt, a thoroughly nauseating and irritating cartoon World Cup mascot, who will be sued to open up the 6 year olds and under market (who are less likely to be interested in football) to the constant stream of soft drink and burger advertising.

The merchandising and selling of this World Cup is a disgustingly exploitation process. It has nothing to do with football.

Football is about the kids, right across the world who kick balls or cans or whatever they can get hold of, around endlessly, emulating their heroes.

Football is about the millions of ordinary people right across the world whose only escape from their daily drudgery is playing or watching football. For many football is their only way out.

Despite the nationalism, the Americanisations and commercialisation, if you are a football fan, like I am, the finals will be unmissable. They provide a platform for the finest international football with all the beauty, passion and intensity that entails.

Whether you are a football fan or not, if you take my advice, you'll miss the opening ceremony, ignore the vast majority of the commentators, avoid all the nonsense surrounding the games, fill your fridge with beer (preferably not Budweiser or Guinness) switch on the television and concentrate on the football. You will be seeing the greatest sporting spectacle this planet can produce, bar none.

End police racism and violence

SIX POLICEMAN and a court official burst into Harold Carr's flat in Camberwell last July.

In a struggle Harold Carr was beaten which resulted in severe bruising to his head and arms. Both his eyes were bleeding.

Disgustingly, Carr has just been found guilty of affray!

Despite his having a history of severe depression the police are pushing for an 18-month prison sentence for Carr. His sister has said that "prison would destroy him — he wouldn't be able to cope."

Carr's crime? Non-payment of his TV licence.

But also — just maybe — he is guilty of being black and working-class.

Chief Superintendent Hugh McBride said: "We don't believe there was excessive force used." The police told the court that Harold Carr's injuries had been caused by a heavy fall.

Rubbish!
It's not Harold Carr, it's the gang of six police who should be on trial. This attack is just one more example of the extent to which the police are out of control, unaccountable and racist.

With hang 'em, and flog 'em, "I'm dead tough on crime" scumbag Blair running for Labour leader it is more important than ever for youth and socialists in the labour movement to fight to make our leaders campaign for an end to police racism and violence.

That is why *Youth Fightback* and *Socialist Organiser* supports the Youth for Justice Campaign.

The Youth for Justice Campaign supports:

- An end to prosecutions based solely on confessions.
- An independent and elected police complaints body.
- Elected bodies to control the police with power over operational policy and budgets.
- The abolition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.
- The disbanding of the Special Branch and the Special Immigration police.



Harold Carr after his arrest

One rule for the cops, and another for the youth

THE TABLOID press are outraged. The *Sun*, the *Star* and the *Mirror* ran the story on their front page. The issue is whether a policeman should be allowed or even congratulated for smacking a fourteen-year old boy in the face until his nose bled.

PC Guscott, who hit a fourteen-year old after chasing him for knocking on someone's door and then running away, is now a hero for the tabloids and the Tories. They opposed the disciplining

of Guscott despite his being found guilty in court.

The tabloid press and their Tory mates think: "this police officer is no doubt being cheered by decent right-thinking people." And the *Star* are paying the pathetic £100 fine he got for the assault.

This sort of fist-in-the-face policing goes on all the time. Youth are harassed and often attacked by police.

Of course, any youth who gave a copper a punch in the face would be up

for a jail sentence and probably a beating as well.

Tory MP Teddy Taylor said: "I'm sickened and horrified that a police officer's career should be ruined for doing what the vast majority of sensible people would have done."

Many sensible people would like to punch Teddy Taylor on the nose for what his party have done to us. But that is not the point. We've had enough of the police throwing their weight around and attacking youth.



YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

Youth Fightback is...

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

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for details of our activity.

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

Euro-bigot of the week

FRANCESCO STORACE, Italian MP and media spokesperson of the neo-fascist National Alliance, is a homophobic git.

Last week he said: "To put it plainly, what they do in journalism, that's weak and flabby and a bit homosexual."

What the hell has who you sleep with got to go with being "weak and flabby"?

The National Alliance holds five senior ministerial posts in Silvio Berlusconi's Italian government. The National Alliance is a front for the fascist MSI. Both look to Mussolini as "the greatest statesman of the century."

Franco Osillini, chair of the gay rights group Arcigay-Arcilesbica, responded to Storace: "Who knows why the fascists in government have got it in for homosexuals? There's no smoke without fire."

History is all too clear about what fascists have in store for lesbians, gays and bi-sexuals. Thousands were killed in the death camps. Today's fascists regularly go in for gay-bashing.

That's why it is vital that socialists and the labour movement across Europe champion the full equal rights of people, whatever their sexuality. We must take on and smash the homophobes.

Ultimately the Italian fascists want not only to attack lesbians and gays and bi-sexuals but anyone who does not fit their crazed authoritarian world view, especially the labour movement and the left.

Youth and workers must unite against the fascists and their filthy bigotry.

Socialist youth

Join the Labour Party!

By Mick Duncan, Youth Officer of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network

LABOUT LEFT activists met last Saturday to discuss the way forward for Labour's left at the second Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network (SCGSN).

Fifty activists attended a youth caucus which unanimously welcomed the first edition of *Socialist Campaign Group Youth*, the new paper launched by the youth section of SCGSN.

The meeting elected a new youth officer for the network and supported the establishment of a properly organised youth section of the CGSN.

The meeting discussed the need to help set up campaigning Labour youth groups across the country and the need for youth groups to have a democratic voice in the Labour Party, presenting socialist answers to youth and drawing young people into the Party.

It is only the campaigning left in Labour that can attract youth to the party. We can also halt the decline of youth in the party resulting from the shift to the right and the Kinnock-led destruction of Labour's old youth structure, the Young Socialists.

The new Young Labour groups, though stripped of all say in the party, offer the left a foothold to organise campaigning youth sections of the party that can win young people to socialism and to Labour. In this context, the creation of a united youth party of the Labour

left formed around the Socialist Campaign Group is a big step forward.

Every young socialist who understands the centrality of Labour to working-class politics should support this initiative and sell *Socialist Campaign Group Youth*.

Socialist Campaign Group Youth

20p a copy from 15a Langham Road, London N15 3QX.
Cheques to "Socialist Youth."

Campaign Group Supporters meet

Livingstone candidature divides the Labour left

By Tom Rigby

WHAT THE left should do in the Labour leadership election dominated discussion at last weekend's 400 strong meeting of the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network.

The vast majority of the conference was united around the idea that it would be wrong to abstain in the contest and that it was vital to do everything possible to stop Tony Blair winning.

A victory for Blair was seen by many present as opening up the danger of further attacks on the Labour Party's trade union links, and the Party's limited commitments on trade union rights, full employment and the minimum wage.

Conference voted by a big majority for a resolution moved by Dave Barter from Manchester Central CLP which called for a vote to stop Blair and a campaign by the Network to raise key working-class demands in the elections.

Another motion which called for support for a Campaign Group candidate caused far more controversy.

No one objected *in principle* to the idea of standing a candidate, but many felt that the left would be making a big mistake if there was a re-run of Ken Livingstone's botched leadership bid of 1992.

An amendment from Bryn Griffiths of Hackney North tried to address this concern. It asked that no public announcement of a candidature should be made until sufficient nominations had been won from MPs to ensure that the left got on the ballot paper.

This amendment was only narrowly lost. In the end the following position was passed:

"A candidate of the Labour left is essential to give voice to the wide support within the party for the policies of the left to achieve full

employment, reduce military spending, defend universal benefits, enact the national minimum wage at a meaningful level, restore trade union rights, increase the representation of women and black people, work for a united Ireland and strengthen party/union links.

We therefore urge a member of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs to seek nomination as candidate for Party leader and ask the Socialist Campaign Group to collectively support such a candidate."

As readers will see this does not amount to a specific nomination of Ken Livingstone as the media have claimed but is rather a general statement about the need for a left candidate. Livingstone himself did not even attend the conference to explain to people why he was thinking about standing.

Sadly, the debate on the issue revealed that many on the Labour left are more interested in token gestures than serious campaigning.

Redmond O'Neill of *Socialist Action* — a prominent member of Livingstone's entourage — even went so far as to suggest that a left campaign could be similar to the stunt candidature of right-wing maverick Denzil Davies — O'Neill declared that "If Denzil Davies can do it why can't we!"

Interestingly, O'Neill and other Livingstone supporters did not feel confident enough to openly nominate their man. Instead, they left it to *Socialist Outlook*, whose members privately despise Livingstone, to move the resolution calling for a Campaign Group candidate.

For *Outlook*, the call for a Socialist Campaign Group candidate serves the purpose of uniting their different factions — some of whom would abstain without a left candidate while others would vote to stop Blair.

This is a convenient way for a small group to avoid splitting, but it is no way for the serious left to relate to an election in which over four and a half million people are entitled to vote.

The left and the Labour Party We must

THE ELECTION campaign for the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party represents a genuinely new development for the British working-class movement.

It is therefore absolutely vital for the left in the party and the unions to get their priorities right. We need to reach out beyond the narrow layer of ward and trade union activists to the much broader audience that is made up of literally millions of working-class people. We need to focus on the single most important issue in the campaign: the need to stop Tony Blair.

Blair is not like any other Labour politician in this contest. He represents the hard-right wing of the party. He is a bitter opponent of trade unions and trade unionism and is a friend of the billionaire media and political establishment.

Blair is so right-wing that as Labour's Shadow Home Secretary he failed to

denounce the arming of London's police or even to vote against the abolition of the right to silence. As employment spokesman he spent most of his time attacking picketing and solidarity action while supporting the abolition of the closed shop. He has supported the total exclusion of the trade unions from Labour Party affairs.

To repeat. The key issue is defeating Blair. It is the job of the serious left to reach out to the 65% of the party's membership who despite the last decade of right-wing counter-revolution still think, according to one recent academic survey, that "the key question in British politics is the class struggle between Labour and Capital." The left should be seeking out the ordinary members who think this, vote with them against Blair and organise to raise basic working-class demands in the party.

This is an enormous political opportunity for the left. We should seize it.

What you can do

- Circulate the "Stop Blair" statement (see text of resolution on this page)
- Give Labour and trade union activists a chance to discuss the issues and be influenced by each others' arguments rather than the capitalist media. Get your District Labour Party or Trades Council to hold a public debate on the leadership, with all the candidates invited to attend or send representatives. If you can't do that, get your CLP or CLP officers to call an open members' meeting.
- Organise to circulate campaign literature to as many trade unionists and Labour Party members as possible.

The issue

By Tony Benn MP

THE GREATEST danger facing the new Labour Party leadership will come if it continues to rely on the unpopularity of the Conservative government to carry it into office when the general election comes.

Everyone in the Labour Party desperately wanted to see the present government removed from office at the earliest possible moment but, if we are serious about it, we have to present ourselves as a real alternative with clear ideas about what we should do if the people entrust us with a majority in the next parliament.

That means that we have to explain precisely what has gone wrong, and expose the philosophy of greed which lies at the heart of modern capitalism, putting profit before people and deliberately using unemployment and homelessness as weapons of fear to secure obedience to the will of the rich and the powerful so that they can retain their privileges.

Labour must translate its long-held principles into solemn commitments to deal, at

What we say...

Stop Blair!

Resolution on the Labour leadership election moved by Dave Barter, Manchester Central CLP

THIS CONFERENCE believes that it is not possible for those of us who want to see a campaigning Labour Party which opposes the Tory Government to abstain in the forthcoming leadership election.

A victory for Tony Blair would open up the prospect of renewed attacks on the trade union link and also threaten even the most limited policy commitments the Party still has, such as on the minimum wage.

This conference therefore resolves to actively

engage in the leadership campaign calling for a vote to stop Blair and by raising the following key demands:

- The restoration of trade union rights including the right to strike, take solidarity action, and picket effectively;
- Rebuilding the Welfare State and public services;
- No Lib/Lab pact. Defend Labour/union links;
- A 35 hour working week with no loss of pay;
- A £4.05 per hour minimum wage.

The Network officers should produce a leaflet along these lines designed for the broadest possible distribution.

The Campaign Group the leadership election

Alan Simpson MP, the secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, presented this report to last weekend's meeting of the Supporters Network. It provides an honest and accurate picture of the real basis of support that exists amongst left MPs for different tactical options in the leadership contest.

THE ENTIRE party has seen speculation about who will and who will not stand. The Campaign Group has been no less prone to this than any other body.

I have to say to you that "unity" would not be the first word to spring to mind to describe the Campaign Group's response to this matter.

Let me put things in context. The Campaign Group has 28 MPs. In order to have a candidate you need the nomination of 34 MPs. This is going to be very difficult to achieve between the

Campaign Group meeting on Wednesday (15 June) and the close of nominations on Thursday (16 June).

It is by no means certain that the Campaign Group can actually get a commitment off its own members to come in behind a candidate.

If that were possible it would probably have been behind Denis Skinner or Tony Benn, both of whom were absolutely adamant that they will not even entertain the thought of standing.

Several other names have come up. Dawn Primarolo, Alice Mahon and Audrey Wise have all committed themselves to supporting Margaret Beckett. Harry Cohen has said he is supporting John Prescott. Denis Skinner's comment — and this is as close as he's got to nominating anyone — is that "Robin Cook is no worse than any of the other bastards."

And Ken's name has been put forward. Where it was left as far as Ken was concerned was that Ken went away from the last Campaign Group meeting with the very clear knowledge that in

Labour leadership election

unite to stop Blair!



Labour competes in the advertising stakes — but this will not win us an election

s in this election

once, with the most pressing problems that face most people today.

These commitments can easily be summarised:

- The restoration of full employment, harnessing the nation's savings to rebuild our manufacturing base, renew our infrastructure, improve our environment and build the homes that the nation needs.
- The protection and extension of our public services in health, education and welfare retaining universal benefits, and introducing a minimum wage.
- The restoration of the link between pensions and average earnings, and a move towards an earlier retirement age for those who wish to take advantage of it.
- A major defence conversion programme to release resources for civil re-construction and international aid programmes to strengthen world peace.
- The establishment of democratic control in all privatised public utilities and quangos to make them fully accountable to those whom they serve and those who work in them.
- The repeal of anti-trade union legislation

and moves to bring it into line with the UN International Labour Organisation convention.

- The return to all local authorities of the right to serve the communities they represent and be truly accountable to them.
- Constitutional reform to end discrimination of all kinds, extend democracy at every level, and restore the power of parliament to approve, amend and repeal all the laws under which we are governed.
- The closest possible co-operation across the whole of Europe, harmonising our policies at our own pace in accordance with the decisions taken in each country.
- A fair tax system that takes full account of the ability to pay.
- A new world order based upon a reformed and democratic United Nations free from super-power domination.

If the Labour Party were to campaign actively for support for these policies it would be surprised to find the extent of the backing it would get, as the public are now well ahead of the party leadership and are just waiting for Labour to articulate these aspirations.

Group and Election

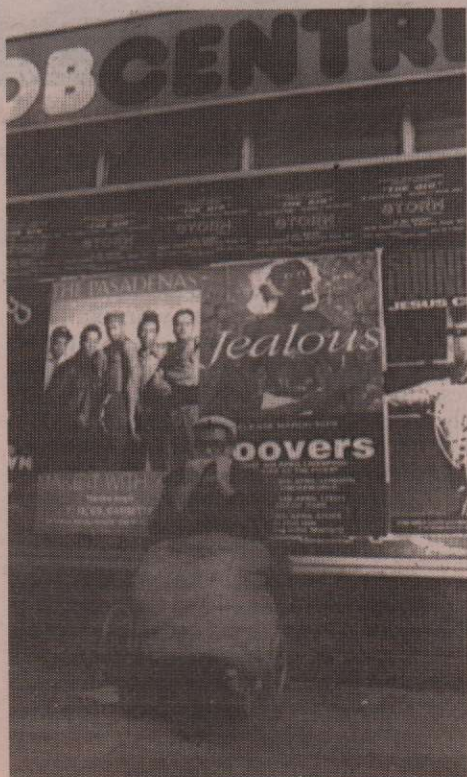
order to get a nomination that was worth putting in he would have to find at least six and possibly ten other members of the PLP to agree to nominate him.

There was a very real fear that if we put forward a nomination that couldn't even get the 34 nominations we would look greater fools than anything else. This was a very strong and profound feeling that it would be wrong of me not to pass on to this conference.

I haven't spoken to Ken in the last couple of days but I have been thrown into all sorts of confusion because I have heard of an endorsement for Denzil Davies, and of Ken's support for Margaret Beckett.

At this point in time — apart from hearing on the television last night that Ken may be about to put his name forward — I can't tell people anything.

This is not the kind of message I want to bring, but it does illustrate the real weakness of the left in parliament and in the party outside.



What they say...

Why we should support Beckett

By Vladimir Derer, Honorary Secretary of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

THE LABOUR left should seek to make the greatest possible input into the party's leadership contest. At the present time this will give it the opportunity to address a far wider constituency than it usually reaches.

All the candidates presently in the frame went along with the rightward drift of the party. A candidate for the Labour left is essential to give voice to the wide support within the party for the policies of the left to achieve full employment, reduce military spending, defend universal benefits, enact the national minimum wage, restore trade union rights, secure greater representation of women and black people, work for a united Ireland and strengthen party/union links. Without a candidate of the Labour left there will be no voice for such policies in the leadership contest and far less pressure on other candidates to say where they stand on these issues.

Given that the party's rules give the parliamentary party a veto over candidates, the parliamentary left, after consulting with the rank and file left, is alone in a position to provide party members with a real choice by offering such a platform of alternative policies. There is no way of putting across alternative policies without standing a candidate who supports them.

The left should not be deterred by the require-

ment of 12.5 per cent support by MPs. Indeed a nomination campaign among CLPs and unions is the only way of exposing the fact that the choice of the leader has been transferred back to the Parliamentary Labour Party. Should the left prove incapable of making an input the leadership contest it will be virtually ceasing to act as an independent political force.

For all of these reasons this conference should call for a member of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs to present themselves as a candidate for the Labour leadership and for collective support to that candidate by the Socialist Campaign Group.

In the unfortunate event of the left not finding the requisite 34 nominations its only recourse would be to support the least unacceptable potential alternative. This would mean supporting Margaret Beckett if she stands for party leader because on at least four issues her position comes nearest to the Left's: (i) retention of the link with the unions and opposition to OMOV; (ii) opposition to proportional representation; (iii) support for progressive taxation; (iv) support for women's rights in the party. In addition the choice of a woman would be the most modernising thing the party could do.

Notwithstanding these considerations the best way of drawing attention to the left's alternative is to stand a left candidate.

This was a statement from the CLPD to the Campaign Group Supporters' Network conference

Back Ken Livingstone

By Pete Firmin

THE ELECTION is an opportunity the left cannot afford to miss. It gives the chance to put forward alternative policies on the issues facing the movement, both internally and externally.

The Socialist Campaign Group of MPs itself needs to recognise that failing to stand makes them invisible and would contribute to a further decline and weakening of the left.

Much of the debate is coloured by the fact that it is known Ken Livingstone is the only Campaign Group member likely to stand.

He is mistrusted by much of the left but at least he recognises the political significance of this election.

Those who don't like him have ducked out of arguing for the Campaign Group to come up with an alternative candidate, but instead used it as part of the reasoning for not standing at all.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Socialist Action share *Socialist Outlook's* view that it is necessary for the Campaign Group to collectively decide on a candidate and campaign for them. A London Labour Left meeting on Thursday May 26 unanimously endorsed a Socialist Campaign Group member standing as a candidate.

Leading supporters of *Labour Briefing* are in effect reinforcing the weakness of the Campaign Group MPs. They argue for a campaign around policies, but without a candidate, arguing that

support would be so low as to be damaging.

But a campaign without a candidate would not get a hearing.

Briefing also argue victory for Blair would be such a catastrophe that the left has to throw its weight behind a candidate with a chance of winning from the start.

Socialist Organiser takes a similar view, while openly displaying its hatred of Livingstone (more latent among *Briefing* supporters). It argues for committees in the unions to organise around alternative policies, a fine sounding idea, which needs taking up by the left, but which is severely restricted in the context of the election.

The time-table means that these would hardly get established before the election is over, and without a candidate supporting them, those policies would have little purchase.

Arguing that a Left candidate is a non-starter, it throws its support behind Prescott as the candidate to back, because of his support in the unions.

If there is a need to unite around an alternative to Blair, the exhaustive ballot allows for this without detracting from a left campaign, but *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser* think it necessary to plump for (a poor) second best from the start.

Of course, Prescott and Beckett might make some left-sounding noises during the campaign, but if the Left rolls over and dies, they will take that as an indication of its inability to actually fight for what it wants.

Abridged from Socialist Outlook 11 June

Trotskyists in the Second World War

“Intrepid against the stream”

NOW THAT there is a public commemoration of the British and US soldiers who died during the Allied invasion of Hitler-occupied France on “D-Day” (6 June 1944) and after, it is appropriate that Trotskyists should recall our comrades who fought and died under the banner of international socialism during the Second World War.

This brief summary was written — part of a larger work — in 1958 by Michael Raptis (Pablo), a Greek Trotskyist active in the French underground during the Nazi occupation. For 30 years after that, his political name, “Pablo”, became synonymous with a tendency within post-Trotsky “Trotskyism” to identify the Stalinist states with the expansion of a deformed world revolution. Since the mid-’70s he has held to views not far from our own, that the Stalinist states were a distinct form of class society.

The movement for a Fourth International was launched by Trotsky in 1933 after the so-called Communist International of Stalin, a mass party in Germany, had peacefully allowed Hitler to come to power (January 1933).

The Fourth International was proclaimed — though in fact it was no more than a tiny propaganda organisation — in September 1938.

In Europe it fell apart as an organisation in 1940; was reconstituted after 1944; and shattered into political fragments in the post-war period. Today there are a number of small organisations spuriously claiming to be the “Fourth International.” No authoritative centre exists.

IT IS not yet possible even to rough out a picture, however incomplete, of the practical activity of the militants of the Fourth International during the Second World War, and of the exact cost of that activity. It is not yet well known, for example, what was the activity of the Trotskyists in the USSR, in the concentration camps and prisons. From some testimony provided by persons freed from the Soviet camps who have been able to reach the West, we know, however, that the Trotskyist militants who survived the Stalinist terror of the years 1936 to 1938 continued their indomitable resistance, and were among the politically most solid and active elements in these places of desolation.

Nor do we know either all the details about the activity of our militants in the concentration camps and prisons of Nazi Germany, or of Chiang Kai-Shek’s China.

The only public trials attempted during the war, and the only condemnations to death or to prison of revolutionary leaders and militants accused of opposition to the imperialist war, in *both camps*, had Trotskyists as their victims. It was thus that in Holland the Gestapo assassinated, after a public trial on April 12th 1942, nine well known leaders of the RSAP, Trotskyists and pro-Trotskyists, among them Comrades Sneevliet and Dolleman.

In Vienna, Trotskyist militants were executed after a public trial, as well as in Germany.

In the United States, 18 militants of the SWP and members of the CIO Teamster’s Local 544 in Minneapolis were indicted under the Smith Act for the propaganda of revolutionary ideas against the imperialist war being carried on by the United States, and were sentenced to prison terms running from 12 to 16 months.

In England, in 1943 and 1944, the Trotskyists played an outstanding role in the wave of



Streetfighting, Paris, just days before Liberation

strikes that marked the reawakening of political consciousness in the British workers and their opposition to the imperialist war. The capitalist press accused the Trotskyists, bourgeois justice hounded several leaders held to be responsible for the agitation among the workers, unlike the Stalinist Party which was preaching sacred union around the “national” leadership of Churchill.

But it was in the countries of continental Europe occupied by the Nazis that the Fourth International had to pay the heaviest tribute for its consistent and courageous struggle against the imperialist war and against the regime that generated it. In France, very early, several comrades fell victims to the ferocious Nazi repression. Among the first were Marc Bourhis and Pierre Gueguen, shot on 22 October 1941 at the camp of Chateaubriant, and dozens of other comrades arrested and deported, most of whom died in the concentration camps. In October 1943, the Gestapo arrested the secretary of the PCI, French Section of the Fourth

International, Comrade Marcel Hic, and sent him to Buchenwald, then to Dora, where he died.

Despite this repression, which again and again decimated their ranks, the Trotskyist militants in France reorganised and carried on a tireless activity. For four years the Trotskyist press appeared regularly, most often in printed form. In fact, beside the Stalinist press, the Trotskyist publications were the only ones to appear regularly and in printed form. *La Verité* appeared in duplicated form in the underground, beginning with August 1940, calling for resistance to the Nazi occupation. The PCI brought out in all 73 clandestine issues of *La Verité*, of which 19 were duplicated and 54 printed, beside other clandestine Trotskyist publications in France.

Quatrième Internationale, theoretical review of the European Secretariat [of the Fourth International] formed in 1943, after a few duplicated issues also appeared in printed form, beginning in late 1943.

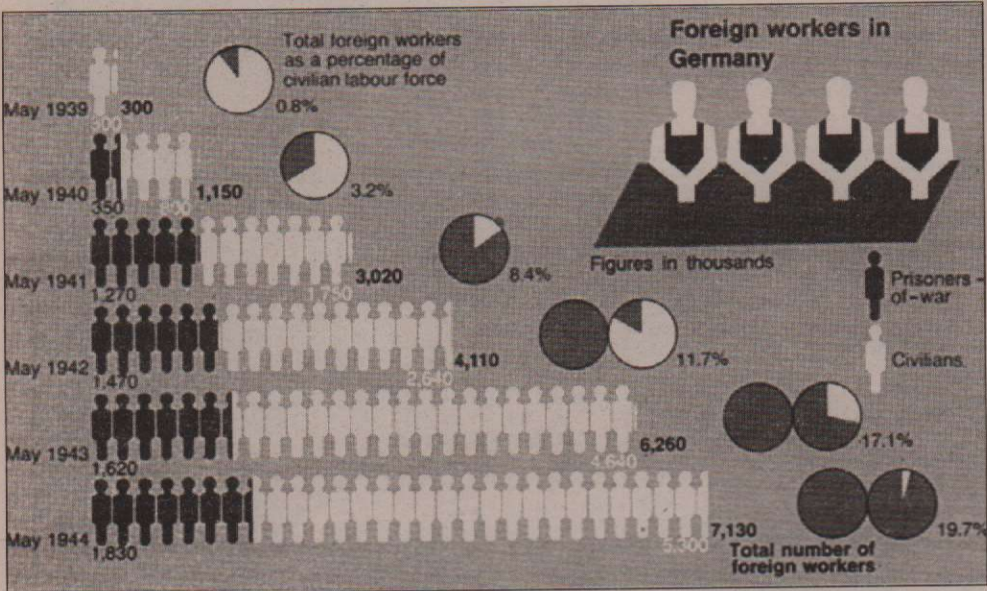
Special mention must be made of a printed

organ in German, *Arbeiter und Soldat*, aimed at propaganda among the German soldiers in France and other countries of Europe. Also a publication of the European Secretariat, it had as editor Comrade Paul Widelin, a German emigré Trotskyist.

Arbeiter und Soldat was the only organ of revolutionary Marxism in German; its daring distribution among German soldiers cost the lives of several German comrades, soldiers and civilians, and of French comrades associated with this work.

Deeds of high heroism and devotion to the revolutionary cause of the International marked the activity of Trotskyists throughout the war, both in France and elsewhere. It is enough to mention the names of comrades such as the Belgian Leon Lesoil, former leader of the Belgian CP and then of the Belgian Trotskyist organisation, arrested in 1941, who died in deportation in Germany and Abram Leon, a remarkably gifted young leader of the Belgian organisation, the author of the only book with a materialist concep-

ainst



The Nazi empire used foreign labourers: at the beginning of the war many were voluntary — hungry, but voluntary — labourers recruited from western Europe, but as the war went on and Nazi barbarism reached its height, most were coerced, semi-starved and starved, slave labourers from eastern Europe. The diagram charts their increasing “contribution” to the Nazi war effort.

tion on the Jewish question, who was arrested and died in deportation; of the Italian comrade Blasco, former leader of the Italian CP, founder of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in Italy, imprisoned by the Nazis and later assassinated by the Stalinists; of dozens of Greek comrades assassinated by the fascists or by the Stalinists (in December 1944) among them the renowned name of Pantelis Pouliopoulos, former secretary of the Greek CP; of several Polish, Chinese and other comrades.

Not long before the liberation of Paris, at the beginning of the Spring of 1944, the Gestapo arrested four Trotskyist militants, two women and two men, among whom was Comrade Widelin. Taken to police headquarters, each had an extraordinary fate. One of the men comrades succeeded in jumping from the second storey of the building and escaping, an almost unique exploit in Nazi-occupied Paris. Comrade Widelin was taken to the Bois de Vincennes and left there executed. He was not, however, quite dead. Transported by a passer-by to the Rothschild Hospital, he was able to get word to the comrades outside, who went to work to organise a way to carry him off from the hospital, if necessary by force.

But the day before the plan was to be carried out, the Gestapo, tipped off by a member of the hospital staff, was able to get its hands a second time on the victim and to finish him off.

This year (1958) there died in Belgium, in the most complete anonymity, Comrade Gallois, a mineworker, who was deported during the war to Buchenwald. One day there the SS, laughing, displayed to the assembled deportees, themselves prostrated and scarcely able to stand on their feet, a mass of human beings who were only skeletons, stinking and cov-

ered with vermin. They were Jews whom the SS were getting ready to “gas” except in case — they stated — some “charitable soul” would take it on himself to clean them up one by one. Nobody in the camp, Christian or otherwise, stirred to undertake the work, save Comrade Gallois who stepped humbly out of the ranks and offered to accomplish the task, on condition that the SS would respect their promise and spare the lives of these Jews. And for weeks on end Comrade Gallois steadily carried out his mission.

The death of Comrade Pouliopoulos is no less characteristic of the human quality and the mettle of several of our comrades who carried the banner of the Fourth International during the Second World War. Comrade Pouliopoulos, in prison since 1939 was executed with three other Trotskyists in June 1943, chosen among the first victims of fascist repression in Greece. He made a speech to the soldiers of the execution squad in their own tongue, producing a real mutiny among them so that they refused to fire. And it was finally the officers who had to fire, killing

Comrade Pouliopoulos and his companions. Our comrades fell, not for the “Fatherland” not for “Democracy” but for the Revolution and for Socialism.

The young militants of the Fourth International will know how to perpetuate the memory of our heroic dead of the Second World War who, under various names, whether they be called Widelin or Leon or Lesoir or Hic or Blasco or Pouliopoulos or Gallois, succeeded in showing the same countenance: that of the revolutionary Marxist militant, intrepid against the stream, intrepid against the class enemy, proud to defend against wind and tide and in every place and circumstance the banner of the Fourth International.

“Deeds of high heroism and devotion to the revolutionary cause of the International marked the activity of Trotskyists throughout the war.”

What the underground Trotskyist paper for German soldiers said about ‘D-Day’ “Hitler and Eisenhower: are there only two possibilities?”

The Trotskyists in World War 2 tried to unite workers in all the warring countries — German, French, English, American, Italian — on a common programme of social revolution against the capitalist classes on both sides. For this they faced repression on all sides — concentration camps and death in Nazi-occupied Europe, jail for some of them in Britain and America. One of their most heroic efforts was the newspaper *Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier), put out by French and German Trotskyists for German soldiers in occupied France. The activists putting it out were all eventually arrested and sent to their deaths. This is what they said in a special issue dated June 1944, after “D-Day.”

A FEW weeks ago, English radio gave us the programme of these sad specimens. Now they have at last shown their true face.

While they were holding forth on the good fortune and the liberties which they wanted to present to humanity after the war, they were silently preparing the usual means of felling the popular masses who rebel in Europe: the big stick.

To prevent “anarchy”, that is the liberation of the working class, and to preserve “order”, that is the capitalist system of exploitation with its crises and its wars, they have created an army of occupation and a staff of civil inspectors “who all know how to handle a machine-gun”. This plan is to be crowned by the installation of military governments all across Europe.

In Germany, they want to replace Hitler by Eisenhower, to exchange one plague for another.

They know what unparalleled misery awaits the workers after the war in shattered Germany.

They know that the German worker, exploited to the limit, is to sweat for double profits, for his own exploiters and for foreign capital.

But they also know that the proletarians of Europe will rise up together against the real cause of their misery, capital and its lackeys.

They imagine that they can stamp out this formidable revolution with the usual good old means.

That is why they want to replace the hangmen of the Gestapo with expeditionary forces from Scotland Yard.

That is how they want to silence us, tie our hands, and impose on us all the misery of the post-war period...

What does the German soldier have to defend?

The terror of the Gestapo? The socialism of... overtime, Sunday working, deductions from wages, speed-up, the most shameless capitalist exploitation, militarism, the great promises of the Second World War?

Let Hitler and Krupp, Goebbels and Siemens, defend their paradise themselves! We want to return to our homeland!

But if we do not want to carry on this hopeless battle, does that mean that we want to give the reactionary Eisenhower a free passage to Berlin? Hitler or Eisenhower? Are there only those two possibilities?

There is a third: the workers’ revolution in Germany, in Europe, and world-wide, which will radically destroy the capitalist system and put an end to crises and wars, and which, alone, can bring the working

people peace, freedom and bread.

Of course, the British and American bourgeoisie intend to drown this revolution in blood. And to do that, they will not blush to use the apparatus of repression inherited from German capital, be it the police, the special troops, or even the old Nazi formations.

But there is a blank in these gentlemen’s accounts! They have done their sums without thinking of the British and American workers.

In the three first months of 1943, the British workers had 200,000 striker-days of action. This year, for the same period, there have been nearly a million and a half.

Soldiers! Comrades! Listen to these figures! Understand what they mean! They are a salutation from our class comrades in struggle on the other side of the Channel, crying to us: “We, the British workers, we understand a little better each day that the capitalists are not waging this war to get rid of Hitler and the Gestapo, but for their own imperialist interests and for their profits.”

The British workers have also taken up the struggle against poverty, war and capital. Against a proletarian Germany, the Churchills and the Roosevelts can unleash the dogs of reaction. But they will need them to deal with their own proletariat.

The dilemma is not: Hitler or Eisenhower, but: who will beat Hitler? Eisenhower, or the German proletariat?

If the German proletariat brings down Hitler before the definitive military defeat and the occupation of Germany, and if it puts its own organs of power in place everywhere — workers’ and soldiers’ soviets — then the American and British military cliques will have to show openly to the whole world what they are in reality: not liberators from the Hitlerite dictatorship, but the stranglers of the European revolution, the champions of the military dictatorship of Anglo-American imperialism. The march towards the American and British workers’ revolutions will thus take a great step forward.

The German revolution, as response to the Anglo-American invasion, will give to the proletariat of Germany, of Europe, and of the whole world, a tremendous lead against world reaction!

But revolutions do not drop from the sky. They are prepared in innumerable partial struggles in which the revolutionary class welds itself together. But today such struggles are breaking out almost nowhere in Germany.



Edition of *La Verité*, paper of the French section of the Fourth International, a Trotskyist publication of the French underground which appeared from 1940.

Dennis Potter: child of 1945 socialism

By Jim Denham

DENNIS POTTER spent much of his life quite literally in agony. Judging by his final, unforgettable interview with Melvyn Bragg, the prospect of imminent death was almost a relief. But even that catharsis was to be denied him: he lived just long enough to witness the death of his wife. If Potter had a God (and that was never quite clear), He was not strong on the quality of mercy.

Potter's deity did, however, save him from one awful fate: becoming a mainstream Labour MP. He stood in the safe Tory seat of Hertfordshire East in the 1964 general election and found it a thoroughly depressing experience which, combined with the onset of a rare and painful illness, served to put him off a career in politics.

"I would have been a politician," he said, "a glib, rhetoric-speaking fraud — there was always that in me."

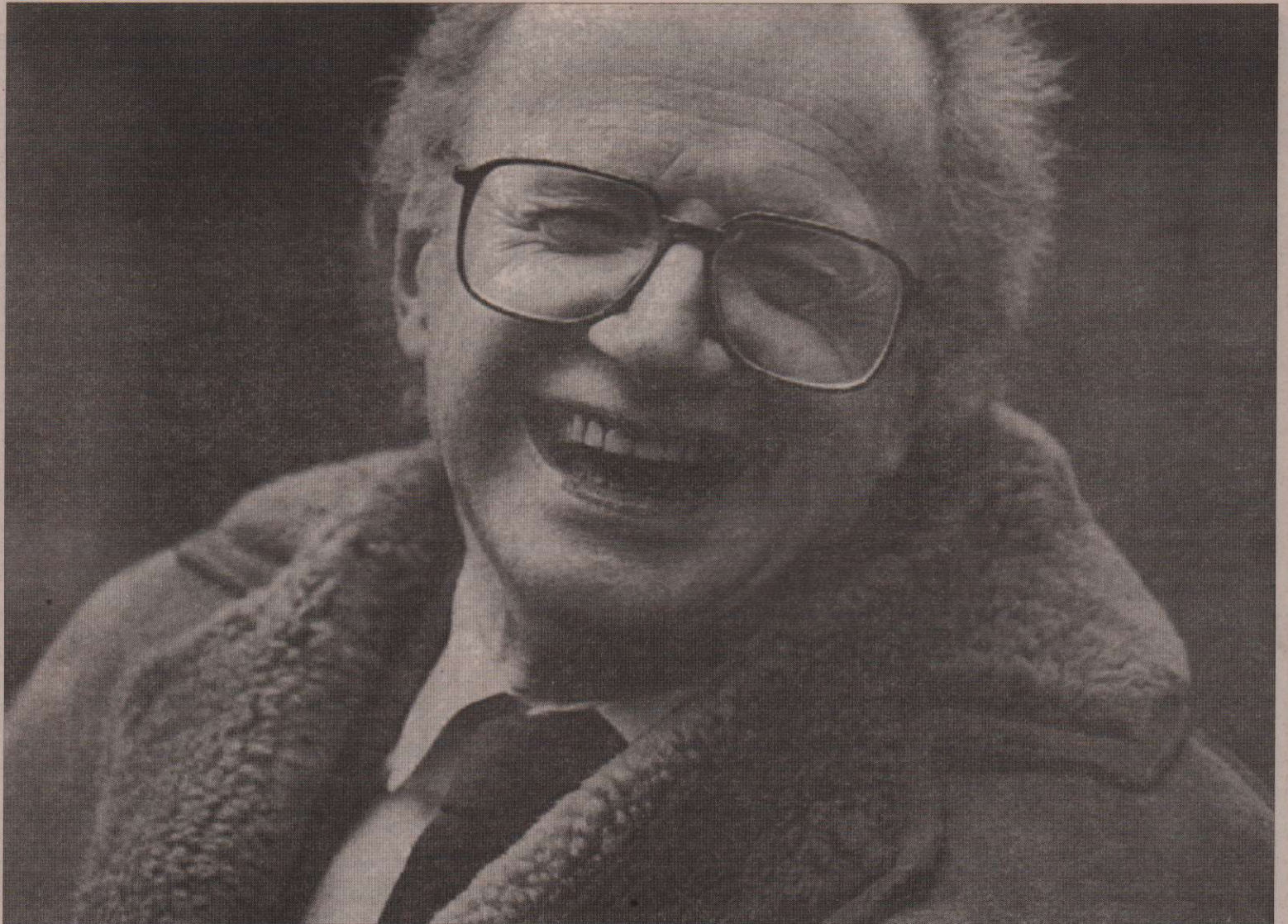
One wonders what he thought of Tony Blair.

Potter was a child of the 1945 Labour government: its achievements, real and imagined, defined socialism for him and a generation of working-class people coming to adulthood after the war. The creation of the NHS, the nationalisation of key industries, the implementation of the 1944 Education Act — these things took on a symbolic as well as a practical importance that it is difficult for later generations to comprehend.

Potter's socialism, like that of Orwell before him, was based upon hard to define but powerfully felt concepts like "social justice" and "common decency." His incandescent hatred of Mrs Thatcher, Rupert Murdoch, John Birt and their ilk, was fuelled by the perception that they were dismantling everything that the Attlee government had created and turning a fundamentally decent society into something cruel, cheap and thoroughly nasty.

The image of flawed, frightened ordinary people groping in the dark for something better — for dignity, decency, love — runs through his work like a leitmotif.

It was there in his first TV play, *Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton* (about a disillusioned Labour MP) and it was the central theme of his most famous (and proba-



Dennis Potter: his socialism was vague and romantic. But it was a real socialism.

bly best) work *Pennies from Heaven*, in which the Bob Hoskins character escapes from a desperate, meaningless existence in 1930s Britain through the saccharine lyrics of the pop songs of the day.

Of course, it was never a simple matter of good against evil: the "hero" of *Pennies from*

"Potter's deity did save him from one awful fate: becoming a mainstream Labour MP."

Heaven was a "tawdry, adulterous little lying soul" while in *Brimstone and Treacle* the devil rapes a brain-damaged girl and cures her of her disability.

Not surprisingly, *Brimstone and Treacle* was banned by the BBC and not shown publicly for 11 years. Sex often got Potter into trouble with the top brass at

the BBC and the likes of Mrs Whitehouse. He usually fought back with vigour, arguing that the famous sub-arboreal sex scene in *The Singing Detective* (for instance) was essential to the meaning of the play and not just gratuitous rumpy-pumpy. But he latterly conceded with *Blackeyes* that he might have gone too far. What had been intended as an attack on pornography and sexual exploitation had verged dangerously close to becoming the very thing it was attacking.

Even so, Potter was far from the "Dirty Dennis" of tabloid mythology. In fact his attitude to sex (and, come to that, life in general) was moralistic to the point of being quasi-religious. All he lacked was a firm belief in God (although in *Son of Man* he portrayed Christ as a militant shop steward. Naturally, that too fell foul of the Whitehouse brigade).

Apart from saving him from becoming a Labour MP, Potter's dour deity smiled on him in one other crucial respect: television and Potter reached their prime simultaneously, and for a brief

period between the mid-'70s and early '80s the BBC had a regime that was willing to give him something approaching free rein (the banning of *Brimstone and Treacle* notwithstanding). This was the period of Potter's greatest creativity, when he really hit his stride. He may have been partially helped too by a change

"Telly was the great democratic medium by which he could speak to the masses as well as the intelligentsia."

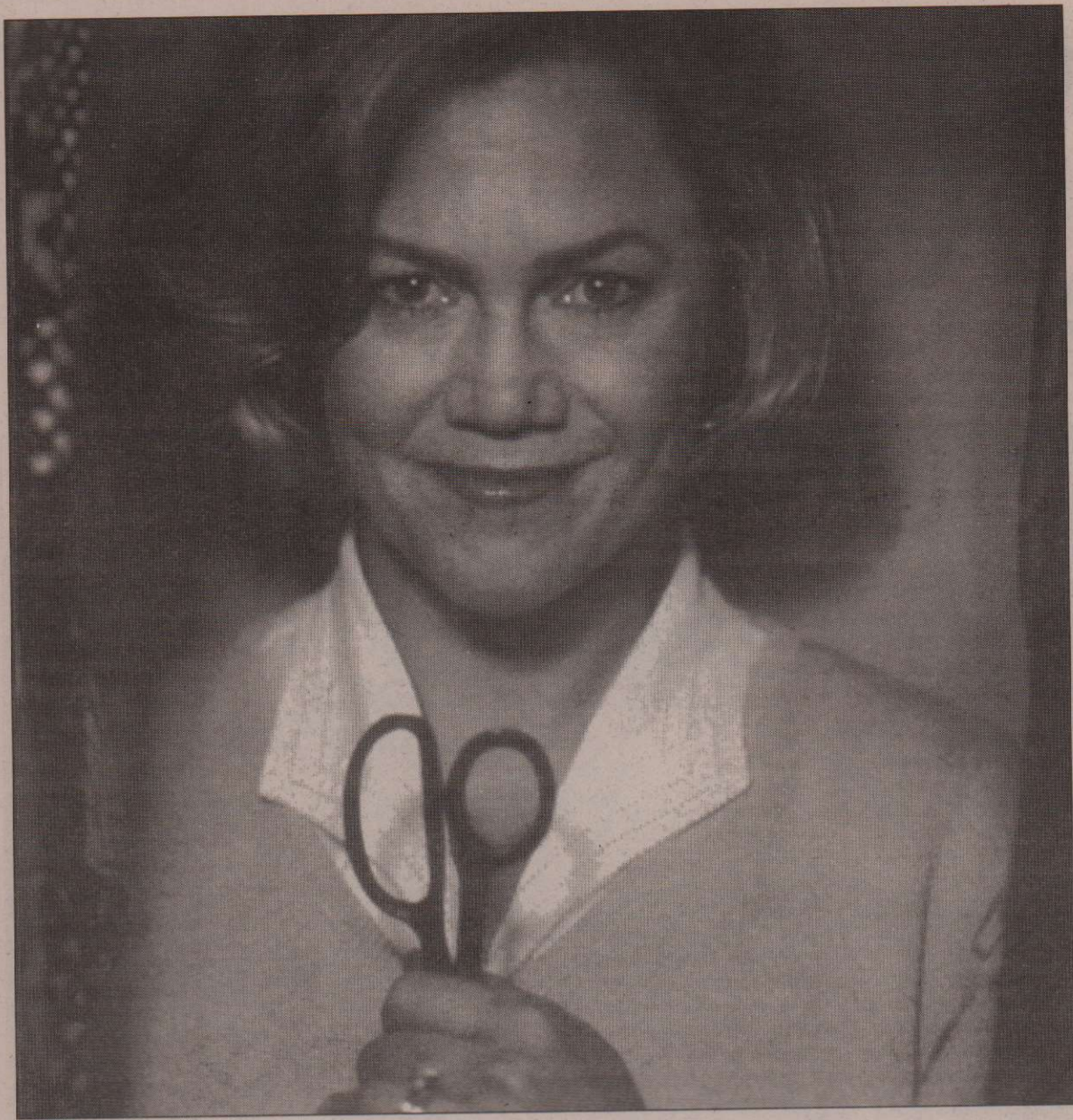
in his medication. But even that had a typically Potteresque sting in the tail: the new drug proved to be carcinogenic.

But it was the relatively liberal pre-Birt BBC regime that was crucial to Potter's flowering. Television was the only medium that really interested him and, again, the reason seems to

have been his grounding in 1945-style socialism: telly was the great democratic medium, the means by which he could speak to the masses as well as the intelligentsia.

And he succeeded: *Pennies from Heaven*, *The Singing Detective*, *Blackeyes* and *Lipstick on Your Collar* were all discussed in pubs, factories and offices by working-class people who would never have gone to the theatre or an "art" cinema. And yet what they were discussing was "art" — a complex, multi-layered, exploration of what makes human beings tick in the second half of the twentieth century. No wonder the present regime at the BBC — John Birt and his "croak-voiced Daleks" — enraged Potter, just as Thatcher, Major and Rupert Murdoch enraged him (he even called the cancer that killed him "Rupert").

His socialism was vague and romantic. But it was a real socialism, based upon humanity, compassion and anger. He was, maybe, a "Christian Socialist." But in a way that Tony Blair could never be described.



A stunning comic performance from Kathleen Turner

Good, unwholesome, family viewing



Matt Cooper
reviews
Serial Mom

Directed by
John Waters

HERE was time a when John Waters was the master of pure subterranean trash. He made *Polyester*, the world's only film that came with a scratch and sniff card, (a scratch and sniff card that mainly featured the smells of various bodily secretions). Waters went out to shock.

Then, with *Hairspray*, Waters proved that he could make films which, while quirky, were almost family viewing. These films were kitsch teen movies from hell. What bound the two Waters together was an off-beat sense of humour and a sharp eye for the quirky side of life.

With *Serial Mom* Waters proves that not only have his talents as a film maker not diminished, but the younger, sicker and grosser Waters still lives and breathes. Nothing here plumbs the depths of Waters' earlier *Pink Flamingos*

(wherein Divine eats the product of a Poodle that would disgust most of us if we trod in it), but *Serial Mom* is certainly not for those of a "nervous disposition."

Serial Mom is a one-joke movie. Kathleen Turner plays an average Baltimore housewife just oozing with rather too

But this all-American Mom also makes obscene phone calls, sends threatening letters and is a serial killer.

much all-American motherliness.

On the surface her only role in life is to look after her husband and kids. She is a good citizen who recycles all her household rubbish, and makes sure the nest is fully feathered. But this all-American Mom also makes obscene phone calls, sends threatening letters and is a serial killer.

The joy of Waters' comedy is that this isn't any kind of "dark side" or contradiction to the

cult of the mother — it is an aspect of it. American culture is a self-centred and greedy culture. While the film cannot be called a serious exploration of these themes it does make good comic capital of them.

Like any good American, Mom will kill for family and country, and she does. Kathleen Turner puts in an incredible comic performance that saves a plot that could have collapsed under its own, even by comic standards implausibility.

With equal verve and venom, Waters attacks the ideal American family and the adoration of serial killers as media stars. By the end of the film Mom is not despised and rejected, but fêted as a celebrity.

In a strange way this, like much of Waters' other work, comes across as a plea for a little more tolerance and understanding in the world.

There is not really enough plot to eke out the one-joke film to 96 minutes and the strain to make the film last this long shows. But this is what family viewing should be. If you have kids, smuggle them in past the 18 certificate. If you don't have kids, take your Mom.

Men who stand for nothing



Channel 4
Tuesdays 10pm

Geoff Ward
reviews *Little Napoleans*

CHANNEL 4's new town hall drama, *Little Napoleans* is very disappointing.

There have been many big issues in local government over the last decade. The rise and eventual defeat of the Labour left in the council chambers; gerrymandering in Tory councils; the election of a fascist to Tower Hamlets council; the growth of unelected quangos usurping control of one third of the public sector. *Little Napoleans*

confronts none of these things and instead focusses narrowly on the corruption and egotism of individual councillors.

Vijay and NK are both solicitors — one Asian, the other black — who get elected as Labour councillors.

They do not have one clear, worked-out political idea between the two of them, save a vague

urge to help their respective communities.

During the selection process, Vijay naively says that he is "a man for all seasons" and can "represent the ideas of everyone." Yet we are not told exactly where he stands when workers defend jobs and services and councillors cut back on them. They are both ignorant of Labour Party policies and Vijay doesn't think it incumbent on him to question them or convince voters to agree with them.

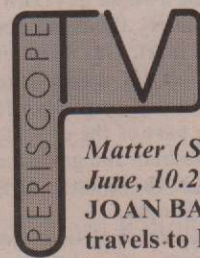
"Writer Michael Abbensett's characters are just not credible, even in right-wing terms."

Here, "getting at the Tories" means nobbling corrupt individual Tory councillors. At best, this pair will fight to stop the closure of a centre used by one community — if necessary at the expense of another.

Writer Michael Abbensett's characters are just not credible, even in right wing terms. He deliberately steered clear of political issues instead writing instead to show the "coming of age" of the black community.

By restricting the drama to the drives of trivial and petty council chamber egotists, Abbensett has produced a dull series.

Crime, punishment and other offences



By Wayne
Geoffries

Heart of the

Matter (Sunday 19 June, 10.25pm BBC1)
JOAN BAKEWELL travels to Boston to see

if there are lessons to be learned from US police forces' treatment of racial crimes, where laws and punishments have become much tougher.

First Sex (Tuesday 21st June, 9pm, C4)

IS A LIVELY 'women's' magazine series that this week looks at the workings of the Child Support Agency. Other topics include the misogynistic lyrics found in some rap

and ragga music and contraceptive advice available to 16 year olds.

The Petrov Affair (Wednesday 22nd & Thursday 23rd BBC1 11.15pm & 11.25pm)
DRAMA IN two parts which tells the story of Vladimir Petrov, a soviet spy who defected in 1954 and made all sorts of revelations about the Stalinist regime in Russia.

Screen Two: Criminal (Wednesday 22nd, 9pm, BBC2)
TELLS the story of teenager Simon Willerton, who committed suicide while in remand prison for the 'crime' of stealing a hot-water bottle from an unoccupied flat.

Still fighting: twenty-five years after Stonewall

Janine Booth, in the first of a two part article, assesses the history of lesbian and gay struggle since the Stonewall riot of 1969

THE STONEWALL Inn was a gay bar in New York's Greenwich village. It was one of many gay bars in New York that had been regularly raided by the police during the 1960s. But when the bar was raided on early Saturday morning, 28 June 1969 the customers did not — as was usual — disperse in an orderly fashion. Instead they stayed and protested.

The Tactical Police Force was called in and fighting broke out. For the next few nights, crowds confronted the cops in the streets around the Stonewall Inn.

Six months later, the police raided the Snakepit bar in New York. One of those arrested was a Cuban illegal immigrant. Desperate to escape persecution and deportation, he attempted to jump from the window of a police station and was impaled on the fence outside. He survived and disappeared. But crowds gathered and marched to the police station.

But it was the Stonewall raid and riot that has entered gay legend and marks the birth of the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement.

Lesbian and gay activists *did* begin to get organised after the Stonewall raid. On the first anniversary of Stonewall, five thousand marched in New York and the annual 'Pride' march was born. Before Stonewall, there were some fifty lesbian and gay organisations in the United States. Within four years, this figure would exceed 800.

Stonewall was able to ignite lesbian and gay activism partly because it happened in a much wider radical political context. In Sixties' America there were anti-Vietnam war protests, there was a militant black struggle, there was student political activism, and there was a new women's liberation movement.

The birth of this new, strident movement for gay equality took an organisational form with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). The GLF's philosophy was defiant, proud and uncompromising. It stressed the importance of "coming out" as a strategy for building a mass movement, seeing a non-apologetic homosexuality as a direct challenge to oppression and social norms. The GLF saw homosexuality as a political issue: "We reject society's attempts to impose sexual roles and definitions of our nature. We are stepping out of those roles and simplistic myths. We are going to be who we are... Babylon has forced us to commit ourselves to one thing — revolution." (New York GLF founding statement)

Similar campaigning organisations were set up in France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. *Gay News*, (later to be incorporated into *Gay Times*) was published from the GLF movement in Britain. The British branch of the GLF organised marches, built the annual Pride demo and other organised actions.

Although radical and active, GLF in Britain was also unstructured and disagreements rapidly became splits. Also the gay movement was dominated by men. To many women, it



Gay Pride demonstration, London, 1977. Photo: John Sturrock

seemed that many gay men did not take up women's issues as they should. At the same time, radical feminists were arguing that all men were the enemy, gay men included. The radical feminists split from the GLF.

What was needed was a different approach: one that insisted that the movement brought *together* women and men, fighting on the issues that affected — and should unite — both. This approach did not win out in the movement. The reason for this is partly due to the failure of the left to get sufficiently involved as well as on the sexism of some men and the radical feminists' antipathy to unity. We should not forget, for example, how the Militant-led Labour Party Young Socialists never raised the issue of lesbian and gay rights with socialist youth, right throughout the Seventies.

In the USA, San Francisco was rapidly becoming a major gay centre. In June 1976 ninety thousand people marched to mark Gay Freedom Day. In 1977, out gay man Harvey Milk, was elected a city supervisor for District 5 — a part of the city that included large lesbian and gay populations, such as the Castro, Noe Valley and the Haight.

Milk moved beyond single-issue politics, and championed equality and social justice for many sections of society. His popularity and support grew. By March 1978, the city's Board of Supervisors had passed an ordinance legislating lesbian and gay rights, with only one vote against.

Elsewhere in California, lesbian and gay people faced attacks on their rights. Republican Senator, John Briggs, drafted 'Proposition 6', a proposal to effectively bar anyone who was openly homosexual or even anyone who advocated homosexuality, from teaching in state schools. The proposal was put to a state-wide ballot, and after much campaigning on both sides, was convincingly defeat-

ed in November 1978: 60% of Californians and 75% of San Franciscans voted 'No.'

Celebrations were cut short when, less than three weeks later, Supervisor Harvey Milk and his ally the Democratic Mayor, were assassinated. The killer was Dan White, a former supervisor who had cast that one vote against the lesbian and gay ordinance, who had supported Briggs' Proposition 6, and who was an all-round notoriously nasty homophobe.

During the six months of White's trial, San Francisco's lesbians and gays were put on the defensive. "Queer bashing" increased, as did police harassment. Venues and areas frequented by lesbians, young gay

"Stonewall ignited lesbian and gay activism because it happened in a wider radical political context."

men and leather queens were particularly vulnerable to attack. Repression, both culturally and geographically, was being aimed at the 'periphery' of the community.

White was tried by an exclusively white and heterosexual jury. The prosecutor failed to raise the political difference between the killer and his victims and so did not establish a motive that could demonstrate White's action to be premeditated. On 21 May 1979 White was convicted of manslaughter, the least serious judgement available to the court. Milk's supporters were outraged. That night between five and ten thousand lesbian and gay men and sup-

porters rioted in the city centre.

In Britain, the Tories won the 1979 General Election. Their victory signalled a reversal of fortune of the lesbian and gay movement. In the Eighties and Nineties lesbians, gay men and bisexuals had to face a new political climate, a rise in new-right moralism, where we were forced to defend ourselves against hostile legislation rather than campaigning for legal improvements.

In the USA, lesbians and gays faced similar conditions as the Republican government came under the influence of ultra-conservative religious groups. One religious leader, Jerry Falwell came out with this bigoted diatribe in 1984: "In San Francisco we actually saw homosexuals sharing a public platform in Union Square with transvestites, Communists, Central American terrorists, punk rock anarchists, unionised prostitutes, people who would legalise marijuana and other radicals Perversion is open, public and pervasive. The main streets are dominated by garish, hardcore theatres promoting homosexual pornography and live, nude, homosexual shows... And you see, what they plan for you and your children is what makes them dangerous! And they do have eyes on your children! It is time to take a stand... With your help, I will launch a truth campaign to counter the homosexual attack on America."

In 1983 there was a by-election in the Labour seat of Bermondsey, South London. The Labour candidate was gay left-winger Peter Tatchell; the Liberal candidate was Simon Hughes. The by-election campaign saw a barrage of bigotry from the tabloid press and from Tatchell's competitors. Media hacks rummaged through his dustbins and tracked down his relatives in Australia. The Labour leadership kept a defensive distance as Tatchell was vilified for

being gay and left wing (and foreign). The Liberals won. It was the biggest Parliamentary swing ever — achieved by whipping up homophobia.

These days, Simon Hughes tries hard to be right-on, and claims to support lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. But typically for a Liberal, his face changes with opportunism. *Socialist Organiser* has reported his recent racist comments about 'illegal immigrants' in Southwark. And on *Question Time* last year, Hughes grinned smugly as the introduction recalled his glorious by-election victory.

During the miners' strike of 1984-85, left lesbian and gay activists set up Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. It worked to build solidarity with the miners amongst the lesbian and gay community, and to raise the profile of the cause of lesbian and gay liberation in the miners' struggle. Collections took place around the gay scene, and pink minibuses took activists to picket lines.

Although recollections of this period can sometimes be overcome with a misty-eyed sentimentalism, LGSM was immensely significant. The National Union of Mineworkers' banners were prominent on the 1985 Pride march, and NUM activists fought for the Labour Party and the TUC to take up policy in support of lesbian, gay and bisexual rights. The experience taught both partners in the alliance the lesson of solidarity:

"You have worn our badge, 'Coal Not Dole', and you know what harassment means, as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us, we will support you. It won't change overnight, but now 140,000 miners know that there are other causes and other problems. We know about black and gay and nuclear disarmament. And we will never be the same." (David Donovan of the Dulais mining community, December 1984).

SOCIALIST

Railworkers strike for 11%

ORGANISER

Victory to the signal workers!

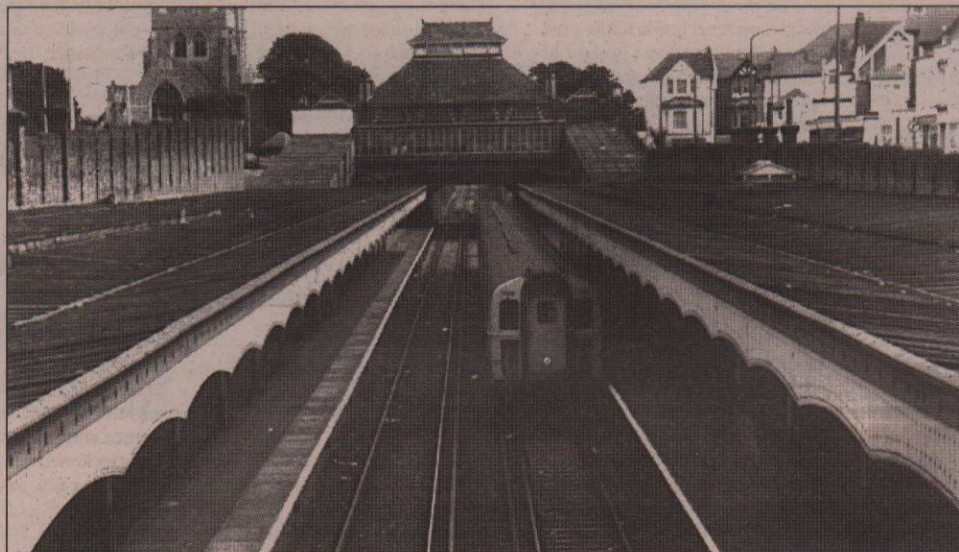
By a ScotRail guard (RMT)

THE RAIL signalling strike set for Wednesday 15 June looks set to cripple the network. The dispute is over a claim for an 11% interim payment to signals staff. Management of Railtrack are talking tough.

Local management within the other "businesses" have also been telling the reps of all other grades that they better show up to work on any strike days or else...

They are obviously trying to operate a divide-and-rule policy exploiting how they have divided the industry into separate shadow franchises and thus claiming that different railworkers are employed by different companies.

Nevertheless the power of the signalling grades and the 80.6% yes vote from an 80% participation in a postal ballot is the key to



the dispute. The signal grades can win. The RMT Council of Executives must not throw away that kind of result and strike action should be maintained until Railtrack

management back down.

Other grades must remember that the 11% is not a pay claim but back payment for financial injustices to the signalling grades

over a number of years. Therefore strike committees should be set up composed of all grades.

The other issue in the strike is that of picket lines. Railworkers should remember that signals' strikers are in possible breach of their contracts of employment even if they have been legally balloted. They are taking risks and deserve our moral and material support. Remember your own grade will be looking for support at some point (probably in the not too distant future). We all know of the kind of things that can be done to avoid crossing picket lines: some may argue that it hurts the management worse to be paid for doing nothing.

Picket lines that are crossed leave bitter memories and store up problems for the future. The management know this which is why they are insisting on all other grades turning up to work. A victorious outcome will be a boost to us all. Support the signalling grades!

Pride march

For a political lesbian and gay movement!

By Alison Brown

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago in New York a routine police raid on a gay bar sparked a riot by lesbians and gay men who had had enough of continual police harassment.

The Stonewall riots, as they became known, lasted for 3 days, and inspired the rise of lesbian and gay movements across the world.

This week, millions of people will join international demonstrations and festivals including Pride in London to commemorate the anniversary.

The need for this movement to be political is as great as every.

This year, MPs failed to vote for the age of consent for gay men to be lowered to 16 to bring equality with heterosexuals. This shows how far we are from reaching the aims of that early movement.

In Britain we are still fighting for the most basic rights, such as the right not to get sacked from work for our sexuality. Police raids on gay bars still happen. Under 15

years of Tory government, adoption and fertility rights have been tightened up, the right to discuss and teach about sexuality in schools has been severely restricted and laws have been introduced to make harassment by the police even more legitimised.

Campaigning on these basic rights is important. The labour movement should be taking up these issues and Labour MPs should be pushing for equality.

The struggle for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual rights must also be a struggle to fundamentally change society. The root of our oppression lies in capitalism's need to maintain the nuclear family as its present economic and ideological basis. Changing this means changing the whole way society is structured.

Only a massive, well-organised working class movement can achieve this — and the basis for this lies in the labour movement.

We must campaign for lesbian, gay and bi-sexual rights — not by convincing a few Tories and media stars, but by setting out to change the ideas of millions of working class people and recognising our real

potential allies.

We must look to the history of Stonewall — those Trannies with attitude — and have Pride!

Still fighting 25 years since Stonewall page 14

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