

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Inside this week



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KICK THE TORIES OUT!

More positions than a Life Guard

"Estonia" ferry disaster Killed by the laws of the market

By Gerry Bates

MAYBE IT was some freak accident, something which could not have been planned for, which damaged the bows of the ferry "Estonia" and caused it to sink on Wednesday 28 September, taking 900 people to

their deaths. We do not know. What we do know is that the basic problem which made the ferry unstable and vulnerable to accidents was known several years ago, after the "Herald of Free Enterprise" ferry disaster in 1987. And a simple measure to cure that instability - putting bulkheads

into the vehicle decks, as they are routinely put into all the decks of other ships - was known to all the experts then.

The bulkheads were not put in. Why? Because of the laws of the market.

The bulkheads would not be fantastically expensive, as these things go. To install them would appar-

ently cost about £600,000 per ferry. The "Estonia" cost £26.5 million second-hand.

But the ferry-owners calculated that this extra cost, plus the delays (again, not huge) in loading and unloading caused by the bulkheads, would damage their position in competition with airlines and tunnels. The competition is

hot, so a relatively small extra cost could make a big difference in competition.

The 900 passengers on the "Estonia" died because transport is organised and regulated by the laws of capitalist market competition, and not by social planning. They were killed by the laws of the market.



DI IS A FOOL. A martyred saint. She and Charles should divorce. They shouldn't. There's one thing the tabloids all agree. Hewitt is a bounder.

It doesn't stop them reproducing page after page of the juicy bits from Princess in Love, the account of the romance between the Princess and the man who gave her riding lessons.

The book had no advance publicity but sold out in a day. 75,000 reprints are ordered. That's for the respectable people who haven't read it in Today, the Sun etc.

People like Barbara Cartland, Di's step grandmother, who only reviews Princess in Love to compare it unfavourably with her own crappy books. "If anyone says this book is like one of my novels, I'll sue them."

Lord St John of Fawsley will be alright then. "This book makes Barbara Cartland sound like George Eliot."

The highlight is loony Doctor David Starkey, constitutional expert at the LSE "conjuring up a picture of the double execution" Di and Hewitt face if the Treasons Act of 1351 is upheld.

Now that might be worth a few pages of newsprint.



Haitian murderous state machine remains in place

Haitian socialists oppose American troops

Haitian Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Workers' Organisation (linked to the Lutte Ouvrière group in France) put out the following leaflet shortly before the American troops arrived in Haiti

"THE [UN] Security Council has just given the American leaders the green light to invade Haiti when they choose.

The poor of Haiti have responded to this announcement in different ways.

Some, for example, have packed their bags and left the capital for the provinces.

Others would like to see troops arriving so that foreigners can rid them of [military chiefs] Cedras and Michel Francois.

It is however clear that leaving the capital is not a solution: repression extends to every corner of the country...

It is clear also that we cannot count on our enemies to defend

our interests, whatever the circumstances. Even if the Americans get rid of some of the military criminals, what then? Repression and coups would continue because the rest of the army would remain. History is there to remind us: Namphy, J-C Paul, Avril, Regala, etc. are no longer part of the army, but nothing has changed for the poor people. On the contrary, things are worse.

Among those who go along with an American invasion, there are some who even say that they prefer repression by white people to repression by Haitians. This sort of reasoning is not right. White dog or black dog, it is the same bite! And the poor are always the victims.

So it is not a question of choosing the colour of the dog who will devour us, but of fighting so that no dog will ever bite us again, whatever its colour.

If there is an invasion, the white military will only help the Haitian military to massacre us, in the event that we confront this criminal dictatorship.

Besides, we can see the facts

already. As soon as the Security Council gave the green light to the USA, the Haitian army declared war on the population. From state of siege to state of emergency, arrests, disappearances, maltreatment and executions are multiplying.

The bourgeois are involved too. They are in the process of starving us with the black market. Most people in the poor areas no longer have anything to put in their cookpots.

Both children and old people are reduced to skin and bones.

That is why we cannot remain with folded arms, watching or waiting for foreign intervention.

Only we ourselves, only the mass of poor people, can deal with the problems of repression and hunger, if we organise our forces in the poor areas.

The Haitian army and the American leaders know the poor districts represent a bomb which can explode in their faces at any moment...

Let us start preparing the material which will facilitate this explosion. That is the only way out."

AWL organisers meet

By Martin Thomas

40 ORGANISERS from branches of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty across the country met in Sheffield on 24-25 September for discussion and training sessions for the AWL's activity in the coming months.

Most of the weekend focussed on work to build the new Welfare State Network. This campaign already involves much broader forces than just the AWL, but in many areas it will be down to the AWL to provide the initial impetus to get Network activity going.

To do that, we must overcome a

sizeable dead weight of defeatism and routinism, both in the wider movement and in ourselves; but a number of organisers reported that with energy and determination it could be done.

Training sessions covered contact work: public speaking; and "problem-solving" in branches. Several speakers stressed the importance of better, brighter AWL branches, reaching out to make new contacts and geared to be accessible to them. If we are to do effective work as revolutionary Marxists alongside the broad activity to build the Welfare State Network.

Wadeem Barsum must stay!

By Garry Meyer

WADEEM Barsum, an Egyptian, is on hunger strike in Lewis prison.

Wadeem began his hunger strike on Saturday 1 October in protest at the threat to deport him.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is opposed to all deportations and demands the scrapping of all immigration laws, including the Asylum Act of 1993, which allows detentions with the ruling of a court.

You can help Wadeem Barsum by protesting to the Home Secretary, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.

Warning: Tory health bosses are dangerous!

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

THE GP WHO advised the Government on aspects of the health service reforms is now under criminal investigation for issuing dodgy drug prescriptions.

Corruption charges against Dr Clive Froggat, the rampaging Tory privatiser, should come as no surprise. This man was one of the first fundholding GPs, a close personal friend of many Tory ministers, is constantly advising Health Minister Virginia Bottomley and, — oh yes, he was personal physician to Thatcher!

Now this leading Government hatchet man in the foul work of chopping down the health service is in trouble.

SIR DUNCAN Nicol is not in trouble. He is thriving. Until recently National Health Service Chief Executive, Nicol has now been invited on to Bupa's board of Directors.

And why not? It's the ideal job for a man responsible for so many cuts and closures and the introduction of Trust hospitals. And a fitting reward. Nobody proposes to charge him with corruption, unfortunately.

THE LATEST BUZZ word for

top hospital and Trust bosses is "rationing". "Rationing" is, quite simply, limiting services that are expensive. In a market-driven health service what is expensive should also be scarce — and never mind what is clinically necessary or important.

One leading advocate of this approach is John Spiers who has recently been ousted as chair of Brighton Health Care Trust. He has thought of an interesting and novel way of justifying such a policy.

His approach is to say that rationing and having to wait for treatment as a result is better than having incompetent doctors. He is also fond of using emotive arguments such as "I would prefer my daughter to wait [for treatment] rather than have quick and ready access to a Doctor Death who kills my kid."

It's a classic smokescreen: trying to justify cuts by pointing to a so-called greater evil. But isn't it time these overpaid and underqualified idiots stopped slugging off health-workers who have to work under the underfunded and understaffed conditions which they create! John Spiers and other like him are the real danger to the public.

Welfare State Network news

LONDON

Thursday 13 October

Islington Campaign meeting
7.30 Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road

Thursday 20 October

Lambeth Campaign to Defend the Welfare State public meeting with Keith Hill MP

7.30 Room 119, Lambeth Town Hall

Saturday 10 December

Lewisham Campaign Working Conference
12.00-5.00 Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 12 October

Campaign Meeting
7.30 SCCAU, West Street

Saturday 15 October

Demonstration against health cuts
0742 583854

BIRMINGHAM

Saturday 19 November

Community Conference
10-4.30pm The Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Park

Action New network links Welfare State campaigns

Together we will win!

INSIDE: Campaigning pages 2-3

10 things you need to know about the Health Service

Units in defence of public sector jobs and services! Saturday 10 November 1994 See page 2

"We should demand the right to useful work and to a living wage, the right to a decent home, the right to a life-long education, to health care free at the point of use, and to dignity in old age".

The first issue of "Action for health and welfare", a twelve-page tabloid newspaper published by the Welfare State Network, is devoted to giving substance to this appeal from Tony Benn in its lead article.

The paper is crammed with reports from local campaigns. The centre pages give a punchy briefing on the Tories' rundown of the Health Service.

Contributors include Jack Jones, Alan Simpson, Peter Hain, John Lister, Nik Barstow and Jill Mountford.

For a free sample copy, or for a bundle of 25 (£6, or £4 to pensioners), phone Jill on 071-358 0419 or write to Welfare State Network, c/o Southwark Trade Union Support Unit, Kennington Enterprise Unit, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17.

Unite the left and the unions against Blair's drive for a "new constitution"

Keep Labour a workers' party!

TONY BLAIR used his first leader's speech to the Labour Party conference, on Tuesday 4 October, to announce that he was going to launch an attack on the constitution of the Party.

After three quarters of an hour of waffle and vacuous soundbites, he suddenly said that he and John Prescott were going to draw up a new statement of aims and a new constitution for the Labour Party.

Plainly he is out to get rid of Clause Four, which commits Labour to public ownership. He wants to turn Labour into a bland, lifeless, "moderate" middle-class party, divorced from its working-class roots, by further downgrading the power of Party Conference and the role of the trade unions in the Party. Probably he will use as an excuse the need to tidy up the complexities created by the last several years of piecemeal attacks on Party democracy.

And he has decided to press ahead quickly, while he is in his "honeymoon" period as leader, using the media-generated myth that "Blair is the man to win the election" to bludgeon the unions and the local Labour Parties.

Soft-left MPs like Peter Hain, and middle-of-the-road trade unions leaders like John Edmonds, have initially responded with wilful blindness. They are pretending that Blair is just going to produce a new statement of aims which

DEFEND:

- LABOUR'S UNION LINK
- DECISION-MAKING BY PARTY CONFERENCE
- CLAUSE FOUR

can go alongside Clause Four. Their immediate comment was to call for the new statement to be published as quickly as possible 'to avoid damaging internal discussion'.

But Blair did say that he wanted to change *the constitution* and to redefine the Party's aims as part of that.

Socialists and trade unionists should rally to the defence of Clause Four, of Party democracy, and of the Labour/union link. Blair's decision to launch Labour into another exercise of self-revision, self-disavowal, and self-destruction, less than two years from the General Election, could have disastrous consequences for the whole labour movement.

He must be stopped. The first step should be for conference to vote to reaffirm Clause Four in a debate scheduled for this Thursday, 6 October. And after the conference we will need a broad campaign, right across the unions and the constituency Labour Parties, to make Blair back down.

Rank and file vote to defend Welfare State

LABOUR PARTY conference voted unanimously to defend welfare services and benefits "as a basic entitlement for all our people".

The resolution, moved by the giant Transport and General Workers' Union, opposed any extension of means-testing and called for increased pensions and child benefit.

The platform accepted the resolution, and Labour's social security front-bencher, Donald Dewar, said: "The welfare state must never be a grudging last resort provision for those who cannot buy cover in the market place".

Our job now is to put a real campaign behind these good intentions, with the Welfare State Network.



Tony Blair wants to turn Labour into a neat, glossy, media-oriented — and thoroughly middle-class — party. Photo: John Harris

What they said about Tony Blair's speech

Arthur Scargill, president, National Union of Mineworkers
This is an attack on the whole basis on which the Labour Party was founded. Blair wants to see the end of socialism. There was nothing he said that couldn't be said by a Liberal or even a wet Tory.

Dennis Skinner MP
Instead of headlines about the crisis in the NHS or the collapse of the education system, we are going to have headlines about an arid constitution. The Tories will be laughing all the way to the bank.

When Blair talked about getting rid of the spivs and speculators in the City, he didn't finish his sentence — because he didn't explain that in order to do that we need to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy.

That is why Clause Four is important. We shouldn't waste any time trying to change it. We should be spending every second of our time trying to get rid of the Tories.

Jeremy Corbyn MP
Other leaders have tried to ditch Clause Four and have

failed, Gaitskell for instance. He failed because the Party members back in the constituencies and in the unions would not have it. Blair seems to have forgotten this bit of history. It is something he should remember.

Mildred Gordon MP
Blair's comments on fathers' responsibility for the upkeep of their children were in reality an attack on the movement against the Child Support Act, a movement from the grass roots which is nearly as strong as the anti-poll-tax movement. He didn't seem to have learned from Kinnock's mistake.

Labour Party conference steward
When Blair said that he wanted to keep the anti-union laws and would not promise anything to the low paid — that was the good bit...

But Michael Foot said...
It's not as bad as 1959 when Gaitskell tried. We'll preserve Clause 4 in some form and live to fight another day.

WE SAY

The signals strike: who won?

LOOKED AT from the point of view of the signal workers, and other rail workers, the outcome of the signal workers strike was at best a score draw. However, in terms of the dispute's wider industrial and political implications, the dispute has had a positive effect.

The settlement got a mixed reception from signal workers. Initially, and publicly, many militants were keen to talk up the percentage rises — supposedly 10-11% for most grades, 8% for the more skilled. However, as people examined the deal in more detail, the strings, and the fact that only 3.6% has been permanently won, started to lead to a minor revolt against the union leaders. A sizeable minority rejected the package.

The strings include:

- 300 signallers will face a pay cut in two years time
- relief signal workers — and all others — are no longer paid travelling time
- flexible rostering, including compulsory 12-hour shifts
- overtime reduced from time and three quarters to time and a half.

There has been no interim payment. Nor were there any parallel negotiations. All that has been gained in the long term is 3.6% in return for a productivity package exactly the same as the one which it took management a lot of trouble and time — and a 25% increase in basic rates — to impose on the track workers.

After going on strike, the signal workers have gained a lot less than the track workers had imposed on them.

However, the outcome will be seen as an encouraging sign by most trade unionists. It shows that the pay freeze can be broken. And the strike has seriously delayed privatisation.

The union's Executive backed the deal unanimously. We think that they were wrong: the deal should have been rejected. Much more could have been won if the train grades had been called out.

Labour's Golden Boy

THE IDEA THAT Tony Blair is Labour's golden boy, took on a new meaning last week when it was revealed that Blair had spent far more money on his campaign for Labour Party leader than either of his rivals. John Prescott spent £13,000, Margaret Becket £17,000 and Blair £79,000. The money was, appropriately enough, raised from rich media folk such as Melvyn Bragg and Ken Follett. Here you have the whole essence of One Member One Vote stripped bare. This seeming advance in democracy in fact creates a passive mass electorate largely made up of people who are not much involved in the labour movement.

Access to them is through the mass media. This means bourgeois media intervention into the affairs of the labour movement. The media had Blair elected before John Smith was buried.

It means the depoliticisation of the processes of electing the Labour leader and their degradation to the level of a beauty contest.

Whatever abilities Blair may yet show himself to have, it was his media image as a bland pretty-boy, politically almost characterless, that won him the leadership — and the introduction of brutal money-power from outside into the affairs of the labour movement.

Media politics is expensive politics. In the USA, a candidate spends millions to get elected and accumulates supporters and backers — who expect to reap the benefits later — in the course of raising money.

This is the deeply corrupt system that raised semi-idiot actor Ronald Reagan to the White House. The same deeply corrupt system, writ small, saddled us with the bland Mr. Blair as Labour leader.

Up the republic!

BARBARA CARTLAND says the media should ignore the story of James Hewitt and Princess Di's romance, and stop knocking the monarchy. "There are so many countries in the world who would love to have a royal family like we have in Britain."

Why don't they then?

Why don't they go out tomorrow and build dozens of sumptuous palaces, choose some public school nob to inhabit them, and give millions and millions of pounds to them? Put these public school nob at the head of the armed forces, and give them the power to appoint the government?

Beyond the debate about whether or not Diana has been wronged — no doubt she has — the debate about the monarchy should rage.

Do away with the monarchy! Do away with all the unelected privilege which dangles from the monarchy like shit on a horse's tail! Up the Republic!

THIS WEEK

The lessons of the signal workers' dispute

By Rob Dawber

AS SOON as the news was out that a deal had been struck at ACAS the media was rife with claim and counter-claim as to who had won.

Horton for Railtrack claimed to have conceded nothing and that the deal was basically what was on offer last June.

Jimmy Knapp, for the RMT, claimed that the package was 'excellent' and recommended its acceptance. It reflected, Knapp said, the steadfastness of the signal workers.

Different figures were banded about as to how much more it was worth to signalworkers from 3.4% (Horton) to 20% (Knapp).

But as the dust settled and the booklets dropped through the doors of signalworkers on Thursday morning (29 September), what the deal meant became clearer. The deal was a restructuring package along the lines of what Railtrack had been after all along and which BR had imposed on its Signal and Telecommunications staff in 1992. The demand for an Interim Payment to reflect past productivity (what the one and two day strikes had been all about) had been dropped.

Horton said that nothing had been paid for past productivity; Knapp claimed that the lump-sum payments, ranging from £375 for a signalworker grade A to £590 for a signalling relief 3 (average £480) was for past productivity. But the price of this lump sum is the loss of various allowances and for all signalworkers to move on to cashless pay, something which saves employers up to £300 per work-

er per year.

Now, forget the strings on this lump-sum payment, for the moment, and accept Jimmy Knapp's claim that it is the payment for past productivity. How does it compare to the claim for 11% that the strike was all about?

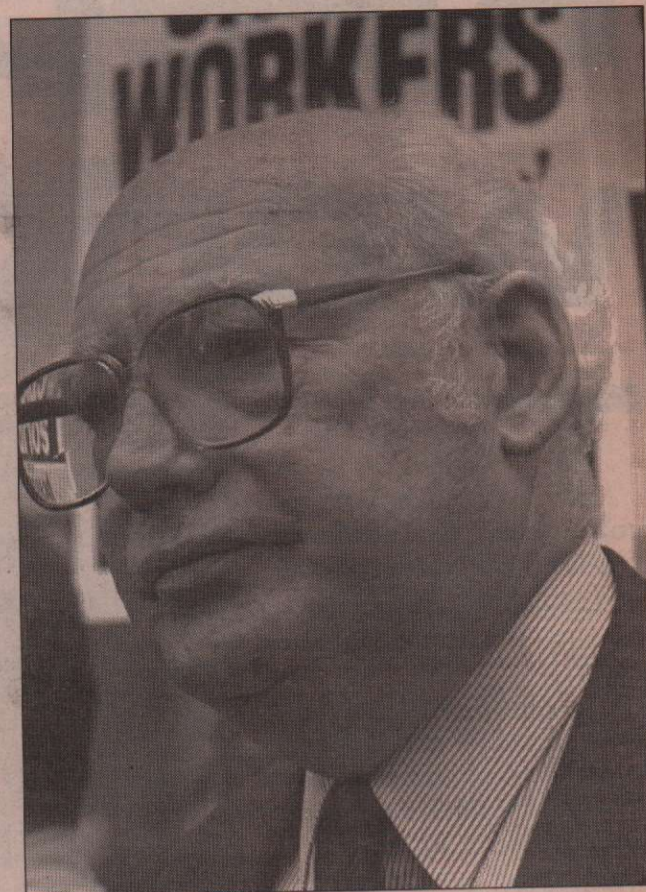
The lowest graded signalworker is on £146.45 per week. 11% of that is £16.11. With a lump-sum payment to the Grade A of £375 it would have taken just 23 weeks to have earned the equivalent had the full claim been won. And the Grade A would have continued to receive that amount weekly and taken that new level as a base wage into talks on restructuring.

So, even on Knapp's interpretation, the settlement falls far short of the claim.

Had it been necessary to grab this settlement then that would have been one thing, but even on Railtrack's admission, only 70 RMT members broke the strike at any time. Certainly the strike needed to break out of stalemate to gain new momentum, but it was far from crumbling.

As with the restructuring imposed on Signal and Telecoms staff (S&T) two years ago, shifts can now range between 6 and 12 hours, almost all allowances have been consolidated in exchange for an increase in the basic wage (S&T got 25%); the grade become salaried; holidays at 28 days after 10 years service, reduction in overtime rates and so on.

On another level however the outcome has to be judged in terms of what signal workers expected to win. Had they achieved the claim for an interim payment of 11% and then



Jimmy Knapp "talked up" the deal. Photo: John Harris

gone into restructuring what would they have emerged with at the other end? Would it have been much better than what they have got?

Had they won the battle for 11%, then undoubtedly it would have been. They would have gone into restructuring all the stronger. But in the eyes of many signalworkers this deal may be all they could hope for.

The claim was abandoned in the end. It may have been won, had the strategy of using the Health and Safety legislation to stop the job on strike days been followed or had the Underground been brought out earlier.

The strike was described by one of the bosses' papers as the most damaging since the miners strike. It is a useful comparison. This three month strike has put some new life back into the labour movement. Activists were once again rattling collecting tins on the streets. Railworkers Support Committees emerged and there remains a widespread perception of a union entering battle,

emerging intact and perhaps winning something against the bitter opposition of the Tories.

And in regard to the Government's drive to sell off to the market whatever it can the Daily Telegraph tells us this: "In the short term, however, the hard left of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union has achieved at least one of its ends. The privatisation, which was always bedevilled, now looks impossible by the next election. Users of rail freight have been deterred. It is difficult to predict whether they will return. No one believes, in the present uncertainties, that a full complement of 25 private companies will be enticed to take the new 'train operating companies,' six of which are due to be set up by the end of the year. At best there might be an orchestrated management buy-out of one or more of the plumper routes. But the dream of a rash of new private, liveried companies has largely died."

RMT and the labour movement 1, Government and Railtrack 1.



Much more could have been won if the union had stopped the railways on the strike days by instructing train crew not to operate unsafe trains. Photo: Phil Maxwell

Signal workers "sold short"

A North East signal worker spoke to Socialist Organiser

"WHAT began as a dispute over the single issue of an increase in pay to restore differentials has ended with an unwanted deal over restructuring. There are a lot of very, very disappointed people in my area who feel they have fought long and hard and have been sold short with this settlement.

The so called 6% interim payment for past productivity — an average of £480 per signal worker — is nothing of the sort when you consider that it is a once-only lump sum.

In the name of flexibility we will now have to carry out new work such as points maintenance, ticket duties, electrical repairs and cleaning and painting the boxes, duties which rightly belong to other grades. We also have to accept cashless pay, first weekly and later monthly.

Many signal workers were angry about having to give their name and address to the ballot monitor, fearing victimisation for rejecting the deal. 'Suitability' is now an element in eligibility for

promotion.

They were also sickened by the neutral attitude of Labour's leaders throughout this dispute. It would not surprise me if a wish to avoid embarrassment at Labour's conference and prevent the Tories highlighting Labour's 'unfashionable' links with the unions was a factor in the RMT leadership's decision to end the dispute at virtually any cost.

It seems to me that any gains we have made have been from accepting restructuring, with nothing coming from our demands over differentials and past productivity. Our leadership made a mistake by not escalating the strike, either through getting other grades involved over safety, or calling for all out action right at the start.

Because of this deal I now have to spend a lot of time trying to convince some signal workers to stay in the union. I agree that the union needs changing, but that must be done by the signal workers and the rest of the RMT rank and file."

1994 Labour Party conference Not yet Blair's party

Paul Mellelieu reports
from Labour Party
conference

WHILST delegates' prime consideration is winning the next election, there is widespread unease about Blair's right wing policies. As Tony Benn put it at a fringe meeting, "people want Blair elected, but they want a few more things as well."

This was best illustrated in the National Executive

"The left can
take heart from
the National
Executive
election results."

Committee elections, where Socialist Campaign Group MPs confounded media pundits by beating Blair-favoured candidates Mo Mowlam and Chris Smith. As the 'New Statesman and Society' conference bulletin explains "the results show that the old style hard, as opposed to the soft, left remain more of a force in the constituencies than most com-



Many delegates see Blair's leadership as a necessary price for winning the election, but dislike his politics.

mentators have thought." The left can take heart from the results.

Elsewhere, Blair has not had it all his own way. Despite USDAW, the shop workers' union, ditching its £4 minimum wage resolution, Bill Morris from the TGWU and UNISON's Rodney Bickerstaffe were at odds with Blair's call

for a "sensible" phased-in approach. Bickerstaffe pointed out that whereas the £4 hourly minimum called for by Morris would help 4 million low paid workers, a £3 level would only affect half a million.

That the Labour Party is not Blair's party yet is probably the best way to sum up the mood of conference. The new

leadership has failed to convince the mass of party members of its policies.

For many Blair is the necessary price for winning the election. This is a mistaken view, but one far from the picture painted by media, Labour spin-doctors and sectarian socialists, that Labour is a political arena dead to socialists.

Fight for union rights!

By Chris Reynolds

FOR EIGHT years now, *Socialist Organiser* and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty have campaigned for a Workers' Charter.

We have campaigned for the labour movement to commit the next Labour Government to a programme of positive legal rights for trade unions and trade unionists.

At Labour Party conference on 3 October, a watered-down version of this Charter was adopted, while the platform managed to fend off a clearer proposal moved by miners' union president Arthur Scargill.

For Labour's leaders to campaign energetically even for a watered-down Workers' Charter would be a tremendous step forward.

But Tony Blair will not fight for trade union rights. A key stage in his climb to the top of the Labour Party was the period when, as Employment front-bencher, he trashed the very limited commitments to union rights included in Labour's 1987 manifesto. A watered down Charter was adopted at last year's Labour Party conference — the platform let it through in order to soften up trade unionists for the debates on Labour's trade-

union link — but Blair and the other leaders have ignored it.

Despite the Labour leaders' chicanery, the fight for the Workers' Charter will continue. So — crucially — will the fight to put organisation and force behind the Workers' Charter, to lift it off the pages of the resolution book and make it a factor in the class struggle.

The campaign shows how

even small groups of socialists, like the AWL and the supporters of *Socialist Organiser*, can play a big role in the labour movement when we formulate precisely and clearly — with the aid of collective thought, study, and experience — what millions of activists are groping towards instinctively.

While we remain small, however, our ideas get taken over

by more powerful forces who gut and bowdlerise them.

The Workers' Charter is a knife to cut through capitalist exploitation — but to cut straight, rather than scraping at the surface, the knife needs a strong, resolute, hand to hold it.

To take the campaign forward to victory, we need your help! Support *Socialist Organiser!* Join the AWL!

Rank and file back Scargill

THE MOST exciting conference debate saw miners' union president Arthur Scargill call for a future Labour government to introduce a charter of positive rights for workers.

He called for the right to take strike action without fear of dismissal and to take solidarity action in support of other workers.

Calling for a revival of "the old time socialist religion", Scargill asked delegates what was wrong with workers taking solidarity action with those, such as nurses, who have little economic strength.

"Tony, you are wrong," continued Scargill, condemning Blair's failure to support the signal workers.

The Crosby constituency delegate summed up many delegates' feelings — "I'm not usually an Arthur Scargill fan, but there is nothing in the NUM's resolution that any single person in this conference can oppose. It is a statement

of socialism and workers' rights."

In a card vote the motion gained 20% of the conference, with the clear support of a majority of constituency delegates. It was an obvious embarrassment for the platform. The chair refused Arthur Scargill's request for a vote to be taken immediately after the debate, and later he refused to take a show of hands, which would have indicated the real support for socialist policies at conference.

The Socialist Campaign Group Network (SCGN) is making an impact at conference, producing a daily bulletin and organising a series of public meetings and regular delegates meetings. The SCGN is gaining support from many ordinary delegates.

An unlikely champion

IT SEEMS only yesterday that GMB general secretary John Edmonds was Neil Kinnock's favourite trade unionist, a "moderniser" of impeccable credentials and a bit of an intellectual to boot. And yet over the past three years or so, he has imperceptibly evolved into a trouble-maker and a focus of opposition within the Labour Party. *Tribune* recently dubbed him the 'Red Baron'!

Edmond's transformation from Mr New Realism to Fred Kite with elocution lessons tells you more about the present state of the labour movement than it does about the man himself. He hasn't actually changed all that much: the world has changed around him.

After the 1992 election debacle and Kinnock's resignation, Edmonds was among the first of the union leaders to endorse

John Smith and good relations with the party leadership looked set to continue. But then things started to go wrong: Smith's drive to replace the block vote at party conference with OMOV forced Edmonds into the unaccustomed role of oppositionist. This was very odd, because Edmonds had for many years been hinting that he didn't support the block vote and would welcome some form of OMOV. Cynics suggested that Edmonds' conversion had more to do with his desire to stay on good terms with Bill Morris and the T&G (with whom he was then engaged in merger negotiations) than with any deeply held commitment to the block vote.

Be that as it may, the fact is that Edmonds and Morris put up a spirited fight over the block vote, forcing John Smith to up the stakes and make the matter a vote of confidence in his leadership. It's worth recalling that particular battle (and its outcome) because it's crucial to an understanding of why Edmonds, Morris and a whole swathe of previously compliant union leaders are now so unhappy with Tony Blair.

Smith won on OMOV, but only by the skin of his teeth, after several union delegations (notably MSF and USDAW) broke their conference mandates on the question and after John Prescott's famous, if incoherent speech, saying, in effect: "Give us OMOV and there will be no more attempts to squeeze out the unions. This is as far as it goes, brothers and sisters. The union link is safe."

Privately, Edmonds declared himself well pleased with the outcome. He believed that he had obtained an important *quid pro quo* from Smith, in the form of firm commitments on the minimum wage, a legal right to union recognition and a wide range of other protective employment legislation contained in the E.U. Social Chapter. Edmonds boasted of an "understanding" with Smith on these matters.

There is every reason to believe that Smith intended to stick by his side of the post-OMOV bargain. Tony Blair, however, is not such a skillful politician and is much more impressed by the blandishments of the Tory media, urging him ever onwards towards a total break with the unions. John Edmonds' "understanding" died with John Smith.

Which is why there is presently a simmering battle for the soul of the Labour Party, and why John Edmonds once again finds himself the unlikely standard-bearer of opposition. This isn't quite the same as the old left vs right battles: it's now the trade union wing of the Labour Party vs the Christian Democrat wing.

Edmonds and Morris have restrained themselves so far not forcing a vote on the minimum wage, for example. Their first response to Tony Blair's plan to write a new constitution for Labour has been to fail to understand it — or perhaps to *pretend* not to understand.

But Edmonds is promising that by this time next year the gloves will be off. It will be Trade Union Labour vs Christian Democrat Labour. We all know which side to be on.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Sick pay? You're sacked!

IT DIDN'T take a genius to guess what would happen when the Tories, ever eager to save a few bob, removed the right of employers to claim back statutory sick pay from the state. This April the provision was scrapped and employers' National Insurance contributions reduced to compensate.

Now, surprisingly enough, the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux has reported a six-fold rise in people coming to them who have difficulty getting money when they have to take time off sick. Some employers have told their workers that they will not receive any pay when they are sick. Other workers with bad health are simply sacked. One thing is for sure, it is pretty unlikely that the government will spend much of the £700 million they have saved on any meaningful structure for enabling workers to force employers to pay up.

ANYONE who believes that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton has a very poor sense of geography, but such ideas of the importance of school students running around in shorts live on into the twentieth century.

Roger Bannister has weighed-in with his contribution to the "job culture" debate, arguing that competitive sport in schools is the answer. "Unless there is an element of compulsion in physical education children are unlikely to take sport seriously" said Bannister, wearing a tasteful brown shirt and leather boots at the Headmasters' Rally, er, I mean, Conference in Bournemouth.

He continued: "Some children do find competitive sport difficult... if pupils lack the skills to succeed in sport, life itself brings reverses. Sport is a way of learning to accept them with grace" Around the same time that Bannister was speaking, 17 year old Matthew Mason was playing that greatest of character building sports, rugby, for Shebbur College in North Devon. Unfortunately he suffered one of life's reverses — head and chest injuries that left him dead. Whether he took this with good grace will have to wait until the post-mortem examination.

DELEGATES to this year's Conservative Party Conference will be on the look-out for a little something to take back to their loved ones — and what could be better than the newly published *Clear Blue Water*, 47 pages of the collected works of Michael Portillo. The work has been cobbled together by fellow Tory MP George Gardiner, and has a foreword by Cecil Parkinson.

But, by oversight, two of Portillo's best remembered speeches have slipped

GRAFFITI



By Cyclops

through the net. Who could forget his speech at Southampton University students' union last year where he suggested that foreign students bought their qualifications, which were nothing like as good as the great British 'A' Level? Where are his great words from his Conservative Way Forward dinner speech when he rounded on those "cynics" who talk down England, the Conservative Party and all their achievements? He was particularly infuriated by the lasting damage done to the nation by attacks on those who hold public office. So, I find it my patriotic duty to thoroughly recommend this book by one of our country's foremost politicians, a fine man... (continued page 37, *Daily Telegraph*)

Sadly, Portillo's words on paternity leave came too late to make it into his selected works. Apparently if men were allowed even a paltry two or three days of leave, let alone a few months or years, even on no pay, the economy would grind to a halt. The idea that men might actually like to see their children, or even have some role in their upbringing seems to have escaped him. Portillo said he himself would never put an employer "in a difficult position" after the birth of a child. While this is to the child's advantage in the case of Portillo, why should the rest of us have to suffer? Perhaps someone could offer him an opt-out?

THE BENT copper of the week award goes to PC Michael Butler, has been gaoled for 18 months for perverting the course of justice. Seems that he took a bribe to destroy a prosecution file on a friend's drink driving charge. Trevor Gladwell, who was a drinking partner of PC Butler, agreed to pay £4,000 for the file. Butler, it seems, needed the money for his second wedding (£3,000 for the wedding, £6,000 for the honeymoon in California, the poor thing).

The trouble was, once that Gladwell had stumped up £1,800 he discovered he could not afford any more.

At this stage, PC Butler, remembering his police training, began to lean on Gladwell. So much so that he drove Gladwell straight in the arms of the police, telling all.

The moral of its story: there may be honour among thieves, but among coppers and their mates are a different matter.

Mr Gobby gets a taste of things to come

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

LAST week the *Sun* attacked the leadership of the Labour Party. Big deal, I hear you cry. The *Sun* attacking Labour leaders is about as newsworthy as dog bites man. Except that for the last three months or so the *Sun* (and the rest of the Murdoch press) has been remarkably kind to young Blair and the rest of New Improved Labour's dynamic, thrusting team.

There has even been speculation (stemming from an off-the-cuff remark from the Digger himself) that the Murdoch empire might throw its weight behind Labour at the next election. Ms Mowlam, on behalf of Blair, has been going out of her way to assure the Digger and his minions that they have nothing to fear from a Labour government. "Diversity and choice for the consumer" is Ms Mowlam's slogan, which roughly translated reads "nice Mr Murdoch can own as many newspapers and satellite TV stations as he likes."

Now it looks as though the *Sun*, at least, is returning to form. Last week's attack was not in the same league as their tirades against Neil Kinnock — which is to say it was an elbow in the rib-cage rather than a knee in the groin. The immediate target was Gordon Brown rather than Blair himself, but that hardly matters: the *Sun* and its readers (quite rightly) under-

stand that an attack on TweedleBrown is an attack on TweedleBlair.

So what exactly did the Shadow Chancellor say to incur the *Sun*'s wrath? Try this for size: "Ideas which stress the growing importance of international co-operation and new theories of economic sovereignty across a wide range of areas — macro-economics, trade, the environment, the growth of post neo-classical endogenous growth theory and the symbiotic relationships between growth and investment in people and infrastructure, a new understanding of how labour markets really work and the rich and controversial debate over the meaning and importance of competitiveness at the level of individuals, the firm or the nation and the role of government in fashioning modern industrial policies which focus maintaining competitiveness."

I am able to quote the above passage thanks to the *Sun*, which printed it word-for-word below

the headline "Labour's Mister Gobby". I am reliably informed that this is the first time that the word "endogenous" (which, as I'm sure you know, means originating within an organism with no apparent external cause), has appeared in the *Sun* newspaper. Well, Gordon did rather ask for it, didn't he?

Contrary to popular myth, the *Sun* is not written by and for morons. As Mr. Major and his cabinet discovered over the past eighteen months, it is actually a rather good bullshit-detector. As the paper's editorial noted on Wednesday, "people aren't daft — they can spot waffle a mile off" Worse was to come on Thursday, when the lethal Richard Littlejohn offered readers a translation based upon his in-depth knowledge of flob-a-dob, the language of Bill and Ben the Flowerpot Men. Gordon Brown has suffered enough: I'll resist the temptation to reproduce any of Littlejohn's translation here.

Of course, the *Sun*'s attacks

were grossly unfair. What Gordon Brown and his boss were doing last week was dumping Labour's commitment to Keynesian "tax and spend" social democratic economies. They were signalling that they are not even social democrats anymore: they are Christian democrats. And, of course, the *Sun* (together with the *Mail*, the *Express* and the rest) has it both ways, accusing Blair and Brown of being secret unreconstructed socialists one minute and of being unprincipled wafflers the next. But having it both ways is the prerogative of the Tory tabloids.

The signs are that the Tory press's mid-term disenchantment with Major is coming to an end (the same edition of the *Sun* that savaged Brown's speech also trumpeted the fact that Labour's opinion poll lead seems to be slipping). The *Mail* and *Express* are gearing up for the next election and, as usual, they will be savagely anti-Labour. And for all the speculation and wishful thinking, the *Sun* won't be supporting Labour either. Last week's teasing of Gordon Brown was but a foretaste of Labour's Mr Gobby and Mr Flob-a-Dob are going to be savaged by the tabloids. All Ms Mowlam's sucking up to Murdoch and all the media skills of Peter Mandelson and Alistair Campbell can't prevent the inevitable.

Smacking people is wrong

WOMEN'S EYE

By Joan Trevor

VIRGINIA Bottomley, the Secretary of State for Health, came out last week as a smacker.

For many parents, she opined, there are occasions when "it is appropriate to use a mild form of physical punishment to rebuke their child." Likewise, a child-minder, in loco parentis, is justified in smacking children.

Virginia has done it. Smacked her children. I don't suppose it's done them any harm. And she's right on so many other things.

Can you imagine what the world would be like in which no child had been smacked while they were growing up? Complete anarchy. People walking around with their shoelaces undone, refusing to eat their greens. Where would we all be? Everyone shouting in shrill voices and throwing food at each other. Sheer hell.

Virginia thinks that if a child is getting on your nerves and all attempts at reason fail, or you simply can't bring yourself to leave the room till you've both calmed down, then you can smack. Spare the rod and spoil the child.

This maxim should be extended to every area of life.

Not just with people under the age of 16 who, hopefully, are not big enough to hit you back.

People who push in front of me at the bus stop definitely deserve a slap. Some bloke cuts you up at the lights — catch up with him at the next lights, stop your car, get out, drag him out of his car and give him a good smack round the head. One he won't forget in a hurry.

That sounds a bit like the job culture the Government is denouncing, but don't worry about it. Most people are reasonable and won't take things too far. Go on. Trust yourself.

There have been several court rulings of recent months upholding people's rights to smack children in their care. I am frankly appalled when the righteous and vindicated parent or child-minder appears on tea-time telly with some hapless infant sitting next to them on a settee. I feel like shouting "watch out" to that kid, sitting there grinning and playing with her toys!

I know that inside every parent who smacks occasionally there is not a Doctor Mengele waiting to get out. But inside some parents who smack there is.

Where do you draw the line? If crayoning the walls one rainy afternoon warrants slapped legs, or — it depends

on the parent — two strokes with a leather belt, what's the appropriate sanction for bored kids setting light to the bins at the bottom of their block of flats?

Who draws the line? The parent in question usually, and scarcely a soul sees what they get up to within their four living room walls.

While most parents aren't frustrated psychopaths, and most children aren't severely damaged, it is also the case that the world would be a much better place, people much more given to speaking up when they disagree with things, or think rules are stupid, if no smacking went on.

We can imagine why people smack their children. Some, because they believe in it.

Others who don't consciously believe in it, because their temper snaps. They might be poor, depressed, isolated, bored, cooped up all day. They might never have wanted that child.

We fight for better contraceptive facilities for people who don't want to be parents, we fight for decent facilities and living standards for people with children, but we never say that their children's rights must wait until all those things are won — to put it crudely, until "after the revolution."

Children should and do have some rights now.

At present the legislation says that corporal punishment shouldn't go beyond certain levels, whereupon it shades over into child abuse.

As an adult I have full rights not to be smacked, rights moreover, that I can exercise. Because children cannot fully exercise adult rights doesn't stop me thinking that children should have those full rights — and the right not to be smacked, ever, is a good take-off point.

Grown-up people who, through illness or disability, or sheer old age, are unable to defend themselves have the right not to be smacked. Children too should have the right not to be smacked.

I am acutely aware when giving my opinion on this matter that I have not had the pleasure of raising a child, and might be setting a standard I myself could not reach. All any of us can say is what we think we should do.

I am also acutely aware, without running the woman down, she being one of those hard-pressed, single mothers of fame and fable — albeit one who believed a little corporal punishment was a good thing — that my mother smacked me enough to make a very "well-behaved" child of me, a fact I had occasion to rue more than once as I grew up.



The Bill seeks to criminalise youth at raves

YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

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

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

Youth Fightback is...

We are all scapegoats!

WHAT DOES a Tory government desperate to appeal to its bedrock supporters do in a time of need?

1. Whip up the law and order debate
2. Scapegoat a few easy targets
3. Clamp down on active opposition.

This Tory government has brought these three together in a neat legislative package and called it the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

The campaign against the Bill has already involved thousands of people directly affected by its repressive measures and has brought many young people into political campaigning.

Far from being a Bill that affects a few weak sections, the CJB is an attack on the whole working class.

The CJB follows in the Tory tradition of picking on others to blame for their disastrous 15 years

in government.

The CJB

- criminalises squatting
- removes the obligation on local authorities to provide legal sites for travellers, at the same time as giving the police powers to break up illegal sites
- clamps down on raves and festivals, even those organised with the land owner's permission.

These attacks on individual rights are draconian. The Bill also includes clauses which could be used to stop the very measures our movement needs to fight back.

The CJB is the latest in a long record of Tory attacks on collective action.

The CJB will give the police the power to break up gatherings on private land, stop those travelling towards them and arrest those refusing to

obey police orders. This could be used against trade union pickets (of more than two people), lobbies or demonstrations.

The CJB gives massively increased powers to the police to stop and search people and effectively removes the right to silence for people whom they arrest.

The Sus laws were removed after the Brixton riots in 1984 exposed the day-to-day random police harassment of young black people in many areas. The CJB gives these powers back to the police.

More recently, the police have been seen to abuse their powers to force confessions from innocent people. Removing the right to silence will increase the pressure on people arrested.

The CJB does nothing to address the genuine concerns people have about rising crime. It only gives the police powers to harass people.

Keep your balance

LETTER

I AM surprised and dismayed at the insensitivity of Mark Sandell's article "Armed struggle and the politics of war" [SO 614]. Does the writer not realise how simplistic and misguided his analysis of paramilitaries is?

To suggest that the IRA occupies the moral and political high-ground (despite some weak noises about misguided nationalism) and that the UVF/UFF are nothing but racist "henchmen" of the Protestant aristocracy/bosses is frankly overly simplistic, untrue and indicates a lack of basic knowledge about the conflict.

Does he really imagine that the UFF are defending their supremacy when the majority of their members are working class from areas such as the Shankill Road where unemployment and poverty are as real as in Catholic areas? The UFF also sees itself as defending its community against the IRA and a United Ireland as well as preserving its cultural and political freedom.

There is a place for moral outrage in the Irish situation. There is still (believe it or not!) a basic humanity and decency alive in Northern Ireland which should not be dismissed, wherever it comes from. Basic decency has often stopped the situation from developing into civil war. I would urge the writer to write with a little more sensitivity if he is not to be accused of regressive and veiled sectarian comments.

It is tempting now for the Left, in the current climate, to come to the conclusion that Sinn Fein and the IRA were/are defenders of the oppressed (the SDLP pulls in more votes). I would urge caution. As Mark started with a well-worn saying, I will end with one:

"When you sup with the devil, be sure to use a long spoon."

PS. I am a Northern Ireland Catholic.

Jenny Thompson, Manchester

Better to argue than to ban

By Mick Duncan, Deputy President University of Central England Students' Union

"FREEDOM IS always for the one who disagrees," So said Rosa Luxemburg, the great German socialist and I find it hard to think of anyone I disagree with more than Hizb-ut Tahrir.

Hizb-ut Tahrir are a vile, reactionary, fundamentalist group.

They want to see a global Islamic state that oppresses people for being gay, for being Jewish, for being a criminal, or for refusing to live by any of their many restrictive rules.

They believe that gay rights and any form of sexual freedom are "crimes", examples of the "depths to which freedom sinks."

They describe Jewish people as "the lowest of the low."

Last year their society, "One Nation", was dissolved by the Societies Council of the Students

Union after a proposal from the Executive Committee.

A debate then raged about freedom of speech. While the union banned the society, students in Hizb-ut Tahrir leafleted the college and held meetings in college rooms highlighting the stu-

"Freedom is always for the one who disagrees."

dent union's attempt to suppress their freedom of speech.

This did nothing to halt them spreading their ideas and made them into victims, when many Asian youth already feel victimised by racism in Britain.

Our ideological enemies have the

right to speak! We must challenge what they say and defeat their arguments. When our opponents pose a direct physical threat to innocent people, we stop them organising, using force where necessary.

We do not turn our backs and hope they'll go away while they leaflet in the building next door. Instead we take them on — politically!

The debate must be broadened from an argument about freedom of speech, which as socialists we should defend, and taken into a positive assertion of the rights of people to express their sexuality.

Of the rights of Jewish people to live without fear of intimidation.

Of the need for extended freedom, not repression and religious dogma.

That is the debate that is needed, and that is why the Executive of UCESU has voted to relax the ban. We will take on the bigots and assert positive rights for all sections of our society. For liberation, not religious repression.

Fingers in the till

KENNETH DURRANDS, Vice Chancellor of

Huddersfield University, wins this week's "Greedy git with his fingers in the till" award. The tiny clique who now run Huddersfield University is going to dole out half a million quid and a free new car every two years as severance pay.

Now, if you or I got the sack, it would be a week's pay if you're lucky and a loss of benefit rights!

Since the old Polys were taken out of local government control, colleges have purged governing bodies of student, trade union and community influence, to leave tiny cliques of college bosses in charge.

The Tories have promoted this process in order to get more "pile 'em high and teach 'em cheap" colleges. College bosses have gone along with the Tories and have gained higher wages and loads of power.

Huddersfield University bosses, now drunk on their power, are giving each other loads of money while students at the college suffer lack of resources, overcrowding and poverty.

Student campaign

STOP THE G

Student grants — fifteen years of lost rights

Since the Tories came to power in 1979...

● **1984:** the minimum grant is halved to £205. In the same year, the travel grant is abolished.

● **1985:** the minimum grant is done away with completely.

● **1986:** students lose their entitlement to Supplementary Benefit (now Income Support) and Unemployment Benefit during Christmas and Easter holidays. Students in Halls of Residence are disallowed from claiming Housing Benefit. The special equipment grant is abolished.

● **1990:** when the Student Loans Bill becomes law, the student grant is frozen. 'Top-up' loans are introduced. The majority of students lose the right to claim Income Support, Unemployment Benefit or Housing Benefit. 'Access Funds' (hardship funds) are created.

● **November 1993:** the Budget includes an announcement that the student grant is to be cut by 10% each year for the next

three years. The 'top-up' loan will be increased to 'compensate.'

Fifteen years ago there was a much higher grant level, a minimum grant, a travel allowance, and the right to claim benefits. Fifteen years ago, students protested that grants were inadequate. Now even the little that remains is going to be taken away.

Why do we need decent grants?

The basic arguments against the grant cuts and in favour of decent grants for all students are:

Students are living in poverty

The repeated cuts in financial support have pushed students into desperate hardship. Lack of money has led to students dropping out of their courses, under-achieving, taking up badly-paid and even dangerous work, and, in some cases, becoming ill. This is unacceptable.

Education is a right

We support free education. The right to learn should not have a price tag attached to it. Education does not just exist to serve the narrow interests of business and indus-

try — it exists for the benefit of all people, of the wider community. The only way to achieve this is to have a well-funded, accessible, public education system.

Closing the door to education

Opposing grant cuts is not just about wanting more cash in the pockets of people who are now students. It is also about fighting for an accessible education system. Without a decent level of student finance, continuing education is not an option for millions of working-class people.

Deepening inequalities

In a society already characterised by great inequalities, cutting financial support to students makes matters worse. In addition, pushing students into debt disproportionately affects those groups in society who already face discrimination in employment — including women, black people and disabled people.

Answering the Tories

The Tories use a number of arguments to justify their failure to fund the grants system and their cuts in grants. These arguments are easily answered.

Argument 1. Why should the bus driver fund the education of the future doctor or lawyer?

This is how Kenneth Clarke put it when Minister for Education. He meant: why should working-class people pay for the education of a middle-class elite? This is no doubt an appealing argument to people struggling on low wages, who have never had a chance of a decent education. But it is sickening hypocrisy from a Government whose policies have deepened the divide between rich and poor, and treated working-class people with contempt. The Tories have given away billions of pounds in tax cuts to the rich since 1979. These billions could have been used to fund education (and the health service, benefits, housing, pensions and so on). We do not want — or indeed need — to make working-class people pay for the necessary improvements in the education system. Let's make the rich pay!

In any case, higher education should not belong to a middle-class elite, it should be accessible to all who can benefit from it. *The bus driver should be able to go to college too.* A lack of finances should not be a barrier to education. This is why we need decent grants.

Argument 2. Grants create a dependency culture.

When the Tories talk about breaking the 'culture of dependency', they really mean that you should not expect services, or rights, or opportunities. Their student finance policy has increased dependency, though — on parents, on employers, on the Student Loans Company, and on banks!

We believe that students should not be forced into debt, and should be treated as independent adults. Dependence on parents is not only tough for many parents, but can be very problematic for many students — for example, for young lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

"Without a decent level of student finance, continuing education is not an option for millions of working-class people."

Labour must fight to save education!

After a devastating fifteen-year attack on education by the Tory Government, Labour should be leading the fight to restore student financial support and to build an education system that is well-resourced and accessible to all. Sadly, the Labour leadership has not taken up this fight as it should. They have not made any real commitments to decent grants for all students, and have even flirted with policies such as tuition fees and 'graduate tax' — policies that make students pay for their education.

The National Union of Students is led by a right-wing faction of Labour Students. It has failed students dismally. They have been more concerned with fiddling around with the structures of the national union than with leading effective opposition to the Tories. But if we push them they can be made to act. That's why students should get involved with the Labour Party and with Labour Students. Left Unity is an organisation in NUS that exists to demand action, and to organise grass-roots activists when the leadership lets them down.

● **Contact Left Unity, 9 Love Walk, London SE5.**

Education and the Welfare State

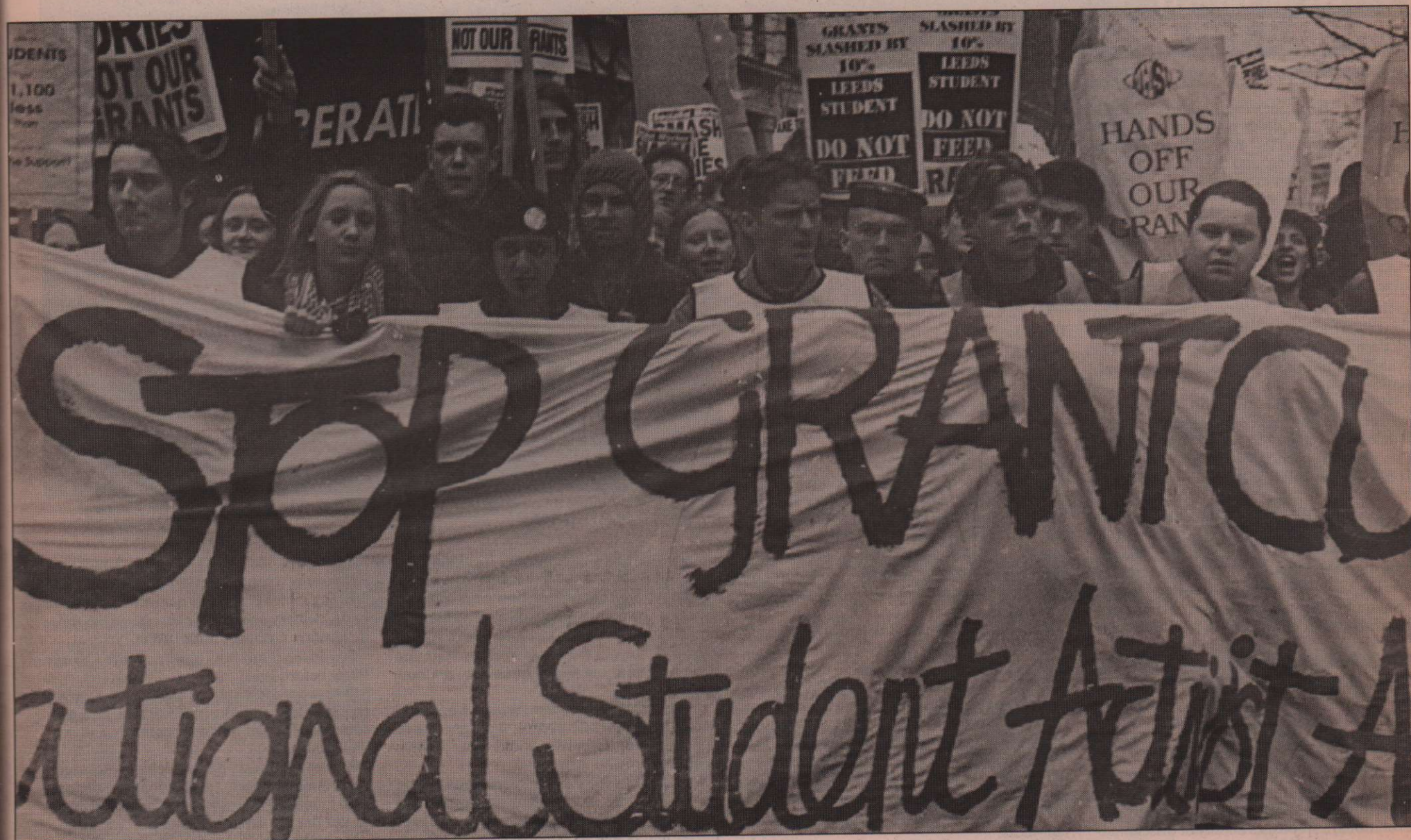
Attacks on education have happened in the context of a full-scale attack on the Welfare State as a whole. While the Tories are trying to do away with the notion of education as a right, to make students pay for their right to learn, and to hand over control of education to business and to an absurd 'internal market,' they are doing the exact same thing in the National Health Service.



Display this in your college

guide

GRANT CUTS!



Students are also suffering from their attacks on housing provision, and on state benefits.

Because of this, the student movement needs to take part in a broader movement

to save the Welfare State, fighting alongside health workers, claimants, pensioners, the labour movement, and everyone else who wants to campaign for decent state welfare provision. We need to assert that

meeting human need — in particular, providing decent education, healthcare, housing and benefits — is more important than the capitalists' thirst for profits.

The Welfare State Network

The Welfare State Network is a new initiative to link up different campaigns, and to co-ordinate action. The Network publishes a newspaper, *Action for health and welfare*, providing activists with essential information, and reporting on campaigning action.

● Contact the Welfare State Network c/o Southwark Trade Union Support Unit, Kennington Enterprise Unit, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17. Tel: 071-358 0419

A fair deal for further education students

Whilst higher education students struggle on desperately inadequate grants, most further education students don't get a grant at all. Discretionary grants have dwindled dramatically as the Tories have slashed funding to local councils. Further Education colleges are underfunded, and have been turned into 'corporations',

handed over to the control of the private sector to be run like businesses.

Training schemes are notorious for poor health and safety standards, ridiculously low training allowances, and low quality training. Many schemes amount to little more than slave labour.

In NUS too, FE students deserve a better deal. Even though two-thirds of the national union's membership is in the FE sector, the NUS leadership prefers to listen to those (University) unions with big affiliation cheques.

FIGHTING THE GRANT CUTS

If the student movement builds a big campaign, then we can beat the grant cuts. That means building action that can mobilise thousands and thousands of students. It means taking direct action in colleges. It means linking up with the labour movement and with local communities. It is vital that this academic year starts off with big, loud displays of student opposition to the Tory assault on education.

NUS NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

9 NOVEMBER, LONDON

● Contact Alison Brown or Richie Carrothers at NUS 071-272 8900

SAVE THE NHS:

WOMEN'S HEALTH MATTERS

Lobby of Parliament

6 December

● Contact Sarah Wellings, NUS Women's Officer 071-272 8900

The Socialist Workers' Party: what they stand for

EYE ON THE LEFT

Colin Foster looks at *Socialist Worker's* statement of aims

HAVE READ *Socialist Worker* for some 27 years now, but never until last week had I looked closely at its "Where We Stand" column. I was wrong, and the many who must look at this column to get an idea of what the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is about, are right — because the column tells us a lot.

It highlights the phrase "Revolution not reform". A strange phrase for Marxists. Rosa Luxemburg, the title of whose pamphlet "Reform or Revolution" might seem to give authority to *SW's* phrase, wrote: "For [Marxism] there exists an indissoluble tie between social reforms and revolution. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its goal".

SW continues: "The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers".

So elected parliaments are no different from unelected judges or army chiefs? The long struggles of the working class (which, after all, also grew up under capitalism) to gain the right to vote for parliament were all a waste of time?

Not quite. *SW* adds a sentence. "At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system".

Not to push through reforms? Not ever? Not even in alliance with mass action outside parliament?

The writers of *SW* might refer to the Communist International led by Lenin and Trotsky in 1919-20 as authority here. In 1920 it declared: "In modern conditions... parliamentary reforms are wholly lacking in consistency, durability... Parliamentary activity [for revolutionaries] consists mainly of disseminating revolutionary ideas".

But "modern conditions" then meant an immediate revolutionary crisis. As early as 1922 the same Communist International was noting that "even a workers' government... of purely parliamentary origin can give rise to an upsurge of the revolutionary workers' movement".

As Rosa Luxemburg indicated, revolutionaries differ from reformists by fighting for reforms *more boldly*, on all fronts, not by fighting for them.

Now, and for the last 15 years, the Tories have been hacking away at a whole array of reforms *won through parliament* by the mass action of Britain's parliamentary-oriented workers' movement — the legal rights of trade unions,

the services and benefits of the Welfare State. But if *SW* is right, those reforms could never have existed in the first place!

There is plenty of sloppy writing in the "Where We Stand". Its first sentence, for example, declares: "The workers create all the wealth under capitalism" — to which thought Karl Marx famously replied, "Labour is *not* the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source..."

But the problem with the phrases on reform, revolution, and parliament, is not just bad editing. It is bad politics. Not only in the logic of its "Where We Stand", but also *in practice*, the SWP is uninterested in any systematic political campaign for a workers' charter of trade union rights or for the rebuilding of the Welfare State.

SW supports Labour in elections, and sometimes demands of Labour leaders that they put reforms through parliament — all of which makes no sense if parliamentary reforms are impossible or useless — only because it shies away from obvious absurdity.

Equally revealing is the last section of the "Where We Stand" column, on "The Revolutionary Party". "To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party". Before May 1976 (when *SW* adopted its current version of the "Where We Stand") this sentence included another clause: "and *Socialist Worker* aims to build towards such a party by fighting for a programme of political and industrial demands..."

With the second clause deleted, the logic is clear. A revolutionary party is defined by *militancy* and by *being organised* — not by programme, theory, education, or ability to learn from the struggles of the working class and act as the memory of the class.

Practice tallies with preaching here, too. The SWP's method is to chase after militant activity, design its slogans in advertising-agency style to attract the most militant, and recruit at all costs — not to work out and fight for consistent ideas.

Tie this definition of the revolutionary party with the earlier definition of revolution, and what do you get? The struggle for socialism is nothing to do with existing political processes — it is to be "revolution not reform"; parliament can "at most" be used as a platform for propaganda; "the working class needs an entirely different kind of state", with workers' councils. The revolutionary party is defined by militancy and by being organised, in abstraction from any consistent political ideas.

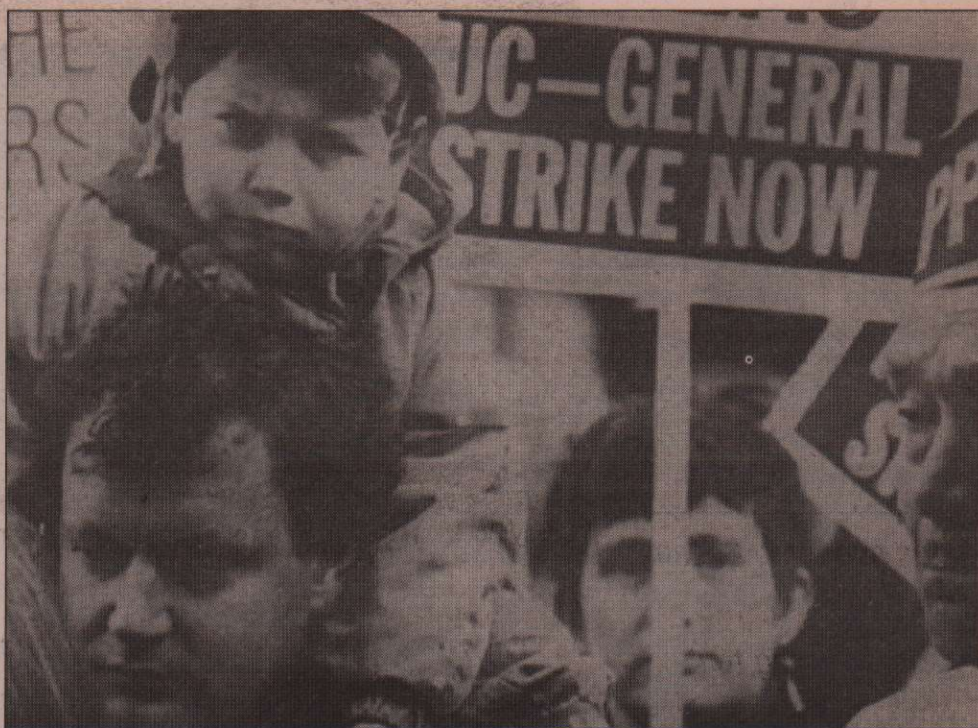
So revolution must happen on the following scenario. Workers get militant in trade-union battles. The SWP whoops up the militancy and recruits. Eventually it gets strong enough and "destroys the system".

It is fantasy. Capitalism does systematically generate explosions of working-class activity which can, or which do, throw up bodies like workers' councils. But parliament and parliamentary parties do not automatically fade away; on the contrary, they probably become more important. They will almost certainly dominate workers' councils, at the start. Even in the 1917 revolution in Russia, so Lenin noted, "the fact that a man had been a leader of an opposition party in parliament — even in a most reactionary parliament — facilitated his subsequent role in the revolution".

Even to win a strike usually requires more than whooping up militancy. To make militancy into victorious *revolution* — as in 1917 — requires, as Lenin put it, "thorough, circumspect, and long preparation". It requires politics and strategy.

SW's version of revolution is close to *syndicalism*, the theory that socialism can and must be won by trade-union struggle alone.

But serious revolutionary syndicalists map out consistent strategies for developing trade-union struggle. Some, for example, have argued that industrial unions can and should be built up until in each industry they are strong enough



"Slogans which have little higher aim than to catch the mood" — SW calls for "General Strike Now", October 1992

to take control of that industry from the capitalists, thus abolishing capitalism without political action. *SW*, by contrast, only *plays with* syndicalism, combining a syndicalist attitude to immediate trade-union struggles with a roughly Marxist view of the future workers' state and a vague blur about what comes between now and then.

Besides the change in the "Where We Stand" which deleted the reference to "a programme of political and industrial demands", other changes over time are also instructive.

Before May 1968 *Labour Worker* (as it then was) had a very short statement, focussed on immediate demands, and often changed. It got longer and bolder as political ferment grew in the late 1960s.

"The problem with the phrases on reform, revolution and parliament, is not just bad editing. It is bad politics."

By May 1968 *SW* was describing itself as "revolutionary" and demanding "a planned economy under workers' control"; but most of the rest of its statement was immediate policies. In December 1970 it adopted a much longer statement, in two sections: one "maximum", about revolution, and another "minimum", about such items as a minimum wage, regular election of full-time union officials, etc.

Small changes to this statement were made quite often, and it was completely overhauled in July 1974, when the idea that the USSR was state-capitalist was written into the basic statement for the first time.

In May 1976 the section with immediate demands was dropped, and the rest expanded and rewritten. In the 18 years since then, there has been only one change, to add a sentence about lesbian and gay rights.

A syndicalistic bias is consistent: for example, where Rosa Luxemburg, in "Reform or Revolution", summarised the "daily struggle" as being "for the amelioration of the condition of the workers... and for democratic institutions", none of the *SW* statements has ever

included the idea of fighting for democratic rights, or of a socialist revolution requiring and creating a higher form of democracy than the parliamentary one. But the changes in the statement mirror changes in the SWP:

- a loose, "modest" group in the Labour Party before 1968;

- between 1968 and the mid-1970s, a group trying to turn to industrial workers, and with some success, but on an economic and syndicalistic basis;

- since the mid-1970s, hardening into a sect, combining ultra-left "revolutionary" rhetoric with immediate slogans which have little higher aim than to catch "the mood".

In the May 1976 rewrite, one other bit was dropped from the "maximum" section besides the reference to "fighting for a programme of political and industrial demands". It was a whole section entitled "work in the mass organisations of the working class". ("Particularly the trade unions", the statement added — bafflingly, since the SWP had given up work in the other mass organisation of the working class, the Labour Party, back around 1968!)

There is now only a cryptic reference, in the section on the revolutionary party: "Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class". The shift mirrors the SWP's move away from serious trade union work.

It might be balanced by another sentence — "We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions" — if it were not that the SWP formally and explicitly abandoned building rank-and-file groups in the trade unions back in 1982.

Since 1976, evidently, the SWP has become so rigid a sect that it cannot change its "Where We Stand" column even when changes in the world have made its wording absurd! It still reads, as it did in 1974: "Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but state capitalist".

To state that Russia was not socialist in 1974 was to counter a widespread illusion. But what is the point today? No-one, of any political colour, suggests that Yeltsin's Russia is socialist.

And does the unchanged statement mean that the SWP thinks that Russia and Eastern Europe have basically the same "state-capitalist" system today as before 1989-91?

More likely, it means the SWP does not care very much — that "state capitalism", for the SWP leaders, is a useful phrase, not a theory.

The "Where We Stand" column tells us a lot. What it tells us, unfortunately, is that the SWP is a congealed, phrasemongering, semi-syndicalist sect.



Anger in every pore



Matt Cooper

reviews

'Ladybird, Ladybird'

Directed by
Ken Loach

WITH *Ladybird, Ladybird*, Ken Loach does what he does best: he tells a simple and personal story which, without ever being forced, sweats anger from every pore against a system that leaves the majority of people powerless and dispossessed. And the dis-possession here is of a particularly personal kind. The central character, Maggie (played by Crissy Rock) has to fight against the loss of her children to the 'care' of the social services.

"As ever with Loach, the loss is not something that Maggie is resigned to without hope. It is something to be fought."

The theme of personal loss had been a major one in Loach's recent films: of home and community in *Riff Raff*; of job, self respect and security in *Raining Stones*. As ever with Loach, the loss is not something that Maggie is resigned to without hope. It is something to be fought. And there is no final victory, only a continuing struggle. Nor is her loss accidental, rather it is an inevitable result of modern British capitalism.

Maggie is not portrayed as the innocent victim of circumstance, or a glowing example of motherhood, of the sort you would get in a sentimentalised America TV movie about a similar subject. She is someone who fails to avoid things other people manage to avoid because she cannot restrain her own temper, and because she cannot reason with social workers who take her inability to communicate with them as evidence that she is being a bad mother. Maggie — herself with a history of abuse as a child, and much of her childhood lost in a children's home — is portrayed as someone who is often her own worst enemy, failing to understand the rules of the game that the social workers play.

This is not a film that apports blame. The social workers are shown struggling to do what is right in a situation where they are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

But the film's sympathies clearly lie with Maggie and her predicament. Driven out of a relationship with a man who beats her, she is forced into a series of situations that put her children at risk, none of them of her own making.

The social workers, on the other hand, who struggle to provide an emergency service, are blinded by a different class outlook and by different sets of values from those held by working-class people whom they police. They fail to see that their cure is worse than the disease. Without



Crissy Rock "brings a raw and gritty power" to her part

ever overstating or labouing the point Loach clearly articulates the view that to patch up this rotten system is a hopeless task.

The film is particularly lifted by Crissy Rock's playing of Maggie. She brings a raw and gritty power to the part. Maybe it's because she is a Liverpoolian stand-up comic in her

first action role. Also fine is Vladimir Vega's portrayal of Jorge, the sensitive Paraguayan exile who in treating Maggie decently — we suspect for the first time — opens up a welter of contradictory emotions in her. Rock's and Vega's acting of a sharply perceptive, sometimes witty, script balance perfectly Loach's deadpan

"social realist" style.

This is a timely film, showing single parent families are only as 'bad' as the society that refuses to accommodate them. It is an indictment of a cruel and inhuman system based on punishing the victim. It proves that when we have nothing else, we still have our ability to fight — and to hope



Wayne
Geoffries
previews the
coming week's
viewing

Drop the Dead Donkey Thursday 6 October, Channel Four, 10pm
The political satire is not as sharp as in the first series, but this comedy send-up of a television news team is still excellent.

Loose Talk Friday 7 October, BBC2 11.15 pm
A comedy version of the long running BBC1 programme, Question Time, features the socialist comedians Jeremy Hardy and Mark Steel.

Rory Bremner — who else? Saturday 8 October Channel 4 10.05pm
This programme must already get up the noses of the Tories, but it's a shame that Bremner doesn't intend to

broadcast the tapes he made of conversations with Tory MPs where he pretended to be John Major. If Jeremy Beadle can dollop up surprises on unsuspecting members of the public, what's wrong with Bremner doing the same to MPs?

Reputations Sunday 9 October, BBC2 9.30
Examines the life of Stalin's last chief of police, Lavrenti Beria.

Network First Tuesday 11 October, Carlton 10.40pm
Looks at the secret chemical weapons research at Porton Down and the human guinea pigs who are struggling for compensation.

Epitaph for a long war

"Ireland without her people means nothing to me" — James Connolly

Six hundred years of strife behind,
Of confiscation, sept and sect;
And Tone said, Nations must grow blind
To creed and race, in self-respect.
But history spawns on rancid need
Malign sly ghosts who memorise
Dim prophecy; that plead, mislead,
And, pleading, weave in subtle lies:
Two peoples yet, not citizens, peers,
Still Talbot's children, William's heirs*.

"Without her people, Ireland is nothing!"

Saviours in-bred on poisoned soil:
Souls shaped to a Fenian shout,
Minds rough-hewn in turmoil, toil,
Meeting, ambush, camp, redoubt,
And civil, fratricidal war,
Unleashed in Tone's and Emmet's name,
By ardour tender as a roar,
And love impervious to blame:
They wandered blind by Murder led,
Calling Tone — Tyrconnell came instead.

"Without her people, Ireland is nothing!"

To finish what Wolfe Tone began,
They masked the face in England's blame

Of Irish folk, and aimed a gun.
Republic in name, communal game!
Old watchwords changed, old hopes recast,
"Unity" sunk to a sect war-cry,
The Rights of Man lost in the blast
Of bomb and gun — sectarian lie!
Two peoples fight to hold, regain,
Two songs with one hate-loud refrain.

"Without her people, Ireland is nothing!"

To knock down walls, let in the light,
A mystic's war was set in train;
Fresh blood and magic would unite
Hate-scarred tribes mad with disdain!
The fools, the fools! Demented choices;
Known history disowned, misread:-
Talk to yourself in pantomime voices
And think to hear the Fenian dead!
Can Erin unite, blood on stones,
Despite her peoples, over their bones?

Without her people, "Ireland" is nothing.

Sean Matgamna

* Richard Talbot, Duke of Tyrconnell, was the Catholic leader in Ireland in the Catholic-Protestant wars at the end of the 17th century, William of Orange the victorious Protestant king. Both strove for sectional victory. When at the time of the French Revolution Wolfe Tone, the founder of Irish republicanism, proclaimed the goal of uniting the people of Ireland "Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter", he demonstratively broke with that sectional past.

Tabloids and their moral void



Geoff Ward

reviews *The*

Moral Maze

BBC2
Saturday 11pm

THE MORAL MAZE, the late night discussion programme, sets itself the task of each week unravelling a topical moral issue.

Four panellists were asked the question: to what extent should the distant past and private present of a public figure be a legitimate concern to newspapers and their readership?

The discussion centred around the recent disclosure in the News of the World that the new Bishop of Durham had a gay fling in a Hull public toilet — 26 years ago! The Bishop, Michael Turnbull, supports the Church of England's ban on gay clergy.

The panel interrogated John Barton (Archdeacon of Aston) representing the Church of England and Stuart Kuttner (Deputy Editor of the *News of the World*).

"Today's tabloids behave like the Church used to. They fill a 'spiritual' vacuum vacated by the Church."

Parallels were made between the Church and the gutter press.

Today's tabloids behave like the Church used to. They parade people's 'sins' in public, pontificate on issues of morality and hand down judgements. They fill a 'spiritual' vacuum vacated by the Church.

The *News of the World* raked up this old story, because the man concerned is now, so to speak riding with the bigots, to expose the Anglican Church's hypocrisy over gay rights. In my view they were justified.

But hypocrisy denouncing hypocrites is deeply corrupt.

The tabloids' outpouring of anti-gay filth is worse than the Church of England's. The official morality of the Church is being undermined, but no higher morality fills the void. Instead we have a strange mish mash of 'acceptance', 'tolerance', 'forgiveness' and condemnation of gays in society.

By the end of the programme only one panellist — right-wing academic Dr David Starkey — attempted to answer the original question by proposing press restrictions and privacy laws to counter these 'immoral' stories. The lack of balance on the panel was shown when no-one seriously challenged him on this.

Trotskyists in tr

By Colin Foster

ON 11 APRIL 1945 the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald was liberated by an armed uprising of the prisoners.

Two days later the US troops arrived. They disarmed the prisoners, banned all political meetings, and let a large number of the prisoners die of hunger.

Among the prisoners the strongest political force was the official Communist Parties, the Stalinists. Taking their cue from the USSR's chauvinist war

propaganda, they were markedly anti-German.

At the time of the collapse of the Nazi occupation of France, the French CP paper had had the headline "A chacun son Boche" — roughly, "Everyone get a Boche."

The French CPers in Buchenwald were not so extreme in their chauvinism; but even so their attitudes antagonised many of the German CPers in the camp.

A Buchenwald "People's Front Committee" had the slogan, "Long live the German People's Republic", but, according to one of the Trotskyists in the camp:

"Some old German communists came to find [us] and said: the time is come, you must come out publicly, and they asked for a preliminary political discussion.

"A text by our German comrades which came out for a German Soviet Republic had a big impact among the German communist comrades."

And so the Buchenwald Trotskyists' manifesto was written, on 20 April.

Like all the Trotskyist documents of that period, it centred its hopes on the revolutionary potential of the German working class.

There were indeed strikes, protests, and attempts to form workers' councils

in Germany immediately after the war. But they were put down by the US, British and French occupying troops — and, rather more ruthlessly, by the USSR in their sector — helped by the servile policies of the German CP and Social-Democratic Party.

The Buchenwald manifesto was written by four Trotskyists, two Austrian, one Belgian, and one French.

Ernst Federn, an Austrian, had been in Nazi concentration camps for 7 years, first in Dachau and then in Buchenwald.

Karl Fischer had been a comrade of Federn's in Austria. He had been jailed in Vienna in 1935, but amnestied in

The Buchenwald manifesto

... 2. This development permits the German proletariat to rise rapidly from its deep defeat and to put itself once again at the head of the European proletariat in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

Isolated by the defeat of the revolution in Europe, the Russian Revolution has followed a development that has distanced it more and more from the interests of the European and international proletariat. The policy of 'Socialism in One Country' represents in the first place only the interests of the ruling bureaucratic clique and has this result today, that the Russian state pursues a policy of nationalism shoulder to shoulder with the imperialist powers.

Whatever developments may follow in Russia, the international proletariat must free itself of all illusions about this state and recognise, through a clear Marxist analysis, that the bureaucratic and military caste ruling today pursues exclusively its own interests and the international revolution must look for no support from this regime.

The complete military, political and economic collapse of the German bourgeoisie opens for the German proletariat the way to its liberation. So as to prevent the revival of the German bourgeoisie, which the conflicts between the imperialists will favour, and to establish workers' power, the revolutionary struggle of the working class of every country against its own bourgeoisie is necessary.

Because of the policies of both the international workers' organisations, who have actively fought against and sabotaged the proletarian revolution — which alone could have prevented this war — the working class has been deprived of an international leadership.

The Second International is an instrument of the bourgeoisie. The Third International has developed since the death of Lenin into an agency of the

foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy.

Both took an active part in the preparation and waging of this imperialist war and thus share responsibility for it. Any attempt to put the blame, or part of the blame, for this war on the German and international working class, just means a further service to the bourgeoisie.

The proletariat can accomplish its historic task only under the leadership of a new revolutionary world party. To create this party is the most immediate task of the most advanced section of the working class.

In the struggle against capitalism and its reformist and Stalinist agents, international revolutionary cadres have already come together for the building of this world party. For the fulfilment of this difficult task, there can be no diversions into the conciliatory solution of a new '2½' International. Such an intermediate formulation will hinder the necessary ideological clarification and inhibit the revolutionary fighting force.

3. Never again a November 9 1918!

In the coming pre-revolutionary period the task is to mobilise the working masses in the struggle against the bourgeoisie and to prepare the building of a new revolutionary International which will realise the unity of the working class in revolutionary action.

All theories and illusions about a 'people's state' or 'people's democracy' have, in the course of the class struggle in capitalist society, led the working class into the bloodiest defeats. Only ruthless struggle against the capitalist state, its destruction and the establishment of a state of workers' and peasants' councils, can prevent further such defeats.

The bourgeoisie and the uprooted petty bourgeoisie brought fascism to power. Fascism is the product of capi-

talism. Only successful independent action by the working class against capitalism is capable of eliminating the evil of fascism at its roots. In this struggle the hesitating petty bourgeoisie will rally to the revolutionary proletariat on the offensive, as the history of the great revolutions teaches us.

To go forward victorious from the coming class struggles, the German working class must struggle for the realisation of the following demands:

Freedom of organisation, of assembly, and of press!

Freedom of combination, and immediate restoration of all social gains won before 1933!

Complete suppression of all fascist organisations!

Confiscation of their property for the benefit of the victims of fascism!

All representatives of the fascist state to be put on trial in freely elected people's courts!

Dissolution of the Wehrmacht and its replacement by workers' militias!

Immediate free elections for workers' and peasants' councils throughout Germany and convocation of a general congress of councils!

Despite the use of all parliamentary institutions of the bourgeoisie for revolutionary propaganda — maintenance and extension of the councils!

Expropriation of the banks, heavy industries, and large landed estates!

Control of production by the trade unions and workers' councils!

Not a man, not a penny, for the war and reparations debts of the bourgeoisie!

The bourgeoisie must pay!

For the all-German socialist revolution; against a partition of Germany!

Revolutionary fraternisation with the proletarians of the occupying armies!

For a Germany of workers' councils in a Europe of workers' councils!

For the proletarian world revolution!

"There were strikes, protests, and attempts to form workers' councils in Germany immediately after the war. But they were put down by the US, British and French occupying troops."

1938. He then escaped to France, where he was arrested in June 1944.

Unlike most Trotskyists, Fischer regarded the USSR as "state-capitalist", rather than a post-capitalist economy ruled by a bureaucratic caste; on this point the manifesto represents a sort of compromise between his views and those of the other three.

Florent Galloy was a Belgian miner who had worked closely with Abraham Leon, the Belgian Trotskyist leader who wrote the classic Marxist study of "The Jewish Question." Leon was arrested in June 1944 and died in Auschwitz; Galloy was arrested in July



Abraham Leon, murdered in Auschwitz

The Nazi camps



Cattle wagons arrive with fresh victims for the Nazis' death camps

1944. Marcel Beaufrere had been in Buchenwald since January 1944, together with a number of younger comrades from his Trotskyist group in Brest, France, who had been conducting revolutionary propaganda among the German troops. The Trotskyists in Buchenwald were cautious about organising openly because they faced threats not only from the Nazis but also from the Stalinists among the prisoners. Beaufrere, for example, was recognised on his arrival in the camp by the French Stalinists, who swore to kill him. Fischer, who returned to Austria after the war, was arrested there, deported to the USSR, and sentenced to 15 years of forced labour in Siberia for "anti-Soviet activity." He was released in 1955. Despite the terrible odds against them, the Trotskyists kept their principles and their faith in the working class. Not only their manifesto, but also their actions, show that. In the last days of the Buchenwald camp, the SS summoned all the Jewish prisoners. A mass killing was obviously planned. But the Trotskyists organised the "political" prisoners to give their badges — red triangles — to Jews to replace their yellow stars and thus allow them to evade the SS.

Another incident was recorded by Michel Pablo, writing in 1958 (*The Fourth International, a History of its Ideas and its Struggles*): "This year (1958) there died in Belgium, in the most complete anonymity, comrade Gallois [Galloy], a mine worker 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 covered with vermin. "They were Jews whom the SS were getting ready to gas, except in case — some 'charitable soul' would take it upon 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." [Information from *Critique Communiste*, November 1978 and *Spartakist*, May 1985.]



The ideological front

In the years running up to World War 2, the beleaguered Trotskyist groups thrashed out the revolutionary internationalist ideas which enabled them to stand against the stream during the war.



Glossary

Second International

The international organisation of social-democratic parties. Set up in 1889, it collapsed politically in 1914, when its member parties each supported their 'own' capitalist governments in World War 1. But it was patched together after the War, and exists today under the name "Socialist International."

Third International

Set up in 1919 under Lenin's leadership to replace the corrupt Second International; degenerated under Stalin's leadership; was formally disbanded by Stalin in 1943.

'2½ International'

Name given to a shortlived intermediate group between the Second and Third Internationals, set up after World War 1; here used to indicate any sort of intermediate group, half-reformist, half-revolutionary.

9 November 1918

After World War 1 the old regime in Germany collapsed. But the Social Democrats served capitalism by replacing the old monarchy with a capitalist republic.

Fourth International

International grouping founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938, aiming to replace the degenerated Second and Third Internationals.

How not to assess Lenin

Al Richardson reviews *The Seeds of Evil: Lenin and the Origins of Bolshevik Elitism*, by Robin Blick (Ferrington, London, 1993, £5.00)

AN UNAVOIDABLE phenomenon of the last few years has been the political meeting taken over by victims of Healyism to recount their experiences, which, whatever the original subject under discussion, or the tedium it inflicts upon the rest of us, they feel necessary to dwell on at some length. But fellow feeling and solidarity give them every right to demand our attention, even if the result is generally massive depoliticisation, so it is all the more interesting when some attempt is made to account for their treatment in theoretical terms.

The intention in this book is to warn us of "the human lives, qualities and talents that Leninism devours", vouched for by "anyone who has spent time in a Leninist organisation, and emerged from the experience relatively unscathed" (p24). If by "Leninist" we are meant to understand the types of organisation Comrade Blick has supported, we have to say that the proof that he has not emerged "unscathed" lies before us in this book, for a more dishonest, dare we say Healyite, method of polemic can scarcely be imagined. Its jeering, unpleasant tone, factional exaggeration, wilful misrepresentation of its opponent's ideas, and selective methods of quotation, very much remind us of how he wrote *Stalinism in Britain* 23 years ago.

But any comparison between the two books is all to the advantage of the earlier work. For whereas *Stalinism in Britain* was packed with original and painstaking research, and demolished the opposing case by representing its views in copious quotations often amounting to several paragraphs at a time, Blick nowhere extends the same courtesy to Lenin. A classic illustration lies in a single sentence at the top of page x, where he attempts to establish the case that Lenin was elitist, authoritarian and anti-democratic from four quotations taken from Volume Five of the *Collected Works*, none of them amounting to more than 11 words at a time, and each separated from the other by at least 10 pages. Of these quotations, the first, saying that class political consciousness is brought to the working class from outside states no more than the truism that Marx and Engels (and Kautsky, Luxemburg, Plekhanov, Lenin himself and Trotsky... need we go on?) did not themselves come from that class. The second, that "talented men are not born by the hundreds", refers to the public activity of Bebel and Liebknecht in the German Reichstag as tribunes of the people, and not to any of Blick's authoritarian conspirators. The third, that the revolutionary party must be made up of people who make revolutionary activity their profession, is explained with emphasis in the very next sentence by "all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals... must be effaced".



Stalin was the most deadly enemy of Lenin's ideas; but Blick, like many who have joined supposedly "Leninist" organisations — in his case, Gerry Healy's WRP — to find their regime in fact Stalinist, equates Lenin with Stalin

The final citation consists of four words taken from a proverb, "whether it is easier to wipe out 'a dozen wise men' or 'a hundred fools'."

Similar violence is done to the political context of Lenin's words and actions. On page 3 Lenin is made the father of Stalin's theory of "the Bolshevised Soviet trade unions as 'transmission belts which link the party with the [working] class'" with his talk of "an arrangement of cog wheels", or "complicated transmission system". Yet the context makes clear that Lenin is polemicising against the idea of the trade unions as mere institutions of the Bolshevik state, and that in these words he is describing "in principle, and in the abstract, class relations in capitalist society" (*Collected Works*, Volume 32, p23). Trotsky's polemic against Stalin as "the 'Committeeman' par excellence" is quoted in the context of an attack on Lenin (p41), without telling us that Lenin himself was making very sharp criticisms of these same 'Committeemen' at the time (*Collected Works*, Volume 8, pp408, 411).

Nor is any attempt made to balance this method of selecting out of context by presenting the wider picture. The argument for the necessity for socialist consciousness to be brought to the working class made out in *What is to be Done?* is nowhere weighed against the remark made only three years later that "the working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic, and more than 10 years of work put in by social democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness." ["Social-democratic" then meant "Marxian socialist"]. There is no mention of the fact that before the 1905 revolution all parties, even bourgeois ones, were illegal in Russia, so that political parties to

survive at all had to be conspiratorial and secretive. Even after that time, the elected deputies of all the parties had to meet secretly in a wood in Finland to protest against the Tsar's dissolution of the Duma. Yet once new conditions of political liberty came along, Lenin was quick to abandon the old centralised conspiratorial methods, and to argue that "the new form of organisation, or rather the new form of the basic organisational nucleus of the workers' party, must be definitely much broader than were the old circles. Apart from this, the new nucleus will most likely have to be a less rigid, more 'free', more 'loose' organisation." He summarised his new approach by admitting that "it will really not be amiss if we now 'bend the bow' slightly, a little, just a little, 'the other way'." (*Collected Works*, Volume 10, pp34ff).

Much ink is spilt (pp43-5) trying to prove that Lenin was aiming at a one party state from the start, in spite of his arguments in favour of participating with the bourgeois democrats in a provisional revolutionary government in 1905 (*Collected Works*, Volume 8, pp293ff), and the stubborn fact that the first Bolshevik government of 1917 was a coalition with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries.

But any criticism of Lenin is deemed valid, from no matter what direction. For example, Lieber is quoted as describing Lenin's views as underestimating "the influence of proletarian psychology" in the formation of working class consciousness" (p32). Is this the same Mark Lieber whose respect for this consciousness in 1917 led him to propose placing detachments of soldiers at factory gates and "the repression, eradication, and punishment of all disobedient workers with all the means at the state's disposal" (N Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution*, pp401, 412), whom Martov himself called a "Versaillan"? Nor was Martov as much in agreement with his argument as our author would have us believe. Blick spends 10 pages (pp74-83) trying to discredit the "legitimacy of Bolshevik rule" in the Soviets in November 1917. But even whilst arguing against the principle of Soviet rule at this time, Martov never denied that "placed in the concrete conditions of contemporary Russia, the Bolshevik party dictatorship reflects, in the first place, the interests and aspirations of the proletarian elements of the population" (*The State and the Socialist Revolution*, p13). Even modern feminism is enlisted in this game, when Bolshevik adherence to principle is described as "machismo" (p46), and the full stream of fashionable Philistine morality is poured over Lenin's plea for the separation of the personal and the political, a position in which Lenin differed in no respect from Marx himself (the Bauman case, p28).

Nor is this technique of selective quotation limited to Lenin. Seeking to discredit Bolshevism to the advantage of Menshevism, Blick notes that "it was not Bolshevism, but left tendencies within and close to Menshevism, that projected the most radical (even if mistaken)

perspectives for the revolution of 1905... the journal *Nachalo*, edited jointly by Martov and Trotsky, advocated a direct transition to a workers' government in accordance with the latter's theory of 'Permanent Revolution'" (p6). Now this really is "bending the stick" so far the other way that it breaks. Blick, who makes such a cult of Martov in this text (pp x, 8, 29, 46, etc) turns out not to have read any Martov at all, and is wholly reliant upon Israel Getzler's book. Now if he had consulted his source more closely he would have realised that far from speaking for Menshevism as a whole at this time "Martov had very little influence upon his fellow-Mensheviks and his voice was all but unheard", that Martov found himself in a minority on *Nachalo*, "which had become a propagator of Trotskyism rather than of Menshevism" (I Getzler, *Martov*, p110). On the other hand, the main spokesman for the stages theory of revolution and for a multi-class bloc with the Cadets, SRs, etc, was none other than the Menshevik Martynov, a rôle he was to resume in Stalin's Comintern during the Chinese events of 1926-28. Another example on page 3 tells us that Trotsky believed that "by virtue of state ownership of the means of production — and nothing more — 'the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state is for us basically defined'." Far from saying "nothing more", an examination of Blick's reference shows that what Trotsky actually said was "through these relations, established by the proletarian revolution, the nature of the Soviet Union is for us basically defined" (*Revolution Betrayed*, p248, our emphasis). In other words, nationalisation as such did not make a state proletarian, but nationalisation as a result of a workers' revolution did, a very different matter, already stated in these terms by Engels in *Anti-Dühring*.

Along with these distasteful methods there runs a most unpleasant undercurrent, seeking to derive fascism and Nazism from Leninism. This appears as early as the second and third sentences of the book, and is brought up repeatedly thereafter (for example, pp x, 38-40, 58-9, etc). Now as a history lecturer Blick is fully aware that Ernst Nolte, whose book is cited in the bibliography on page 87, explained these parallels long ago even to the satisfaction of bourgeois scholarship when he pointed out that Nazism and fascism borrowed the methods of communism precisely in order to combat it, and not out of any adherence to its principles, or admiration for its goals. This sort of thing only serves to convince us of bad faith — and not on the part of Lenin.

The final paragraph asks us to have the courage to think that "contrary to the claims of Trotskyism, Stalinism was the necessary outcome of Leninism" (p60). Far from being "unthinkable", I believe that this original insight might already have occurred to cold warriors, conservatives, liberals, social democrats, and even to Stalinists themselves. I always thought that it took courage to think otherwise.



Lenin argued for conspiratorial centralism not as an ideal, but only when Tsarist repression made it necessary

WORKERS' LIBERTY

PUBLIC MEETINGS

LANCASTER

Monday 10 October

How to stop the Criminal Justice Bill

7.30, Albert pub

Tuesday 11 October

Can we win peace in Ireland?

1.00, Student Union, Lancaster University

LONDON

Wednesday 12 October

The Brazilian elections and the struggle for freedom

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

Saturday 5 November

Educational School: The German revolution, 1918-19

12.00-4.00; details from Mark on 071-639 7965

NEWCASTLE

Wednesday 12 October

How to defend the Welfare State

1.00, Student Union, University of Northumbria

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 13 October

The police and the state

1.00, University of Central England, Conference Room,

Perry Barr

MANCHESTER

Thursday 13 October

Is socialism possible?

1.00, Student Union, Manchester Metropolitan University

LEICESTER

Tuesday 18 October

Why be a student activist?

7.30, Room 2, Student Union, Leicester University

YORK

Saturday 22 October

Day school: The politics of Workers' Liberty

12.00-5.00, Priory Street Community Centre

UNISON: how not to campaign on pay

By Tony Dale

UNISON'S LOCAL government pay campaign is degenerating into a fiasco. The agitation against the employers' offer of a two year pay deal of 1.7% plus £75 now and 1.4% plus £75 next year is barely alive. The latest activities by the union's Local Government National

Executive threatens to kill it off.

At the start of the summer UNISON became bogged down in a consultation exercise dreamt up by the Service Group Executive. For two months members were informally consulted over the offer and their willingness to take part in a rolling programme of strikes.

The process was so long winded

as to dampen any prospect of action, and the result at best inconclusive. Out of 800,000 members, it was calculated that 66,300 voted to reject the offer and support action and 61,500 to accept the offer.

Then the Service Group Executive voted to cancel the delegate conference due on 12 October!

Now the national leadership will go

back to the employers to demand an improved offer, even though there is no pressure on the employers. If this doesn't work, the employers will be threatened with... arbitration!

The only way out of this mess is for a delegate conference to be organised, to be followed by a ballot if delegates vote to reject the offer and

in favour of industrial action. The employers' offer represents a two year pay squeeze on council workers.

Rumours are circulating that UNISON is on the verge of bankruptcy, and that this is the real reason for calling off the delegate conference. If so, then it is a scandal that union democracy is being sacrificed to balance the books.

NCU leaders back rotten deal

By an BT engineer

THE STAND OFF between BT and the NCU over BT field engineers' attendance patterns is about to end.

On Thursday 6th the results of the union's ballot on the amended proposals from BT will be known.

The union has recommended accepting the deal. This is a terrible mistake. After the 'no' vote on BT's and with the majority of affected members holding firm on not signing new contracts, we needed a stepping up of the campaign, not a cheap deal.

Branches were reporting good attendance at workplace meetings, Branch meetings and Saturday meetings. In areas where the union is well organised, with a tradition of not just rolling over and succumbing to management pressure, we had been winning the argument — in London, in the North East, in the West Midlands and in Scotland.

NCU leaders Tony Young and Jeannie Drake were arguing for compromise because they thought that BT's original proposals, overwhelmingly rejected by the members, were

OK — £1,000 to buy out existing patterns.

They got their way at an Executive meeting that finished at three o'clock in the morning; four Broad Left members voted with the Right, to recommend acceptance.

Since the vote, two things have been made clear.

1. That Tony Young had misled the Executive over BT's position. It is obvious that the 'voluntary' commitment to existing attendance patterns does not include keeping current Scheduled Day Off Patterns. After this deal, BT will attack engineers 9 day-fortnight, 13 day-three-week patterns. All the other union demands a shorter working week, protection for supervisory grades, and better rates for Saturday working, have been dropped.

2. That members are angry! The response of left branches campaigning for a 'No' vote has been very good. Where members are presented with the facts of the situation and their local leadership is campaigning — they are voting no.

Nevertheless the ballot result is unlikely to be no.

**Welfare State
Network
Lobby Tory
Party
Conference!
Wednesday
12 October
Assemble 1pm,
Merrick Park,
Bournemouth
Everybody
welcome
More details: tel
071-358 0419**

Poor leadership on the Tube

By a Central Line guard

LONDON UNDERGROUND workers in the RMT union are due to strike on 6/7 October over pay.

Despite the RMT members' clear vote for action — 2072 to 809 — the union leaders have been feeble. They sold the signal workers short, the postponed the Tube strike — planned for 30 September — on a legal technicality and rushed to seek new talks. London Underground bosses said

they would only explain their existing offer.

The ASLEF leaders' grovelling treachery in calling off their ballot in return for a half a percent increase is also a problem. A campaign by RMT activists to sign up ASLEF members to RMT will legally cover ASLEF members angry with their executive and wanting to take action. Despite everything tubeworkers now have a real chance to win back some ground.



Facts, figures and arguments
95p plus 19p postage, from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.
Cheques payable to "WL Publications"

Why you should be a socialist

TODAY ONE CLASS, the working class, lives by selling its labour-power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the social means of production. Life is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes unemployment, the maiming of lives by overwork, imperialism, abuse of the environment, and much else.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to regroup socialists in a democratic organisation which can convince and mobilise the working class to overthrow capitalism. We aim not to create a new labour movement, but to transform the existing workers' movement, trade unions and Labour Party.

We want socialism: public ownership of the major enterprises, workers' control, and democracy much fuller than the present system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We stand:

- For a fight to rebuild the Welfare State; for health care, housing, education and a minimum living standard to be available to all, by right. For the extension of the principle of social provision for need from a limited range of services to the whole economy.
- For social planning, for a sustainable use of natural resources.
- For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working-class-based women's movement.
- For black and white workers' unity, organised through the labour movement, to fight racism and the despair which breeds racism. For labour

movement support for black communities' self-defence against racist and fascist violence; against immigration controls.

- For equality for lesbians and gays.
- In support of the independent trade unions and the socialists in Russia and Eastern Europe. We denounce the misery caused by the drive to free-market capitalism there, but we believe that Stalinism was a system of class exploitation no better than capitalism.
- For a democratic united Europe; against the undemocratic and capitalist European Community, but for European workers' unity and socialism, not nationalism, as the alternative.
- For a united and free Ireland,

with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

- For the Palestinians' right to a state of their own, alongside Israel, and for a socialist federation of the Middle East with self-determination for the Israeli Jews.
- For national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide.
- For a workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, to take solidarity action, and to decide their own union rules.
- For a rank and file movement in the trade unions.
- For left unity in action; openness and clarity in debate and discussion.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Fight student poverty! Stop the grant cuts!



The Indian plague

Capitalism spreads disease

By Joan Trevor

SURAT, A city in the north-west Indian state of Gujarat, is a centre for India's thriving gem-cutting industry. It is one of the filthiest cities in India.

Two million people live there in normal times, most of them in unimaginable poverty, a few, those who own the gem-cutting and other industries, in unimaginable luxury.

Filth in India is not a new thing, and it has taken a peculiar sequence of ugly events to turn this dirty city into a plague city, haemorrhaging its population into the surrounding countryside.

The sequence might have begun last year in the neighbouring state of Maharashtra where an earthquake kills 30,000 people.

The earthquake makes homeless swarms of wild rats, which pour out of the forests and into the small towns and villages. The rats carry the flea that carries the bacteria, *Yersinia pestis*, that brings the plague.

The rats die of the plague, and the fleas, having nothing else to feed on, feed on people.

The fleas carry two sorts of plague: pneumonic and bubonic.

Pneumonic plague is usually fatal if not treated early on. The victim dies of a violent, bloody, infectious cough. Bubonic plague victims have a fifty-fifty chance of survival without treatment. They suffer fever and painful swellings which erupt under the skin, causing the dark patches which gave it its name in medieval times — the "Black Death."

To catch pneumonic plague you have to come into close contact with someone who has the disease, inhale the infected droplets from their breath. To catch bubonic plague you have to get bitten by the disease bearing flea or rat. So far the fleas live only on rural rats like those of the Maharashtra villages, but if they spread to the rats of the towns, more and more people will catch bubonic plague.

Pneumonic plague was probably brought to

Surat by a labourer returning from a holiday in his Maharashtra village. In the crowded, unhygienic conditions of this city the plague spread quickly among people, and now all major Indian cities are on alert for cases.

There have been other outbreaks of the disease in recent times, and every year, even in the United States, some travellers who come into contact with an infected wild animal, catch the disease. In the United States they receive prompt treatment — assuming that their Medicare payments are up-to-date.

In India, in Surat, where a large proportion of the private doctors — almost the only doctors there are — have fled the town, and where the victims are poor, where even if they know they are ill, they go to work because they cannot afford not to, the chances of a victim getting treated in time are virtually nil.

The Indian plague has caught more headlines in Britain and Europe than the Maharashtra earthquake which set it off.

Black Death. Medieval disease. Immigrants catching planes to European capitals. These are the angles for the British media.

Nevertheless, if the disease spreads unchecked to the other bigger cities of India, the death toll will be mind-boggling. Plague will once again join the list of diseases which carry off millions of people every year.

Advances in medicine after World War 2 led to massive programmes of immunisation and treatment which all but eradicated the smallpox virus and checked the virulence of other diseases.

But advances in sanitation in many developing countries didn't keep up with massive immigration into the cities. In slum conditions, the killer viruses are coming back, stronger.

Some of them have mutated and are harder to treat with the old drugs.

Tuberculosis will kill 30 million people throughout the world in the 1990s, and it has come back to European towns and cities now.

Malaria kills a million people every year.

Every one of those people is you or me, or our brother or sister. Every one of those millions has family, friends, hopes and dreams, and above all the right to benefit from the scientific achievements of this century. The right to decent sanitation and shelter, food and medicine.

Rights denied them by their greedy and indifferent rulers.

There never should be people who live in such flimsy houses that they are swept away in an earthquake.

There never should be people who have to go to work when they are ill, or who cannot get treatment when they are ill.

There never should be people who live cheek by furry jowl with rats — dirty, infected rats.

More than anything, this disease, which could have happened at any time and which is probably long overdue in the Indian slums, points up the insanity of capitalism, where a few are well off and the many are impoverished and powerless.

Protest at Tory Party Conference

Wed 12 October
1.30, Merrick Park

Sponsored by: NUS London, Bournemouth & Poole College of Art and Design SU, Dorset Against the Criminal Justice Bill, Welfare State Network and the National Student Alliance
Contact: Kevin Sexton, 071-637 1181

Students will link up with Welfare State defence activists and campaigners against the Criminal Justice Bill to protest against the Tories' attacks on education, welfare services and civil liberties.

Left Unity fringe meeting How can we stop the Tories?

After the rally, Moon in the Square, Exeter Road, Bournemouth

Stop the Grant Cuts!

Lancaster,
Wed 19 October
1.00, St. Martin's College for march and rally

Speakers: NUS, AUT & RMT
Contact: Cumbria & Lancashire NUS, 0524-65201 ext 2210

Left Unity fringe meeting After the rally

NUS National Demonstration

Wed 9 November
11.00, Battersea Park, London

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