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NICARAGUA: THATCHER BACKS US TERROR



Photo: John Harris

BRITAIN'S TORY government is secretly helping President Ronald Reagan to strangle the Nicaraguan economy, against which Reagan last week declared a US trade embargo.

Publicly and officially Thatcher's government pretend to think that the Reagan administration's harrying of the left-wing, democratically-elected Nicaraguan government is unjustified and unreasonable, as well as likely to be counterproductive.

But behind the scenes Thatcher backs Reagan to the hilt.

This was revealed by the Observer last Sunday when it published excerpts from secret Foreign Office documents. Reporter Hugh O'Shaughnessy rightly commented that "the government's actions directly contradict Britain's declared intention of supporting loans to Nicaragua on their merits".

He went on: "The documents show that the Foreign Office is anxious to shield its activities from public opinion. One memorandum says: 'The problem of explaining [the policy of blocking loans] in public will, however, persist and we shall need to stick to our present line of claiming that our opposition is based on

technical grounds".

As Thatcher works behind the scenes to back Reagan's economic war against Nicaragua, meanwhile the 'contra' guerillas, the CIA-financed and organised gangsters, continue to wage another sort of war, on the Nicaraguan border. They ambush and kill Nicaraguan officials and civilians, burn villages, and try to spread economic havoc. They have already caused hundreds of millions of dollars worth of wanton destruc-



tion to the poverty-stricken Nicaraguan economy.

The revelation that Thatcher actively backs Reagan behind a smokescreen of hypocrisy inescapably raises the question: are all or some of the other 'reasonable' West European governments — West Germany, France, Sweden, etc — who publicly 'oppose' Reagan, in reality giving him the same sort of covert support as Thatcher?

The labour movement must protest against the British government's undeclared economic war on Nicaragua. We must organise material aid to help Nicaragua defeat Reagan and Thatcher's economic war, and their attempt to put the right-wing gangsters back in power in Managua.

Keep our
unions
LABOUR PARTY
LABOUR



Plasht Grove, Newham, E6 Photo: Andrew Moore

Keeping the streets safe for racists

LAST Saturday over 3000 people marched in Newham in protest against racist attacks and police harassment. The demonstration was called at very short notice in response to the police attack on a march two weeks earlier in support of the Newham 7 and the 'Justice for the Pryces' campaign.

Despite police attempts to smash up the march and provoke people, it was a big success and largely free of trouble.

When the march arrived back at Plasht Park the police tried to funnel it through a gate four feet wide. Inevitably there was a certain amount of jostling and

On Saturday we asserted our right to march the streets of Newham (or anywhere else) without the fear of police harassment.

Unmesh Desai,
Newham 7 Defence
Campaign

Trotskyists in the
concentration camps: p.8

Neil Kinnock's guru:
centre pages

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Rearguard fight in Sheffield

By Dave Barter

AT THE Sheffield City Council meeting on May 7, 20 Labour councillors broke with District Labour Party policy and voted with the Liberals and Tories to set a legal rate. But the fight for jobs and services in Sheffield is not over. The council's stand ag-

ainst the government mobilised a campaign, and the council unions and the Labour Party will not back down now.

The day after the council caved in, over 250 shop stewards from local authority trade unions met and pledged to continue the fight, if necessary by action against the council.

The shop stewards decided to continue meeting and to set up a city-wide joint union cuts committee. Monitoring groups are being set up to identify and respond to any attempted cuts.

The District Labour Party will have to fight for the agreed budget to be implemented, which means no amnesty for the 20 coun-

cillors who broke DLP policy. Eight ward Labour Parties have already passed motions of condemnation or no confidence; one of the 20 has already resigned.

If any councillor refuses to resign after being no-confidenced by his or her ward, then the DLP will have to push for their expulsion from the Labour group.

London unions tell councils to stand firm

By Terry Connolly (member London Labour Party EC, in personal capacity)

TWO IMPORTANT meetings took place last week between the leaders of rate-capped councils in London and the Labour Party.

Last Thursday, 9th, the Greater London Labour Party executive met council Labour group leaders to hear an assessment of the situation in each borough. In the main these assessments were honest and reassured the executive that the fight would continue.

However, when the executive was asked to agree on a resolution committing Labour to up the stakes and seriously begin to tackle the government, the EC majority — with the support of the borough leaders and of GLC leader Ken Livingstone — refused.

They chose the softer option, presented in a motion from Militant which called vaguely for strike action and piously condemned the reneging councillors.

Lambeth council leader Ted Knight argued that it was crucial to maintain defiance — on however limited a basis — "for as long as possible", and asked the regional executive to have faith in the Labour groups to continue their 'no rate' tactic.

The stronger motion called for councils to withhold interest payments, but speaker after speaker claimed that the unions and workforce would not support this, because cash for wages would soon run out.

The meeting also considered

the probability that Ken Livingstone's GLC will take the boroughs to court for non-payment of the GLC rate precept. Ken Livingstone said that if the GLC failed to act on non-payment of precepts, and failed to levy the discretionary penal interest rate, that would place individual GLC councillors in "an illegality and surcharge situation", and "there was no majority for that in the Labour group".

But Livingstone himself does not offer a fight within the GLC Labour group, nor is he personally prepared to stand with the boroughs.

On Sunday 12th London Labour Party representatives met with defiant Labour groups and the local government workers' link-up organisation, London Bridge. The meeting failed to agree on stepping up action.

Borough leaders pleaded that they could not guarantee to continue to fight, but they all thought they could carry their groups over the next few weeks.

Liverpool's deputy leader Derek Hatton, who because of last year's experience can go well into June without setting a rate, gave firm support for the no rate tactic, and assured his London comrades that his group will stand firm.

London Bridge chair Jim O'Brien argued that councillors had only to deliver on their own policy of 'no rate', and said that they should stand firm.

"As soon as a single councillor is moved against by the District Auditor", he said, "the trade unions will take this as the trigger for immediate strike action and solidarity action".



McDonnell purged

By Paula Watson

AT THE AGM of the Greater London Council Labour Group on Monday April 29, the purge continued of those who stood by party policy in the great budget debate.

John McDonnell was ousted from the deputy leadership by Michael Ward. McDonnell only received 13 votes, those of Deirdre Wood, Lesley Hammond, Paul Boateng, Dave Wetzal, Steve Bundred, Ed Gouge, Tony Banks, Charlie Rossi, Simon Turney, Norman Howard, Bryn Davies, Paul Moore, and McDonnell himself.

McDonnell also lost the chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Ken Livingstone was re-elected leader without opposition and none of the other offices were contested.

Earlier a motion, moved by Dave Wetzal, to abolish the posts of leader and deputy

leader and to operate a collective democracy through the Labour Group and the policy committee, had received only four votes, including that of John McDonnell. Ken Livingstone opposed it for the interesting reason that standing orders could be changed to accommodate such a proposal, but the underlying power structure would not alter.

The atmosphere in the meeting was strange. McDonnell, sitting on the dais, looked sad and grave, isolated but for the solid support and sympathy of Vidya Anand, the delegate from the Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party, sitting next to him.

Livingstone, bronzed from his recent Cuban trip, was in ebullient form, clearly elated by his success in Brent East the previous day. He and the majority of the group behaved with the bravado of children who know that nanny disapproves, but are determined to show no contrition.

Lewisham East's blow against racism

By Chris Knight

Lewisham East Constituency Labour Party has struck a blow against institutionalised racism in the Labour Party.

By selecting Russell Profitt as our prospective parliamentary candidate, at a selection conference which included our two black section delegates, we have strengthened our standing with the black community in Lewisham, boosted the black sections movement nationally, and presented Kinnock and the right wing of the National Executive Committee with a real headache.

Russell Profitt does not claim to be on the 'hard left', or to be a revolutionary socialist, but he is a good, cred-

ible candidate with a long record of fighting against racialism in the Labour Party. An important factor is that he will also stand a very good chance of winning the seat.

The problem for the NEC is what to do next. Their initial attempt to split us has failed miserably: they sent

Witchhunt on Militant

NEWCASTLE-under-Lyme Constituency Labour Party, home of arch-witch-hunter John Golding, has effectively expelled Militant supporter Dougall McKinnon by refusing to accept his membership transfer from his former constituency. The reason given was that McKinnon was seen selling Militant in Newcastle town centre.

each General Committee delegate a form for us to sign saying that we accepted the constitution and rules of the Labour Party. Clearly they hoped that supporters of the black section would refuse to sign, so that they could depict us all as elements without any commitment to col-

lective rules or the Labour Party. They would then hold a new selection conference with those who signed. Unfortunately for them, we all signed.

Our argument is that we are all good Labour Party members. It is institutionalised racism which is contravening the rules and constitution of the party. There is nothing in the constitution which says that every Labour MP should be white — yet that is what the NEC are seeking, in effect, to perpetuate.

If party rules and the constitution are to be enforced, then that presupposes that the same rules apply equally to all of us — regardless of sex or ethnic origin. We are fighting for just that.

The next Labour government

Jeremy Corbyn MP reports on the week at Westminster



THE COUNTY Council election results have been deliberately misrepresented by the media, and claimed as a triumph for the Liberals and SDP.

A careful analysis will show that among the 113 seats that Labour has to gain in the next general election, we won the vast majority of those up for contest in the county elections.

We have to continue and strengthen our campaigning activities, and campaign on class issues, on class politics. We won't win a general election if we merely trail behind the lowest common denominator of the opinion polls.

The Campaign Group has not had any detailed discussions about this yet, but my own view is that in the local authorities where Labour is the largest party but not in an overall majority, it is very important that we form minority Labour administration but do not deal with anyone. We then defy the Liberals or SDP to vote with Labour in opposing privatisation or to show which side they are on.

I'm opposed to coalitions in local government and in national government.

The last Parliamentary Labour Party meeting was partly taken up with a discussion on the role of black sections in the party. My own party, Islington North, strongly supports the formation of black sections, and indeed a black section has been formed there.

I'm sending a note of congratulation to Russell Profitt on his selection in Lewisham. I very much hope that the selection stands, and I very much hope that Russell Profitt is elected at the next general election.

The Campaign Group will be meeting representatives of the black sections campaign, and we'll be discussing the best ways of helping and supporting them.

Perhaps Neil Kinnock does not understand this, but many people in the black communities — including those who do not support the formation of black sections — are looking very carefully at the way the Labour Party

handles this issue. To shout 'apartheid' when somebody tries to form a black section completely misunderstands the oppressive role that society has played against black people. Black sections won't remove all that oppression right away, but they at least begin to recognise the right of black people to organise among themselves.

A main priority for the Campaign Group now is to support the miners that have been dismissed or imprisoned — demand their reinstatement, demand a commitment from a future Labour government that they will guarantee reinstatement.

Our other main tasks are to work as hard as possible for the political levy ballots, and to make demands and put questions as to how a future Labour government will operate.

Despite all this talk of realignment in the Party and a nice image at the next election, the reality is that a Labour government on being elected will face an immediate financial crisis. It happened in 1945, 1964 and 1974. It's how the government reacts to that crisis that is the issue.

We believe that the only way that a Labour government can maintain itself in office and carry out its programme is by confronting that crisis — by putting a ban on the export of capital, by being prepared to control dividends and share prices, by being prepared to direct investment and bring into public ownership the largest industries.

If we avoid those questions, then we're disarming a future Labour government.

YTS conference

By Jane Ashworth

School students Rosanne and Reb from Nottingham told the conference how they had helped organise the strike against compulsion in their school.

THE CONFERENCE on the Tory Youth Training Scheme (YTS) called last Saturday, 11th, by Manchester and Tyne-Tees Areas of the National Union of Students (NUS), discussed the Tories' plans for youth and how NUS should respond.

Jim Denham from the Birmingham Unemployed Centre explained that recent government circulars indicate that YTS will not be made compulsory in the short term. However, benefit reductions for 'refusers' will still go on.

Tim Perry (Manchester Area NUS convenor) and Simon Pottinger opened the conference.

Simon explained how YTS should be made a priority for NUS. NUS Areas, which link up the Further Education colleges with Higher Education (polys and universities) should turn towards unionising and involving trainees. Areas can also help develop the school students committees by opening up NUS facilities to them.

NEWHAM'S RACIST POLICE

Continued from page 1

pushing between marchers and police, and, given the earlier police provocation, the march erupted.

Within minutes riot police moved into the park and cleared

it of demonstrators. There were 15 arrests on charges of assaulting police officers, possession of offensive weapons, and obstruction.

Running battles with the police followed in the streets of Newham.



Thugs with riot shields and helmets go mad in Newham.
Photos: Adrian Franklyn (top) and Andrew Moore (bottom)



Justice for the Pryces!

Eustace Pryce was attacked and stabbed to death on Barking Road, Plaistow, by 5 white racists.

When the police arrived on the scene they arrested his brother Gerald and two Asian youths, allowing the murderers to escape.

After pressure from the community, his attackers — known racists — were rounded up and charged with murder. Four of the murder charges have since been dropped. The remaining racist facing a murder charge is now out on bail and walking the streets of Newham.

Meanwhile Eustace's brother has been denied bail, then given it on condition that he stays outside Newham.

Newham 7

The Newham 7 are seven Asian youths charged with affray for defending themselves and their community from racist attacks. They are Zafar Khan (18), Parvaiz Khan (17), Khan Bahadur (21), Jyoti Rajjappan (17), Amjad Ali (21), Jamal Chandri (19) and Habib Mohammed (18).

National mass picket

Newham Seven Defence Campaign: National picket of the Old Bailey, Monday May 20, 9.30am.

Councillors arrested under PTA

THEY SEEMED most interested in my political views on various issues. They wanted to know what I thought about internment, the hunger strikes, whether I was in favour of a united Ireland, whether I was in favour of troops out. A lot of the questions were carefully designed to get me to say I was supporting the IRA.

The other part was trying to get details from me: who I knew from Sinn Fein, who I'd stayed with. They wanted to know whether there was something I'd gone over there to ask them to do.

I think it's part of a tactic to isolate the Republican movement in the Six Counties from the labour movement in Britain. They find it very threatening that the left in the Labour Party should have closer links with the Republican movement and with Sinn Fein in particular. They were worried that we had met with Sinn Fein members, both on that last occasion when we were there and on a previous occasion when we sent a delegation.

They were very concerned whether someone from Sinn Fein, particularly Gerry Adams, was intending to come back to Sheffield on an invitation from the Labour Party to speak to meetings here.

They have a policy of picking up anybody with an interest in Irish politics from the Republican side.

There are two things we can do about this. People who are going over ought to be prepared for this sort of interrogation

When Sheffield councillor Sheena Clarke flew in from Northern Ireland last week she was held by the police under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and questioned for one hour at Manchester Airport.

Sheena Clarke is active in the Labour Committee on Ireland and a member of its National Council.

A week earlier, another Sheffield councillor, Tony Damms, had been given similar treatment on returning from the Six Counties.

Cllr Clarke was questioned about her political opinions, her attitude to Sinn Fein, and links between the Sheffield labour movement and Northern Ireland. Here, talking to Dave Barter, she describes what happened.

when they come back. We ought to be thinking about some sort of training, and information packs about what to expect.

With my own detention, we knew it was likely to happen, so we had arranged that as soon as I was detained the people from Sheffield who met me at the airport contacted the press, MPs, etc.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act is a repressive tool of the state used to intimidate and frighten people. In the longer term, all these incidents need to be used in a campaign to get the PTA repealed altogether.

We've got a lot of work to do in the Labour Party. The Labour Party is now voting against the PTA each time it comes up for renewal, but it is not much good if only 35 MPs turn up.

We can link the issue with the jailed miners. People from the

Republican communities in Northern Ireland saw the struggle of the miners as very important to them. They raised an incredible amount of money. That's had an effect on members of the NUM and miners' wives — it's brought home to them that Northern Ireland is used as a training ground for new methods of repression. The repression and harassment that the miners saw during their dispute are everyday events to people in the Six Counties.

• For copies of the report of the recent Sheffield Labour Movement delegation to Ireland, contact Sheffield LCI, 147 Middlewood Rd, Sheffield S6 4HB. For the Maire O'Shea Support Committee, campaigning over another PTA case, contact 448, Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 4AE.

Facts and figures about the PTA

GREAT BRITAIN: 29.11.74 to 31.12.84

	In relation to N.I.	Total
Detention at ports	4175	4180
Detention inland	1730	1769
Total detained, plus those 'examined' (for which figures only since March 1984)		6023

Excluded or deported after detention	288
Total charged with any offence after detention	467

NORTHERN IRELAND: 29.11.74 to 31.12.84

Total detained under the Act	4360
Total excluded (detained or not)	30
Total charged after detention	1741

JACK CADE'S



Wet skids

ARE THE Tory skids under Mrs Thatcher?

The party is notorious for its brutal way with recently-adored leaders when they become a liability. Many Tories now feel that Thatcher is a liability.

Bad results in the recent county council elections; the prospect that an election now would turn the Tories out of office; opinion polls giving unfavourable verdicts on Mrs Thatcher's style and 'uncaring', 'hectoring' manner — the signs are that the grim snatcher may be sharpening his scythe for Prime Minister Thatcher.

The Tory 'wets' have finally found the courage to organise, and maverick reactionaries like Peregrine Worsthorne of the Sunday Telegraph are starting to discuss her departure publicly. (Worsthorne concludes that she is safe).

Significantly, Thatcher herself feels sufficiently under pressure to ask her image-managers to give her a 'softer' re-tread.

During the miners' strike Tony Benn made a speech warning the movement not to focus its anti-Tory campaign on Thatcher because she would be ditched by the Tories if things got bad for them. The advice is worth keeping in mind.

Base pay

BASE PAY for directors and senior managers in the UK has continued to rise at about 10 per cent a year over the past six months.

This rate has been relatively constant over the past 2½ years...

[These are salaries paid by some of the biggest companies:]

Company	Chair Highest paid director
Shell Transport	202,434
BP	183,134
BAT Industries	150,112
ICI	170,999
Marks & Sp.	—158,508
Hanson Trust	177,000
Lorrho	—322,861
BOC Group	—771,600

Beecham	171,660	—
Tate & Lyle	—198,000	—
Argyll Group	178,000	—
Plessey	206,468	248,365
STC	201,000	—
Lex Service	189,711	—
ICL	—189,000	—
Racal Elec.	152,117	—
Pearson	—200,672	—

Burton Group	348,000	—
Assoc. News.	—168,887	—
Heron Corp.	296,000	—
Laporte	156,775	—
BSR Int'l	—497,105	—
Wedgwood	174,469	—
Combined Eng.	156,106	—
Geers Gross	—193,000	—

[From the Financial Times, 11.3.85].

Dopey

LIBERAL Dutch Catholics rioting in the streets — against a visit by a reactionary Pope. The Pope receiving Italian and French fascist leaders in Rome. The Vatican silencing Fr Boffa, the eminent Brazilian theologian whose liberation theology wants to align the Church with the poor and oppressed and away from its age-old alliance with the rich.

Karel Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II, is proving a 'turbulent priest' indeed.

By repressing left-wing and liberal Catholics, and by such measures as the partial restoration of the Latin Mass, this spiritual absolute monarch of hundreds of millions of Catholics has organised a partial putting-back of the clock in the Catholic church. And thus — it is increasingly clear — he has destabilised it.

His visit to Holland aims to strengthen the conservative Catholic minority against the majority, who, to an old-fashioned Catholic, must seem more like Protestants than Catholics.

A die-hard bishop who refused to accept the changes of the '60s — the dropping of the Latin Mass, for example — used to denounce John Paul's predecessor Paul with the memorable words: "The Pope's a Protestant". The Pope is saying that many Catholics are Protestants,



and he isn't going to tolerate it.

But the worst thing that this reactionary Pope has done has been to preside over and seemingly inspire an unholy alliance in his native Poland between the powerful Church hierarchy and the Stalinist police state to control the Polish workers' movement.

The Church urges caution, legality, restraint, on the workers, and the state represses Solidarnosc. The Church has used Solidarnosc as a bargaining counter to improve its own position in relation to the state.

It would be good news if the liberal Dutch Catholics got their hands on the man they mockingly call Popey-Dopey.



Threatening

Britain's racist police pick up this Asian youth outside the Old Bailey on a Newham 7 picket. As you can see, his toy gun is a threat to the entire fabric of society. Photo: Andrew Moore.

Chasm opens

THE RIFT in the Communist Party grows wider and more irreparable as the mid-May special conference looms ahead.

Last Friday (10th) the Morning Star carried an angry report on the front page under the headline, 'Shock Report Exposes CP Vote-Rigging'.

Citing facts and figures, it charged the CP executive with systematic and organised cheating in the election of delegates to the Congress. These facts and figures, said the 'Morning Star Reporter', "seriously called into question the legitimacy of any

decisions to be taken by the Special Congress."

Monty Goldman, one of the opposition leaders recently expelled, is quoted as an authoritative representative of the Morning Star faction, "The delegates from London may have a majority in favour of the executive's position, but the votes cast are actually against the executive.

"The London delegates will not be representative of the view of the London CP, and I fear that the same is true of delegations from other parts of the country.

"We are going to witness a

national congress which has been gerrymandered to the point where we cannot regard its results as in any way representative of the democratic wishes of the Party.

"It is going to be a Congress without any real authority, and it is certainly going to fail to resolve the differences in the Communist Party."

If this is not a clear declaration that the Morning Star faction will not accept the decisions of the Congress, and will split once it is over, then it is impossible to know what it is.

What tradition?

THE MORNING Star claim to stand in the real CP tradition is a fraud for another reason too.

Take John Gollan, for example. John Gollan replaced Pollitt as secretary in 1956, when Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin threw the world Stalinist movement into deep political soul-searching. The British CP lost one in three of its 35,000 members. Most, like E P Thompson, moved to the right, basing themselves on the Popular Front element in Party history. A sizeable number of others initially became Trotskyists, and one or two are still revolutionaries.

Many who remained with the CP did so only after much heart-searching. In their own way they tried to draw conclusions from the horrors of the Stalin era and such things as the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution by the USSR in 1956.

Subtly they changed the

Party. In 1956 the CPGB supported the suppression of the Hungarian workers; but 12 years later it condemned the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. When he died in 1977, John Gollan left a 'Eurocommunist' testament on 'Socialist Democracy' which would seem to give the Marxism Today group as much claim on him as the Morning Star has.

Or take the case of Jack Woddis, who died about three years ago and is now annexed by the Morning Star faction. The CP denounced the invasion of Afghanistan in 1980. It published some very valuable material on events in Afghanistan that led up to the invasion, which, I understand, was Woddis's work.

At a time when most so-called Trotskyists in the world supported the Russian invasion and takeover (nearly all of them have

changed their minds since), the CP condemned it.

True, its viewpoint was not that of revolutionary working-class socialism, but that of pacifism, but the Morning Star of January 1980 made better reading than most of the Trotskyist press.

Failing to break with Stalinism fully, or to draw revolutionary conclusions from their piecemeal self-distancing from full-blooded unashamed Stalinism — in Gollan's case, this was a failure to return to the revolutionary politics he had been drawn to in the Edinburgh slums 50 years earlier — and instead drawing liberal and social-democratic conclusions (or half-drawing them, and leaving it to others to go further), the Gollan and the Woddises helped to generate the virulent SDP-Communist current which now dominates the Party.



Pollitt etc

ONE OF the factional game-plays of the Morning Star group is a series of articles on dead Communist Party leaders — former secretaries Harry Pollitt and John Gollan, former head of the Party's International Department, Jack Woddis, and people like that.

A smart move to reassure the old-timers, shoals of whom seem to be with the Morning Star and against the SDP-Communist Executive.

There is no doubt that the Morning Star group is closer to what the Party has stood for during most of its life. Yet the claim that the Morning Star alone stands in the Party tradition is — fundamentally — a fraud.

The right-wing Marxism Today/Executive group also stands in the tradition of the Party — the right-wing Popular-Frontist tradition dominant from the late '30s to the late '40s.

According to myth, the CP and its big band of Labour Party co-thinkers and collaborators in the late '30s were the valiant and far-sighted socialist left wing of the movement. The

truth is that its politics were to the right of the present Marxism Today faction.

Despairing of the chances of getting even a Labour Party government, they advocated a Popular Front which would include Liberals, thus putting themselves to the right of the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party who then rejected coalitionism.

The Labour Party leaders went into a wartime coalition in 1940 and stayed in it until the end of the war in Europe, when they appealed to the electorate to give Labour a majority for major reforms. In the 1945 election the CP advocated a coalition broad enough to include 'progressive Tories' like Winston Churchill!

This too is "the Communist Party tradition" — the tradition of Pollitt, Gollan, Dutt, etc.

You can take your pick of a number of very different traditions woven together in the long history of Stalinist zig-zags. As well as right-wing politics, you can find suicidal ultra-leftism in that tradition too — as various Maoist groups did in the '60s.

Paul Whetton's diary

In the latest issue of 'Coal News', the NCB paper, MacGregor has come out with a statement about defending scabs against 'intimidation'. In Notts people have been so snowed under with papers about the ballot that the Coal News got shoved on one side. But obviously MacGregor and the Coal Board have reacted to the criticism that was coming from the National Working Miners' Committee, about them not being looked after once the strike was over.

We've got to mount pressure to get reinstatement of miners who have been sacked for 'intimidation'. People like Kinnock aren't exactly helping us. He should recognise these people being sacked are people who stood up in defence of jobs and communities, and if Thatcher and the Tories have their way, it won't just be miners placed in that position, it will be all other sections of the workforce.

Flying

Flying pickets were sent out last week from South Kirkby, where miners had been sacked, but then the Yorkshire area executive called the flying pickets off. They said that the only way to get the jobs back was to negotiate, and the Coal Board wouldn't negotiate until the strike was called off.

I can well understand their argument, but I don't agree with it. I believe that there should have been every assistance given to the flying pickets. The Coal Board have made it quite clear that they are not going to sit round a table and talk about giving jobs back just like that. We should show them that they are not going to get away with it. I think the lads from South Kirkby were correct to do what they did.

I don't want to criticise the Yorkshire executive too severely, but I don't think that they were correct.

Extra-parliamentary

I cannot understand people like Kinnock thinking that they can sit round a table with the present government and talk them out of it. It's a direct threat to the working class, and just standing up in Parliament isn't going to stop the Tories.

Extra-parliamentary activity is the only way that the working class has got to defend what few gains we've made over the years.

There have been two more pit closures announced last week. Once the NUM went back to work, it was obvious that the Coal Board was going to carry on where they left off, and these closure announcements can't be surprising to anybody.

NACODS are trying to come in at this late hour, but they're missing the boat by a mile. There's a notice up at our pit saying that they have been conned. But in order to be conned you've got to be unaware of what's happening, and there's no way that NACODS could be unaware of what was happening. They went into it with their eyes wide open. They had a massive mandate for action to stop these closures, and they blew it.

By Paul Whetton, former secretary of the Notts rank and file strike committee

PROTEST intensified this week against the death of Andries Raditsela, an executive member of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), shortly after his release from detention.

An official of the non-racial Chemical Workers' Industrial Union, Raditsela died in a Soweto hospital of head injuries. There was immediate widespread protest: FOSATU, which has around 130,000 members, called a one-day general strike in the Transvaal for Tuesday May 14.

The strike call was coupled with a demand that the employers pay striking workers, and FOSATU warned the police that workers would remain on strike one extra day for every black worker that was shot.

Meanwhile, a black student leader, Siphon Mutsi, has died in police custody.

Violent clashes have continued throughout South Africa over the past few weeks. The wave of mass mobilisations that began in Uitenhage on March 21 have intensified, meeting with further police violence.

Black fury has also been directed against the black 'councils' promoted by the apartheid regime, whose elections were boycotted by the overwhelming majority of blacks.

The movement against the apartheid state is stronger now than it has ever been before — a strength reflected in the problems of the regime itself. Botha's government is making unprecedented proposals to modify the apartheid system.

Following on the repeal of the law banning marriage and sexual relations between different races, Botha's National Party — the party which introduced apartheid back in 1948 — is now declaring that 'separate development' is no longer appropriate to South Africa's needs. Shrewder than his ultra-nationalist critics, who are crying 'sell-out', Botha has warned against a "dramatic escalation of the revolutionary climate".

Non-racial

The new non-racial (i.e. black majority) trade unions have been central to the recent rise in the opposition to apartheid. 1984 saw more days lost through



Black workers take the lead

Unions central to black revolt

strikes than any other in South Africa's history, including a strike of an estimated 800,000 workers in the Johannesburg area. The unions have been able to force the employers into direct negotiations.

By far the biggest union is the 130,000-strong National Union of Mineworkers. The NUM has organised a number of big strikes — part of the background to the recent mass sackings of 20,000 miners.

The independent union movement has so far kept its distance from the main anti-apartheid political organisations. Whilst in part this may be an expression of a narrow trade-union outlook, it is also indicative of a healthy desire to maintain working-class independence.

The biggest political movement to have emerged among blacks over the past year-and-a-half is the United Democratic Front (UDF). Few non-racial unions have directly linked up with it. FOSATU argues that it wants to maintain independent working-class politics.

The UDF is a broad, multi-racial coalition of some trade unions, church bodies and various organisations like the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses, and includes such figures as Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu, as well as African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela. It is largely an organisation of the type of the cross-class Stalinist 'popular fronts' of the 1930s, but it has been important in recent mobilisations, and it has a membership of some two million, from 600 affiliated organisations.

Development

The unions are right to keep their independence. There have been debates pointing towards the establishment of an independent workers' party. The Brazilian Workers' Party is sometimes looked to as an example. Such a development would be an enormous step forward. The South African economy is

in serious difficulties, due in particular to the falling price of gold and the closing of many markets to South Africa's mineral exports. Working-class blacks have suffered most: unemployment among 'economically active' blacks is believed to exceed 3 million out of 6.13 million.

Coupled as it is with a growing political crisis, however, this suffering seems to have strengthened working-class resolve and militancy.

The apartheid state still has big reservoirs of tame opposition, and even passive support among blacks (notably among the so-called Zionist Christian Church). But the huge mass mobilisation in the black townships show no sign of abating.

With our help and solidarity, the black working class can bring South Africa's disgusting system of racist oppression crashing to the ground, and install working-class power in its place.

Lesbian, gay model motion

AFTER THE experience of last year's Labour party conference, where a vote for a debate on lesbian and gay rights was almost won, with the support of most Constituency Labour Parties and the of the NUM, the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights decided to make campaigning for a debate at this year's conference its number one priority.

The party's existing policy is inadequate — two lines in the 1983 party manifesto — and discriminatory, particularly over the male gay age of consent, and has no specific reference to lesbians. In particular it contains no pledge to defend the rights of lesbian mothers to keep their children in custody cases.

Since there has never been a debate at the conference, and because the last year has been such a momentous year for the lesbian and gay movements — with the threat of AIDS and related hysteria, the victory at Rugby and most of all the massive success of Lesbians Against Pit Closures and Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners — LCGR is not just asking that the left of the party makes its resolutions a priority this year, but is demanding that it does.

From the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

We are also asking 'straight' party members to stand aside and let lesbians and gays through to be delegates to this year's conference. We are fed up with heterosexuals pretending that they can speak on our behalf and understand our oppression.

The model resolution reads as follows:

"This conference opposes all discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and notes that existing Labour Party policy with regard to lesbians and gays fails to meet the legitimate demands of lesbians and gays, and that a consistent and principled campaign conducted over a number of years is necessary to reverse that failure.

Conference welcomes the progress made by some Labour authorities and looks for an end to the institutionalised oppression of lesbians and gays. It therefore:

- a. Instructs the NEC to draw up a lesbian and gay rights bill, which should specifically:
 - i. declare that lesbian and gay acts and relationships are not

- contrary to the public policy of the law,
- ii. prohibit discrimination by the courts against lesbians and gays in child custody and in unfair dismissal on grounds in any way connected with sexuality or lifestyle,
- iii. abolish criminal laws that discriminate against lesbians and gays,
- iv. make discrimination on grounds of sexuality an action-



- able civil offence and invalidate all discriminatory regulations and by-laws,
- v. prevent police harassment and discrimination against lesbians and gays,
- and calls on the PLP to introduce such a bill and support bills to reform the law in this direction with a three-line whip.
 - b. Calls upon all Labour local authorities, district and county

Labour Parties to adopt practices and policy to prevent discrimination against lesbians and gays, and in particular to:

- i. adopt and enforce equal opportunities policies in regard to sexual orientation along the lines of Islington,
- ii. end discrimination against single people and lesbians and gays in housing policies,
- iii. provide funds for lesbian and gay switchboards and centres,
- iv. publicise the anti-discriminatory policies listed above.
- c. Instructs the NEC to:
 - i. organise a campaign of education among the membership of the party on the oppression of lesbians and gay in conjunction with the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights,
 - ii. place adverts in the lesbian and gay media and produce leaflets using the slogan, 'The Labour Party supports lesbian and gay rights — join the Labour Party'.
 - d. Instructs the NEC to set up a sub-committee in collaboration with the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights to organise the implementation of this policy".
- Please modify the wording slightly, since resolutions from different CLPs count as one if the wording is identical.

To a soldier

Letter to a British soldier on Irish soil

Soldier
 You did not ask to come here
 We know that.
 You obey orders
 We know that.
 You have a wife
 A sweetheart
 A mother
 We know that.
 And you have children
 We know that too.
 But soldier
 Where you stand
 There is death.
 Where you walk
 There is a burning wound.
 Where you sleep
 There is no peace
 And the earth heaves
 Through a nightmare of blood.

Soldier
 When you die
 The dogs will bury you.

When you came to this land
 You said you came to understand.
 Soldier, we are tired of your understanding,
 Tired of British troops on Irish soil
 Tired of your knock on the door
 Tired of the rifle-butt on the head
 Tired of the jails, the gas, the beatings
 In dark corners.

Soldier
 We are tired of the peace you bring
 To Irish bones.

Tired of the bombs, exploding in our homes
 Tired of the rubble, growing in the streets
 Tired of the deaths of old friends
 Tired of the tears and the funerals —
 Those endless, endless funerals.

Soldier
 When you came to this land
 You said you came to understand
 Is this your understanding?

We dream here.
 We dream that this land
 Is our land.
 That one day
 Catholic and Protestant
 Believer and Non-believer
 Will stand here
 And dream
 As Irish men and women.

We dream
 Of a green land
 Without death
 A new silence descending
 A silence of peace.
 And this dream
 We dream, soldier, without you.

That is our understanding.

Go home, soldier.
 Your presence here
 Destroys the air
 Your smile disfigures us.
 Go home, soldier
 Before we send you home
 Dead.

Patrick Galvin
 From 'Republican News'

Israel's cosmetics

ISRAEL IS preparing to 'soften' its attitude towards unrest among Arab students in the occupied West Bank.

Last week SO reported on repression of Arab students in Israel itself. In the West Bank, institutions like Bir Zeit University have been shut down for long periods — most recently, two months — and students and staff have been harassed.

Now Bir Zeit has just been reopened, and in future, the Israeli government says, individual Arab militants will face punitive action but collective punishment of whole institutions will cease.

The government has several aims. Clearly it is concerned about Israel's tarnished reputation

and wants to appear liberal. Further, it will be aiming to develop its alliance with so-called West Bank 'moderates'.

Finding a team of such people — Arab leaders distanced from or hostile to the PLO — with whom to negotiate, is central to current Israeli diplomacy.


In reality, repression is unlikely to soften much. The policy of reprisals against individuals will mean more intensive military surveillance in order to pick out 'trouble-makers'.


Israel's aim is not to ease up on its persecution of Arab militants but to hit at them with greater efficiency and at less cost to what remains of Israel's liberal reputation.

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Ireland 69-85





Why Militant and IRSP are twins

Editorial: Dialogue yes, verbiage no!
 Militant's record on Ireland...
 ... and ours
 James Connolly
 For a federal united Ireland!
 16 years of conflict

50p plus postage from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY

On June 9 1983 Labour suffered its worst electoral defeat for half a century.

Not surprisingly, it has provoked thought and debate. The most influential and wide-reaching discussion of the future of the labour movement has been generated by the writings of Eric Hobsbawm. His article, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted', was first published in 'Marxism Today' in September 1978.

The response and Hobsbawm's replies developed into a book of the same title published in 1981. The debate, initially stimulated by the failure of the Labour government's social contract, has intensified with the success of Thatcherism, with a further series of articles, most notably in 'Marxism Today', the 'Guardian', and 'New Socialist'.

While the discussion has increasingly focussed on the way forward for the Labour Party, the political positions proffered by Hobsbawm are only intelligible in terms of his lifelong membership of the Communist Party. Yet in the past years Hobsbawm's views have become increasingly influential amongst sections of the Labour Party, including sections of the left. At the 1982 Labour Party Conference, Neil Kinnock under pressure from the left pleaded Hobsbawm in his defence as "the most sagacious living Marxist".

The response from Labour's hard left has been all too often healthy but largely unthought through and unargued. Tony Benn commented..... "The truth is, he [Hobsbawm] is a member of a party, the Communist Party, that puts up candidates against the Labour Party. He's covering a shift from the left to the right... all this analysis of a fundamental change which means that everything is different is designed to demoralise and defeat."

This — characteristically — is instinctively correct. Hobsbawm's intention is specifically to demoralise and defeat the Bennite left. His attacks are aimed at those he denounces as "sectarian radicals".

Hobsbawm's objective is to isolate Bennism in the interests of firstly, the stable reconstruction of Labour's internal coalition as represented by Kinnock, Healey and Hattersley, and secondly, the creation of a wider coalition with the SDP-Liberal Party Alliance.

But it is not enough to say that. We need a closer examination. Hobsbawm's analysis is one-sided and incorrect. His solutions to Labour's crisis would be disastrous and terminal. It is therefore essential that we look at his ideas and arguments in detail. The fullest understanding is necessary if we are to proscribe effective antidotes.

Muddle

This is a difficult task as Hobsbawm's arguments are at times muddled and contradictory. To some degree this is a function of his method and politics. To some extent it is unavoidable in a discussion stretching over four years taking on board new events, issues and emphases.

The Hobsbawm of 1978 is less pessimistic than the Hobsbawm of 1984. His specific prescriptions only appear as the discussion advances. Nonetheless, his case consists of a central assertion and a central solution. His fundamental argument is that the crisis of the labour movement represents a decline in class consciousness resulting from changes in the class structure and growing affluence.



Spot the ball..... Photo: Marxism Today

Hobsbawm and SDP-Communism pa

Neil Kinnock'

guru

Every big working-class defeat strengthens the right wing of the labour movement. When a great and heroic effort like the miners have just made fails and is beaten back, then the faint-hearts and defeatists say it was all that could be expected. Frontal assaults and class-struggle methods are foolish — or anyway now outmoded and destructive of the multi-class alliances we need to forge against the Tories.

Those whose trademark is their lack of courage and fatalism suddenly gain both courage and a voice as the movement tries to draw the lessons of the defeat. The hard right wing seizes the chance to pour scorn on socialism and the class struggle. They are aided, wittingly or unwittingly, by the sceptics, those who remain nominally socialists but have had their faith in working-class socialism eaten away by the years and by disillusionment with Stalinism.

And so the nostalgic yearning of some old CPers for the Popular Front — the cross-class alliances of the '30s and '40s —

is now treated with respect by sections of the broad Labour left, especially those who are now shifting dramatically to the right. And Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock has described the guru of this current of opinion in the labour movement, Eric Hobsbawm, as the "most sagacious of living Marxists".

The respected historian Eric Hobsbawm, a Spanish Civil War veteran with 50 years in the CP, has for the last seven years systematically argued for a sharp rightwards turn by the labour movement. Basing himself also on the experience of the Italian Communist Party — which is to the right of Roy Hattersley in day-to-day politics — he wants alliances with the SDP and perhaps with some Tories — an 'anti-Thatcher coalition'.

Hobsbawm's writings are important, and serve as ready-made rationalisations for newly-softened-up ex-hard-leftists like Ken Livingstone. This week we print the first of an important series of articles on Hobsbawm's politics written for Socialist Organiser by John McIlroy.

"The manual working class core of traditional socialist Labour parties is today contracting not expanding. It has been transformed to some extent, divided by the decades when its standard of living reached levels undreamed of even by the well paid in 1939. It can no longer be assumed that all workers are on the way to recognising that their class situation must align them behind a socialist workers' party although there are still many millions who believe this".

The erosion of the solidaristic nexus linking workers with the institutions of the labour movement can be seen from Hobsbawm's indices of class consciousness. A decline in the Labour vote — its political expression — at successive elections is complemented by a decline in attachment to trade unionism — its most elementary index. "Union density is now (1978) only a little higher than in 1948... Britain the home of mass trade unionism has clearly fallen behind some other countries... there is not much doubt that sectionalism is on the increase..."

Sometime in the late forties/early fifties, the Forward March of Labour was halted. By 1979 it had indubitably turned into a

retreat and by June 1983 a disorderly rout. Labour's lost millions signal a crisis so deep that for Hobsbawm "critics are right in pointing out that the views expressed about Labour's future prospects by me and others in *Marxism Today* are in a way an up to date version of the Popular Front." For Hobsbawm, the Popular Front is not some necessary but unsavoury expedient. It is part of a coherent strategy. He does not "even see the broad anti-Thatcherite front which is surely quite essential today as a mere defence against encroaching reaction. It is that, certainly, but the history of the anti-fascist struggles show that those purely defensive struggles were the foundation of major advances of the left not least in Britain."

Thatcherism

Thatcherism is such a serious threat, Hobsbawm believes, as to deserve the same kind of response as Fascism in the '30s. (Thatcherism moved over the Falklands in 'I hesitate, but only just, to say a semi-Fascist direction'). No specific organisational

means are put forward for constructing this "broad anti-Thatcherite front" right now, though it does dictate a maintenance of the status quo in the Labour Party and he insists that giving this 'front' organisational embodiment is a second worst outcome to Labour's presently constituted coalition winning in 1988.

"Essentially an accommodation may well have to be found with the SDP/Liberal Alliance. If, at the next election, Thatcherism is everywhere opposed by two or more candidates competing for each other's votes, the Tories can look forward to being in power well into the 1990s. Some way of uniting the majority of the British people which is opposed to Thatcherism must be found".

Despite his assurances, the brunt of his argument is that accommodation with the Alliance is the way forward and that his analysis, and the agenda of practical Parliamentary politics, dictate that "the issue of electoral unity will have to be faced".

So much for the main thrust of Hobsbawm's argument. Let us look at its detail.

There is little new in Hobsbawm's argument about the alleged seignioring class attitudes to unionism in the Labour Party. It is in essence the same old trotted out to explain Labour's decline in the quarter of a century ago in the 1930s and to argue, then as now, that the dilution of Labour's political programme and the changed situation. "As economic conditions grow less violent with the rise of material standards, voters may make a rational assessment of where their interests lie", Tony Crosland wrote in 1959. In 1974 psephologists like Butler and Stokes, were away "...the betterment of economic conditions is important of the social structure weakened the inclination of the working class in terms of class." Now in the worst and most problematic period of this century the Communist Party is in a chorus.

As rehearsed by Hobsbawm, the ancient myth of the Gaullist which a pauperised proletariat, socially and geographically isolated communities; their only consolation was football, and Blackpool, football, and the Labour Party. They packed the union branches of the Labour Party wards on the basis of "the Labour Party right or wrong". But they were corrupted by television sets and two were Hobsbawm's noble savages, haggard, brylcreemed footballers of their time, peering worriedly at their team photographs. Like the half affluent successors to the Labour Party, he has turned Jack the Lad into a hero.

Of course any attempt to change the behaviour in terms of social deprivation is unsustainable if union commitment does not flow with economic improvement. If it did the present argument would be hard to sustain. We had to wait until 1945 or 1931 for the first major Labour government: or why the Labour Party won 289 seats in 1931. Winning 289 seats

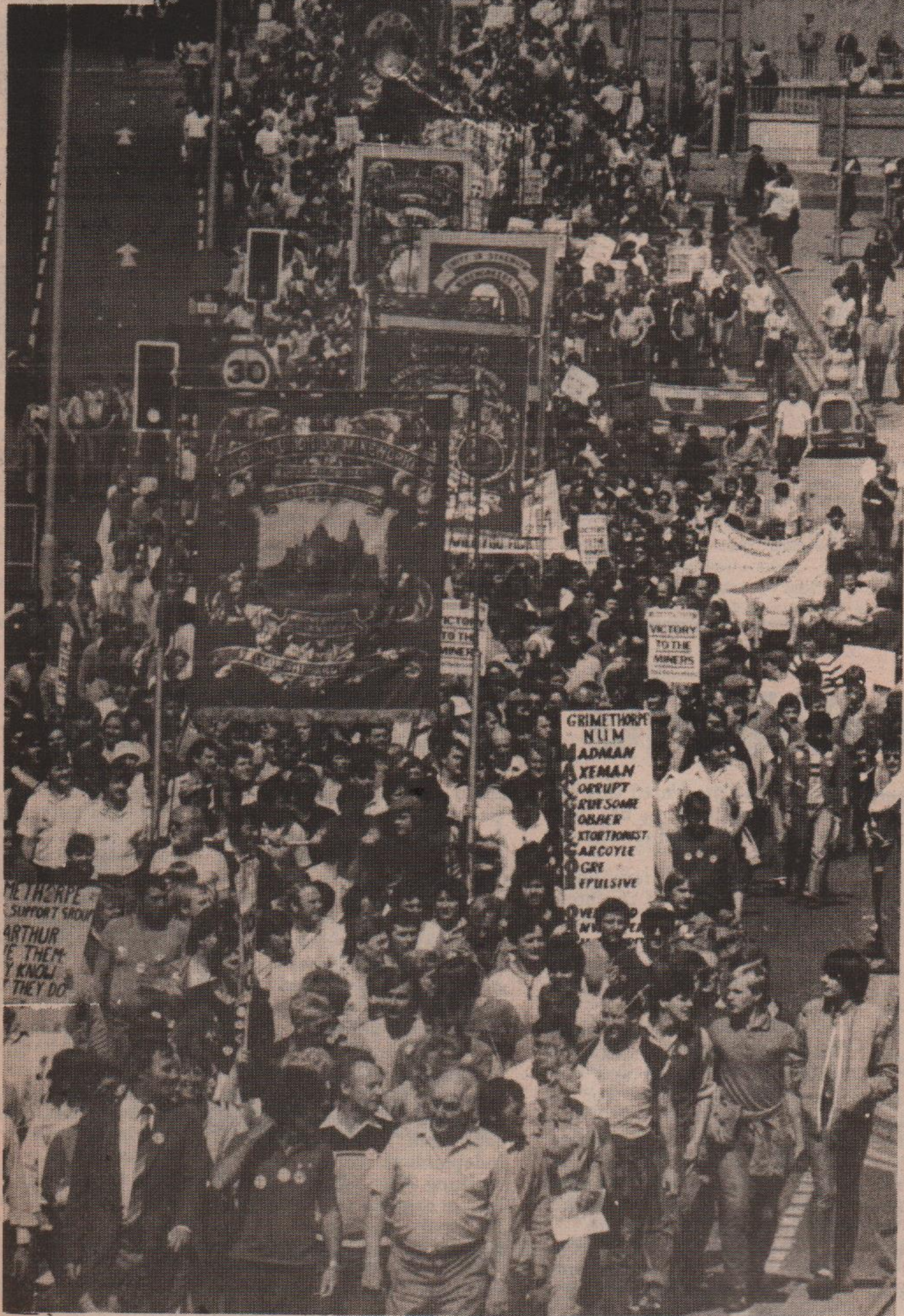
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S

Hobsbawm's argument... change in work... and the Labour... same argument... Labour's defeat a... the 1959 election... for a consequent... es to meet the... omic class con... the rise in living... take a less auto... re their political... nd was telling us... ological pundits... still hammering... of the electorate's... y far the most... ends which have... o see politics in... the midst of... nged recessions... st Party joins the

Hobsbawm it is the... den of Eden in... etariat lived in... y isolated com... tions were beer... fish and chips... ch meetings and... nd voted on the... y and the union... n came the fall:... vos, videos, tele... ks in Majorca... ges are the... allers old before... ily from the old... ir too-clever-by... day, the elector-

to explain voting... mple affluence/... ble. Party and... simply ebb and... ment and deter... ponents of this... it to explain why... ot 1924 or 1929... Labour govern... ote collapsed in... 1929, Labour



Miners march through Mansfield. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

won only 52 in 1931. Its total poll dropped from 8.36 million in 1919 to 6.6 million in 1931.

At the heart of the inter-war depression Hobsbawm's 'traditional working class' was offered a Labour Party regrouped and purged of the "McDonald factor" and the working class responded by giving the Tories a resounding vote of confidence in the 1935 election. They were returned with 10.5 million votes and 387 seats (420 if the National Liberals are included) to Labour's 8.3 million votes and 154 seats.

Golden

During Hobsbawm's Golden Age it could not be assumed that all workers were on the way to recognising that their class situation must align them behind the Labour Party. And in 1966, as even Hobsbawm is forced to note, in the heart of the swinging sixties, Wilson got 48.8% — a proportion of the popular vote which exceeded that achieved by Attlee in 1945 on the tide of the war-induced radicalism; it equalled that achieved at the high tide of Labourism, the

1951 election, when Labour got more votes than the Tories but less seats.

At least a decade and a half after Labour's Forward March was halted and more than half a decade after the agonised 1959 post mortem more workers were voting Labour than during the heroic '20s and '30s, the heart of the Forward March. Affluence, psychedelia and mini skirts proved just as potent for Labour as rationing, Vera Lynn and demob suits. As the real impact of prosperity was felt in the 'you've never had it so good' days of the late '50s and early '60s, Labour's vote declined only from 48.8% in 1951 to 44% in 1959 to rise again to almost the 1951 figure in 1966. The crisis commenced for Labour when the prosperity began to disintegrate. As in the '30s

the party's retreat has taken place during a developing economic crisis.

It was as long ago as 1961 that Mark Abrams produced a detailed refutation of the idea that economic trends were directly reproduced in voting and that affluence produced a switch to the Tories. It is two decades since Goldthorpe and his colleagues claimed that over 80% of their most affluent and satisfied workers still intended to vote Labour, and Runciman argued that even as absolute living standards reached "levels undreamed of in 1939" relative deprivation could produce radical discontents.

It is fifteen years since John Westergaard pointed out that even if we accepted the dissolution of solidaristic bonds within the working class, the new instrumentality, 'the rediscovery of the cash nexus' together with the manufacture of new wants could create an explosive situation for capitalism (a point reaffirmed by the militancy of the early '70s). He argued that the existence of isolated working class communities in the past may well have fostered narrow horizons and a limited consciousness of community rather than a broader — class — consciousness.

Closer

Whatever the content of cultural development of the affluent years they hold the potential for bringing the working class closer together. Yet, as time goes by, and as the dole queues approach four million, the distinguished academic, Hobsbawm, like the distinguished pianist, Dooley Wilson in Casablanca, is still playing the same old song.

Yet if he were to look closer he might detect a slightly different picture. The decline in the Labour vote is not progressive and sequential. In fact, it has largely occurred in three specific periods: the early '50s; the late '60s and early '70s; and after 1979.

This should lead us to strongly question whether it is due, as he argues, to social or economic changes. Or whether it has been caused by an intensification of the political attack on the working class which has been inadequately answered and therefore relatively successful. These three periods were all striking periods of strong ruling class offensive.

Similar points may be made about Hobsbawm's second index of class consciousness — trade union membership. Hobsbawm has very little to say about this index of class consciousness during the golden age of the '20s and '30s. As an academic historian he knows that by this criteria, too, class consciousness was in severe decline during that period.

By 1933 trade union density was around 23%, about 50% of the 1920 figure. It is in Hobsbawm's period of retreat that trade union membership takes off, increasing from around 44% of the workforce in the early '50s to a record 55% by 1979. Moreover, whilst the unions have lost more than two million members since 1979 and there can be no grounds for complacency, what strikes us is not only the extension of trade unionism in the '60s and '70s to new areas which in other countries had been its nemesis, but the relative resilience of trade unionism in the depression of the '80s.

Unions

Today after four years of mass unemployment and a decade of rising unemployment, fifty per cent of the workforce are still in the unions. Not only does this compare well with the 45% of the workforce unionised for most of the post-war period. That trade union density has dropped so slowly from its peak during the recent jobs holocaust illustrates the commitment of its membership as well as the strength of its organisational arrangements and the breadth of its coverage.

A range of workers hold union cards today who would never have been considered organisable in the '20s and '30s — workers whose organisation gives the move-

ment a potentially greater power. Moreover, the drop in membership that has occurred has occurred through workers losing their jobs, not, as happened to a degree in the '20s and '30s, through those with jobs leaving the unions.

Yet Hobsbawm asserts that "Britain, the home of mass trade unionism, has clearly fallen behind some other countries". The examples he gives, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium, are not useful comparisons. In relation to its real competitors, the USA, Germany, Japan, Britain remains a powerfully unionised economy.

Moreover, while he is correct to draw attention to its political weaknesses, Hobsbawm has nothing to say about the distinctive achievements of British trade unionism; strong workplace organisation links with the Labour Party; a strong centre in the TUC. These are the strengths of British trade unionism which have constituted such a powerful and enduring barrier to repeated attempts to reorganise British capital.

It was only in the '40s, '50s and '60s, not in the '20s and '30s, that the edifice of workplace unionism — surely a vital expression of working class self activity and combativity for all its flaws and limitations — was constructed.

Hobsbawm shows no interest in it. This draws our attention to the crudeness of his measurements of class consciousness. They are used in a fixed and strangely ahistorical fashion, so that he takes no account of shifts in consciousness and self-activity and the changing forms and expressions they take.

In one period, blocked on the trade union front, workers may move to seeing the Labour Party as the expression of their aspirations. In 1927, for example, it was difficult after the defeat of the General Strike and anti-union legislation for many workers to exhibit Hobsbawm's elementary class consciousness through being in a union. In the twenty odd years of the long boom workers turned away from participation in the Labour Party to building workplace organisation as the preferable means of achieving reforms. In 1950 there were only a fraction of the half a million shop stewards that existed in 1980. Today's depression has seen a limited but discernable turn back organisationally to the Labour Party.

Sectional

It is necessary to make a more sensitive analysis which interrelates the indices Hobsbawm proffers and correlate them to the development of the class struggle. Indeed Hobsbawm's whole analysis of trade unionism is limited and cavalier. The alleged increase in sectionalism in the working class during the last thirty years — "there is not much doubt that sectionalism is on the increase" — bears a strong burden of his argument in 1978. But it simply dispensed with a year later. "Whether sectionalism is stronger in the trade union movement today than in the past is a historical question on which I may well have been wrong."

There is nothing in his analysis about a third rough measurement of class consciousness and combativity — strike figures. There were, for example, no national strikes during the entire 1930s. Hobsbawm says the Forward March of Labour was halted at the end of the '40s. But as Labour turned from its second to its third decade of being "halted" a wave of militancy unparalleled since 1914 shook British society. Who would have said in 1972 or 1974 to the custodians of British capital: "Don't worry, the Forward March of Labour halted twenty-years ago"?

In the year Thatcher came to power nearly 30 million days were lost through strikes. We have seen a decline since then to around four million as the depression has bit; but this is still a figure not reached, on average, through the '30s and '40s.

Despite the differences in the meaning of statistics, today's position in relation to the past gives us no grounds for pessimistic comparison.

NEXT WEEK

The disappearing working class?

Trotskyists in the Nazi camps

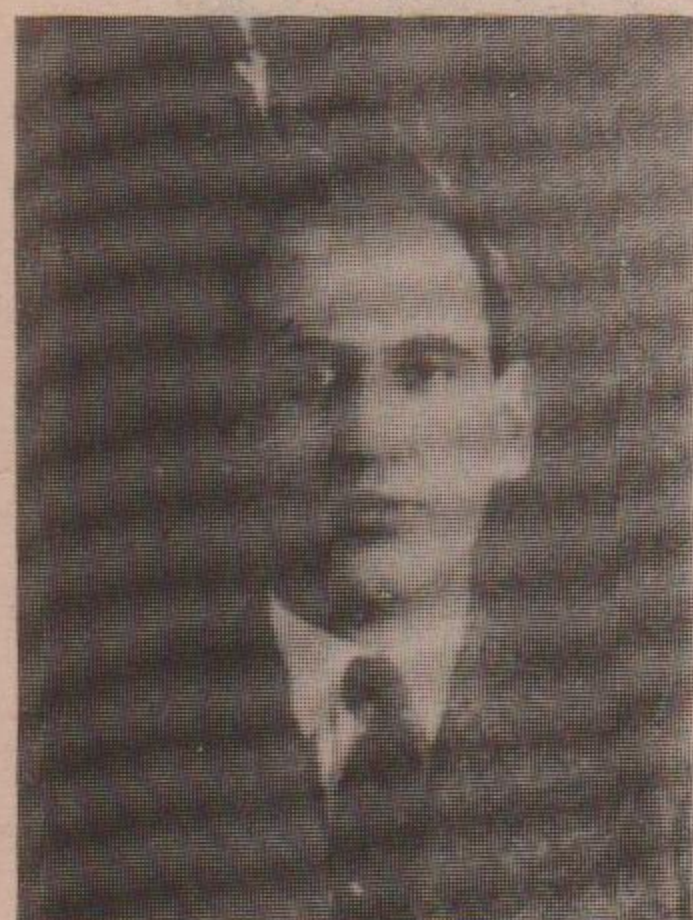


Karl Fischer: 8 years in USSR labour camp after the War

ON APRIL 11 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



Ernst Federn: seven years in the Nazi concentration camps

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



Marcel Beaufre: organised propaganda among German troops

German communist comrades".

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

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,

By Colin Foster

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 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



Abraham Leon: author of Marxist classic on the Jewish Question

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 1944.

Marcel Beaufre 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. Beaufre, 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



Buchenwald prisoners celebrate their liberation

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 pris-

oners. 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, com-

rade Galloy [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 - they stated - some 'charitable soul' would take it on himself to clean them up one by one.

"Nobody in the camp, Christian or otherwise, stirred to undertake the work, save comrade Galloy, 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 Galloy steadily carried out his mission!"

[Information from Critique Communiste, November 1978, and Spartakist, May 1985.]

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 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 fulfillment of this difficult task, there can be no diversions into the conciliatory solution of a new '2½' International. Such an intermediate formation 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 struggles 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 capitalism. 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!

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 I. 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 in 1943 by Stalin.

'2½' International: name given to a shortlived intermediate group between the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, set up after World War I; here used to indicate any sort of intermediate group, half-reformist, half-revolutionary.

9 November 1918: After World War I the old regime in Germany collapsed. But the Social Democrats saved 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.



HARVEY MILK

Harvey Milk: San Francisco's first gay supervisor

A gay martyr

HARVEY MILK was San Francisco's firstly openly gay supervisor — a sort of city councillor.

This film — awarded an Oscar for best documentary last year — charts Milk's rise to prominence as gay rights campaigner, his brutal murder (along with city mayor Moscone) by fellow-supervisor Dan White, and the events following White's deri-

Edward Ellis reviews 'The Times of Harvey Milk', directed by Robert Epstein, now showing at the Everyman Cinema, Hampstead

sory sentence. 'The Times of Harvey Milk' tells his story through original

film footage and interviews with people who knew him: fellow lesbian and gay rights campaigners, election campaign organisers, trade unionists, people in his community.

It is a deeply moving film. Milk became something of a national folk hero for his stand on gay rights and other issues. The high point of his career was the successful campaign to defeat Proposition 6, the so-called 'Briggs Amendment', which would have resulted in the sacking of all gay teachers in California.

He comes across as an impressive and charismatic person, committed to his beliefs and — by politicians' standards, at least — honest.

Irish

His murderer was a clean-cut Irish-American committed to small-town American values. Bigoted — he called for the banning of future lesbian and gay parades after witnessing overt 'immoral' behaviour — but not rabidly so (he opposed Briggs) White eventually shot Milk and Moscone at the high point of a political fiasco caused by his own resignation and subsequent change of heart.

He served a total of five and a half years in prison.

The film takes us from the deep public emotion at Milk's assassination through to the anger following White's virtual reprieve.

The day Milk was shot, there was a spontaneous candlelight demonstration through San Francisco. The film shows us the thousands upon thousands of people marching silently in mourning and protest: an ocean of little lights swarming through the city streets. It is a tremendously moving image.

Looting

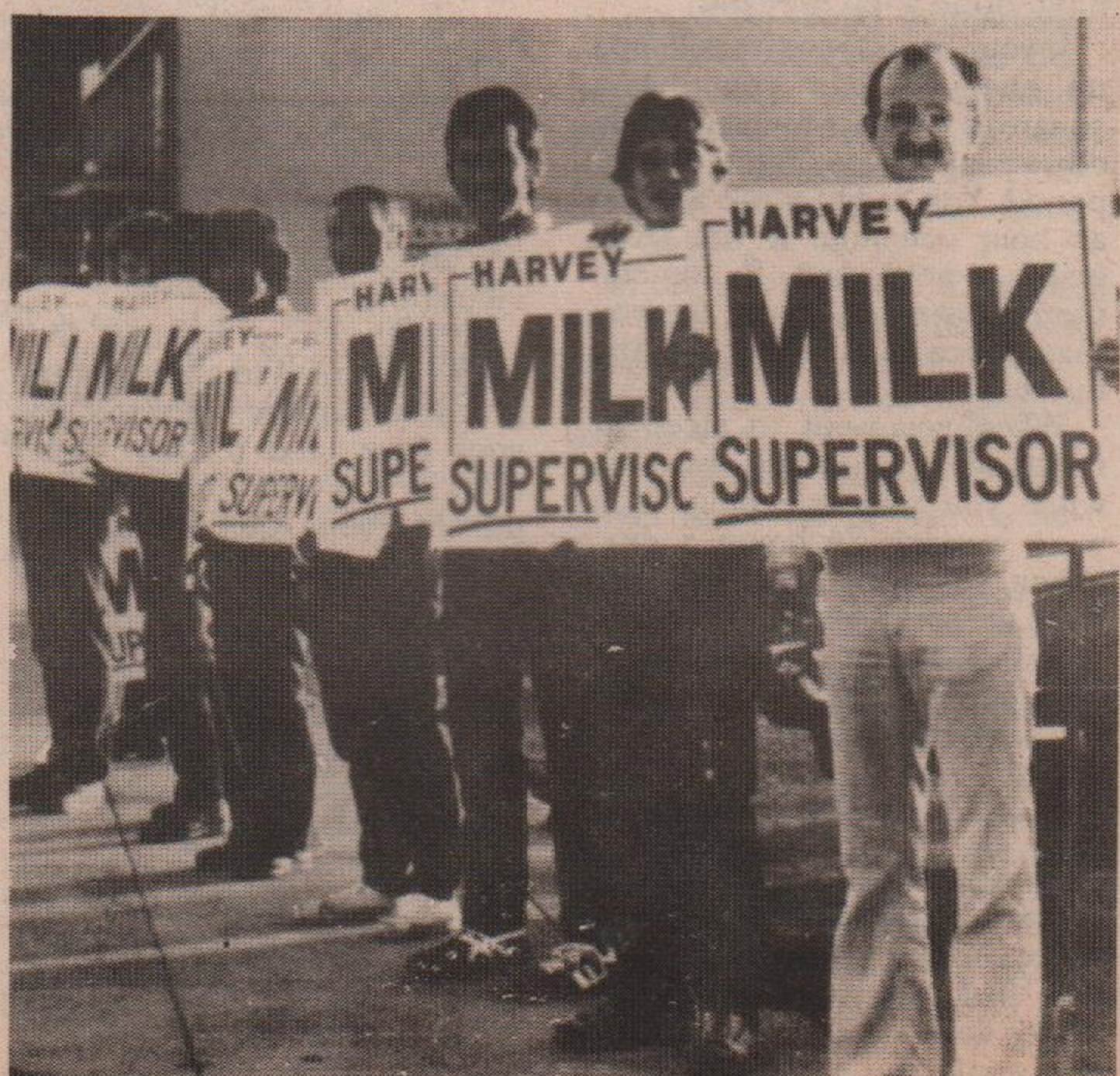
A friend recounts, between sobs at the memory, how several people were spurred by Harvey Milk's death to come out so that he would not have died in vain.

The day White received his sentence, rioting broke out. The outraged lesbian and gay community besieged City Hall and did battle with the police.

A demonstrator recalls it: "You can replace a window or chandelier", he says, "but you couldn't replace Harvey".

It is a fine film. But it has its weaknesses. It is sometimes difficult to follow for a British audience, because local politics in the US is so different.

Aspects of Milk's politics come through. In fact, his project for a 'coalition' of dispossessed minorities and the 'union rank and file' is strikingly similar to views held now by many on the Labour left in Britain. But Milk was a liberal: the politics do not step beyond anger at oppression and a call for justice. They do not identify a real agency for change.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



We have fed you all for a thousand years

[Written by 'An Unknown Proletarian', and first published by the Industrial Workers of the World in the USA in 1918].

We have fed you all for a thousand years
And you hail us still un-fed,
Though there's never a dollar of all your wealth
But marks the workers' dead.
We have yielded our best to give you rest
And you lie on crimson wool.
Then if blood be the price of all your wealth
Good God! We have paid it in full!

There is never a mine blown skyward now
But we're buried alive for you.
There's never a wreck drifts shoreward now
But we are its ghastly crew.
Go reckon our dead by the forges red
And the factories where we spin.
If blood be the price of your cursed wealth,
Good God! We have paid it in!

We have fed you all for a thousand years —
For that was our doom, you know,
From the days when you chained us in your fields
To the strike a week ago.
You have taken our lives, and our babies and wives,
And we're told it's your legal share,
But if blood be the price of your lawful wealth,
Good God! We have bought it fair!

GERRY BYRNE'S TV WATCH



Union Jack knickers

GO ON, own up, you enjoyed every minute of it, all that tacky nostalgia and ribald jollification. You lapped it up, down to the last dried-egg sandwich.

The flash of the Union Jack knickers, the roar of the crowd, 'We want the king'. Dead? Unfortunately not. This was patriotic stew we were being served — with a dash of naughty relish.

For the majority of the population who weren't even a twinkling in a GI's eye on VE Day, it was the voyeuristic kick of watching your parents' or grandparents' generation misbehave. One participant compared it to pigeons being released. It seemed an apt metaphor for all the clatter and confusion.

I think it was meant to convey the soaring spirit of liberation. But the pigeons fly home to their cages.

It struck me more as a gigantic Hen Night. Even the newsreels of the time are suffused with nostalgia. Not so much looking forward to a 'free' future, as the last chance to drop your Union Jack knickers for a uniformed stranger. Then it's goodbye nylon stockings and Tootsie Rolls, and back to the old life.

Relationship

The War blew apart traditional notions of sexual and social relationships. It's no surprise that the women look back fondly to a time when they'd never been freer.

But it wasn't just sexual relations that were changed.

Across Europe, workers concluded that a return to the old order was not the only alternative to Nazism. Having settled with Hitler, the time had come to finish with their own class and national oppressors. The cruel betrayal of those hopes in the West, and their vicious deformation by Stalin in Eastern Europe, is another story.

Even in England, where the Monarchy's fascist sympathies were conveniently forgotten in a wave of patriotic amnesia, the celebrations were not for the restoration of the old order.

Returning radicalised troops were quickly disarmed, in some cases confined to barracks, under armed guard, on polling day. Troops abroad suffered ballot-rigging on a huge scale. Yet still a Labour government swept in with a landslide majority. You don't get much inking of that from TV celebrations.

One commentator suggested that this surge of socialist aspirations was all down to the evacuee children. Before the War, the working class had only impinged on the national conscience, like present-day Ethiopian famine victims, as gaunt shadows.

When they came face to face

with the half-starved, bug-ridden slum children, so the argument runs, the nation were stirred to take action on the appalling conditions of the working class.

A nice idea, nice people's view of politics. Presumably the working class were quite aware of their own existence even before the war. What they lacked was a sense of their own power.

The grain of truth in this picture is that liberal opinion had to concede the existence of the working class — and very threatening it looked, too. This horrid vision had to be tamed.

Depoliticised

And so the Salt of the Earth is born — the chirpy Cockney, the canny Geordie, the cocky Scouser — the loveable depoliticised working-class character.

Sociologists measured him — and popped in for a chat and a cup of tea with 'the wife' — cine newsreels featured his cheeky grin, and on VE Day, he and the wife and their vast extended family threw a ginormous street party.

Forty years on, we're invited to eavesdrop on that party. Let the big nobs make their speeches, we know "it was us that won the War". I think I'd rather swallow a dried-egg sandwich.

Of course, the Second World War is not short on myths. Against the blatant imperialist trumpeting of John Wayne/Ronnie Reagan saving the world for democracy, there's the counter-myth of our Soviet friends.

As a counterpoint to Union Jack knickers, we have the Battle for Stalingrad.

Like a giant socialist-realist statue, where blank-eyed proletarians of both sexes ripple their muscles strivingly towards the socialist future, it's an epic deceit.

Irony

The heroism is real enough — the phenomenal courage and endurance of Russian soldiers and civilians, a starving people fighting hand-to-hand over every last inch of brick and concrete.

There is an awful irony in the fact that the survivors still call it Stalingrad, though it was renamed Volgograd after Stalin's fall. He has not fallen in their eyes.

Twenty million Russian dead. For what? "To defeat Fascism. To free Europe from the Nazi yoke".

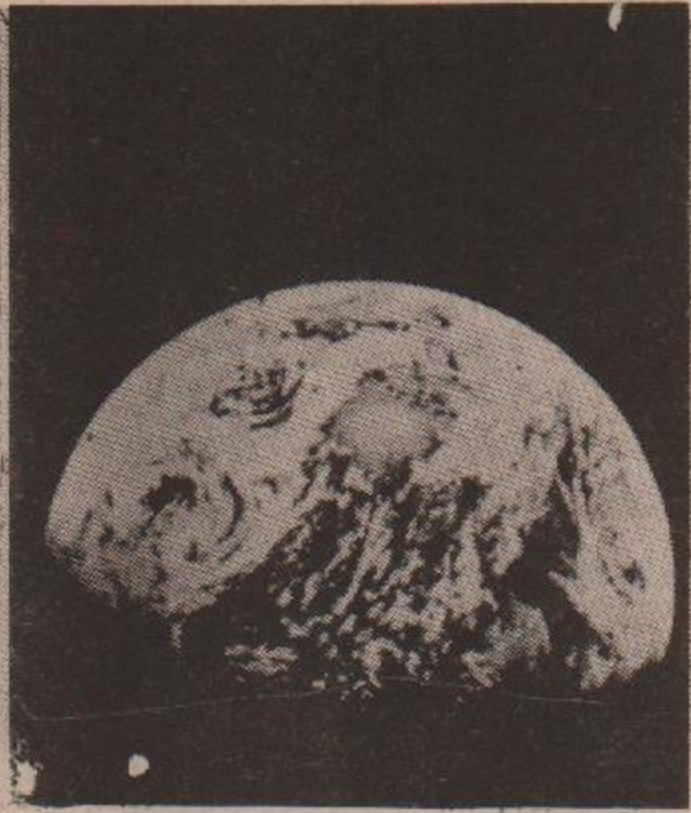
Stalin and his imperialist allies/rivals honoured that sacrifice by turning the guns on the revolutionary workers and soldiers, restoring wobbling capitalism in Western Europe and turning the East into one vast prison camp.

No wonder the sturdy proletarians turned to stone. That way their hearts wouldn't break.

The shy killer bugs

'LEGIONNAIRE'S Disease' (LD) has temporarily displaced AIDS from the front pages, with the recent toll of deaths among mainly elderly hospital patients.

So readers may be wondering why it has taken so long to identify a simple bacterial infection. One problem was that investigators were looking for a virus, thinking that the disease was flu.



SCIENCE

But LD is not caused by any ordinary bacterium. Legionella pneumophila is a tiny, shy and retiring bacterium, one of a group of extremely small bacteria often thought of as being between bacteria and viruses. This group is an extremely unpleasant but fascinating bunch of bugs.

The group consists of at least three probably unrelated classes, the Rickettsiae, the Chlamydiae and the Mycoplasmas. Between them, they have had quite an effect on human history.

Most of them are incapable of carrying out all the functions necessary for life and can only grow *inside* the cells of a 'host' animal. This is similar to viruses which are also intracellular parasites. Viruses may just be more incompetent versions of these degenerate bacteria. They are more difficult to treat than ordinary bacteria, since they are hiding inside the victim's cells.

The most well-known are the Rickettsiae, responsible for various forms of typhus. They naturally infect ticks, lice, fleas and mites, but can infect humans if their host bites people.

Epidemic typhus (gaol fever, spotted fever) was particularly dangerous in the overcrowded unhygienic conditions common in prisons, slums, wars and famines, but DDT (to kill the carriers) has dealt it a severe blow.

Common in Victorian Britain, typhus came into its own during the Civil War after the Russian Revolution. It affected millions, killing more than died in the fighting. Its victims included the revolutionary journalist John Reed.

Other diseases of the Rickettsiae include trench fever and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever,

contracted by settlers in Bitter Root Valley, Montana, after 1880, and having a mortality rate of 80%.

The Chlamydiae cause a range of unpleasant illnesses. One causes trachoma, a widespread disease in very poor countries in which the cornea becomes ulcerated and scarred, causing blindness. It is spread by flies and particularly affects undernourished children living in unhygienic conditions.

More and more common is chlamydial non-specific urethritis. This is more easily recognised in men, where it causes a secretion from the penis, known as 'drip'. More dangerous, because less obvious, is the same infection in women. Here the infection may reach the womb, Fallopian tubes and ovaries, possibly causing scarring and blocking of the tubes and leading to infertility. Certain IUDs may make this more likely to happen.

Psittacosis is a more exotic type of chlamydial infection. Originally identified as a disease caught from Psittacine birds (parrots, cockatoos and budgerigars), it can be caught from pigeons, chickens and turkeys. Usually causing a mild fever and lung infection, it can be fatal.

Psittacosis seems to be a fairly mild infection of birds, but when they are under stress (as a result of being captured and shipped around the world to pet shops), the disease can flare up, making the birds very infectious.

This ecological aspect is crucial to understanding the nature of bacterial infections. Few bacteria can make their own food and most have to rely on energy-rich matter, living or dead. The majority are harmless unless given an opportunity they cannot refuse — such as free entry to a body through a wound or bite.

Victim

Once inside, their high metabolic rate makes a large demand for nourishment. Their waste products may be poisonous and cause blood poisoning, etc. The attempts of the body to fight the infection can weaken and put a strain on the victim.

Obviously, a person already weakened through hunger or privation can more easily be overwhelmed.

Thus typhus is described as the traditional plague of war and poverty, while trachoma is a disease of hungry and poor children. On the other hand, chlamydial venereal infections are spreading because of a decline in the use of barrier contraceptives, coupled with the general ignorance, fear, shame and embarrassment about sex that makes people reluctant to seek treatment even if they are aware of the need for it.

Next week I will look more closely at the saga of LD.



Inside a detention centre Short sharp shock

YOU HAD to do everything at the double, and even faster than that. If you were doing something as fast as you could, the screws made you do it even faster. They wanted to give you a fright while you were in, but they shouldn't have done what they did.

If your boots weren't polished up enough, then you got a square of the floor to scrub while other people were on their break period. You had to scrub for half an hour non-stop. If you stopped, you got kicked. By the end there was more sweat on you than there was water in the bucket.

When you went to sleep at night, you were still working while you were sleeping. You were working 24 hours a day. When you went to sleep, you were dreading getting up in the morning. You had to get up at six o'clock and do a mile while you were hardly awake.

Circuits

We used to do circuit training. It was really hard. You had to do three circuits, one after another. The first time you did it and didn't know what was going on, you would try to impress them. But they catch you out. Every time you did it, you had to beat

Eddie McCann, a 19-year old youth from the Gorbals in Glasgow who served a two-month sentence at Glenochil at the close of 1983, described the 'short, sharp, shock' treatment in the detention centre.

your last time.

They forced you to run a mile. I've seen guys in a daze and guys hit the deck, but they had to carry on. You had to do the mile in under six minutes. And you always had to beat your previous time.

After the circuit training, they made you stand to attention and give your number. They told you your time, and if they didn't think it was good enough, they punched you. After the training it was straight back to scrub floors.

When I was in, there were three grades — blue, yellow and red. If you didn't get the grade, you lost two days' remission.

After your first two weeks you could get the blue grade. This was for 'effort' and most people got it. You could get yellow after five weeks, and everything had to be good to get it. Red grade was for perfection but hardly anyone got that.

Now there are five grades in there. They've added on a sen-

ior yellow and a senior red. This makes it even more difficult to get the grades. And now you can lose up to ten days' remission instead of just six.

I never got the yellow grade. I got transferred to the bottom flat and only had ten minutes to clean up my room. The screws found a Polo mint paper in the bin, and that cost me the grade.

I tried to explain to the governor that I only had ten minutes to clean up, but he wouldn't listen. He was going to take off another two days' remission for speaking out of turn.

If the screws found a scrap of paper in the corridor, they would search every room to find the book from which it was missing. When you got a book, you checked all the pages were in it. If someone had torn out a page, you would get the blame for it.

The screws did shifts in both the detention centre and the Young Offenders' Institute (YOI). In the YOI they were in for longer sentences, so the screws had to sort of live with them. But we were only in for three months, so the screws were really hard on us.

Those guys who hanged themselves, it was the screws' fault. 'Short, sharp shock' treatment is one thing. But there it was getting beyond a joke.

Driven to suicide

By Stan Crooke

LAST MONTH sixteen-year old orphan Derek Harris became the seventh prisoner since 1981 to die in the Glenochil complex in Fife. He had just six days of his sentence left to serve. He had been sent to Glenochil against the advice of the medical officer at Friarton Detention Centre in Perth, who had declared him unfit for the notoriously tough regime at Glenochil.

Classified by the authorities at Glenochil as a 'high suicide risk', he had been given what they consider the 'appropriate' treatment: solitary confinement, with only a canvas mattress in the cell and a canvas smock to wear, and observed every 15 minutes.

Derek Harris hanged himself on the evening of Saturday April 13.

Deaths

Glenochil combines a detention centre and a Young Offenders' Institute (YOI). The detention centre holds 182 men aged between 18 and 21, serving short sentences of between four weeks and five months. The YOI holds up to 496 men of the same age range, mostly serving longer sentences of at least nine months.

The detention centre was opened in 1966. Between then and November 1983, when the Tories' infamous 'short, sharp shock' regime was introduced, there were no deaths there. Since November 1983, however, two inmates have hanged themselves.

The YOI was opened in 1976. Four of its inmates died between 1981 and 1983, one from solvent abuse and three by hanging. New Scottish legislation has reduced the YOI to half-capacity since 1983. Derek Harris was the YOI's fifth victim.

The YOI regime is supposedly less rigid than the 'short, sharp shock' detention centre. In fact there is a considerable overlap between the two. Many staff work in both the YOI and the detention centre. In both, visits are limited to one per month of 40 minutes' duration.

In the summer of last year, after the first death at the detention centre, the Scottish Office Prison Department set up an inquiry into Glenochil. But its remit is to consider precautionary measures for high-suicide-risk inmates, rather than to examine the Glenochil regime itself. Two members of the 8-strong committee of inquiry, including its secretary, are employed at Glenochil, and another two members are directly associated with the prison system.

Jump

The fact that another two Glenochil inmates have died while the committee continues its deliberations provides an adequate verdict on it.

'Short, sharp shock' treatment is supposed to discourage young offenders from any further criminal activities. But in the course of 1984, the numbers admitted to Scottish detention centres jumped by over a third — and the number of inmates admitted who had previously been in detention rocketed by some 100%.

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Miners

Amnesty!

By John Bloxam

MOST OF the official trade union and Labour Party leaders did their best on the May Day rallies to forget about the sacked and jailed miners. But Tony Benn spoke for the militant rank and file. In Chesterfield on Monday May 6 he demanded "a complete amnesty for all those trade unions and trade unionists and any local councillors who have been fined or imprisoned under the repressive laws passed by the present government".

"Tory laws", he said, "have been used against decent people whose only offence has been to defend jobs".

Peter Heathfield has written to trade unions and supporters of the NUM: "Until [the sacked miners] have their jobs back, their welfare and that of their families is the responsibility of the National Union of Mineworkers and the wider labour movement".

Last Thursday, 9th, the NUM Executive discussed further ways to raise money for the sacked miners, and considered pushing for a public inquiry into the NCB's refusal to reinstate any miners in Kent or Scotland.

Sympathy and solidarity is widespread. But since the strike ended we have lacked the organisation to make the appeals and the speeches mean something. Inevitably many miners' support groups, solidarity networks, and collections, have

folded up.

We need to revive them. We need to ensure that the levies, meetings, etc continue, and that there is a campaign to demand that those labour and trade union leaders who express 'concern' or 'support' be forced to translate this into doing something about it.

An important part of this campaign should be the sacked miners themselves. The 700 sacked miners, hardened in the year-long strike, could be a tremendous spearhead and motor-force in the campaign. But with a few notable exceptions they are not playing this irreplaceable role.

Terrible

Of course, the sacked miners have many terrible problems. It is a daily fight to secure their own and their families' existence, after a year on strike. The rejection of the proposed 50p levy in the NUM ballot has disheartened many and demoralised others. Some of the officials and sections of the rank and file are indifferent to their plight. The union also has massive problems: its funds are still sequestered, and the TUC still refuses to lend them money.

Most of the sacked miners are now getting money from the Miners' Solidarity Fund, which is reported to have enough to pay £30 per week to each miner

for the next six months. The NUM now wants all donations to go to this fund.

But conditions still vary between the Areas. In Durham, none of those sacked is signing on — because it would imply 'acceptance' of the sackings. At the moment they receive £75 a week from the Area.

The level of organisation also differs widely from Area to Area. Kent's sacked miners organised from the beginning. In Notts the sacked miners met for the first time three weeks ago. In Yorkshire, there have been neither full Area nor panel meetings.

There was talk of the NUM organising a national meeting for the sacked miners; now it is said that the first step will be meetings organised by the Areas.

Such meetings are clearly essential, to stop sacked miners feeling isolated and getting demoralised and to plan the political and financial campaign. If necessary, the sacked miners will have to take the initiative themselves.

The NUM's problems place greater responsibility on the rest of the labour movement. Organise meetings with sacked and jailed miners as speakers; rush money to the NUM to make it easier for them to organise.

Send money to: Miners' Solidarity Fund, Co-operative Bank PLC, 84-86 West Street, Sheffield, South Yorkshire. Code: 08-90-75. Account number: 30000009.

Notts rules ballot

THERE'S NO information as yet about the results of the ballot in Notts.

Berry Hill [the area HQ controlled by scab Roy Lynk] has been going overboard with newspapers, posters and all the rest of it to try and get a yes vote, to reject the national NUM rule changes 'even if it means being expelled from or leaving the national union'.

Personally I believe that they will get a majority say-

**KEEP NOTTS NATIONAL
NO BREAKAWAY!**

ing yes, which virtually means that Notts will be breaking away. That is a major tragedy. But it will be very interesting to see the size of the no vote — to see the number of people who, by declaring no, are saying that they wish to stay with the national union.

People have been very interested in the Miners' Forum paper, the Notts Collier, in spite of hassle from management.

NACODS ban

NACODS, the pit deputies' union, is expected to begin an overtime ban this Thursday, May 16. The NCB has said that loss of output could be as high as 30 per cent.

NACODS is protesting at the NCB refusing to abide by the agreement made last October over procedures for pit closure. Strike action to follow the overtime ban does not seem to be ruled out.

The NCB says that some pits will have to be closed, because of damage suffered during the miners' strike, without going through the procedure agreed with NACODS to stop them joining the miners on strike.

NACODS is demanding that

this statement be withdrawn.

If it had struck last summer, NACODS could have given victory to the miners. Instead they took the Coal Board's word on it, and let the miners be defeated.

The miners' defeat removed the NCB's motive to make concessions to NACODS.

The need for solidarity and unity is being drummed into NACODS by the triumphant NCB. There is poetic justice in the way the NCB is now treating NACODS. But it would be stupid and short-sighted to gloat. NACODS opposition to closures should be supported by the labour movement.

Victimised for her ideas

By Bert Mansbridge

EILEEN Healey is involved in trade union education in Liverpool. As a socialist she believes in applying her principles to the work she does.

Not surprisingly, Eileen has opposed attempts by the TUC Education Service increasingly to dictate to tutors and students what should happen in the classroom.

Eileen's employer is the Workers' Educational Association. This is an independent and progressive body which provides shop stewards' courses for the TUC.

It is dedicated to the goals of educational emancipation and freedom of expression. It is resolutely opposed to sexism and racism.

However, it derives a fair slice of its income from the TUC.

Eileen's trade union is ASTMS. They are firmly dedicated to the protection of their members against encroachments from the employers. They too fiercely abhor sexism as an abomination. This is particularly

true of Eileen's full-time officer, Dr David Bird. Dr Bird is a member of the Communist Party.

All of this is well known to the Liverpool working class. They were, however, a little surprised by what happened next.

Increasingly irritated by Eileen's failure to toe the TUC line, Dave Eva — a former fellow-traveller of the International Marxist Group who only a few years ago was urging the formation of a group of 'ultra-left' tutors — cut Eileen's work with the WEA by two-thirds.

Eileen was the only woman part-time tutor. She was pregnant at the time. The work was given instead to a man who had never taught those courses before.

That this was a most blatant case of sex and political discrimination was as obvious to Liverpool working class as the fact that Everton have won the

League championship. The shop stewards at Ford Halewood, for example, boycotted the TUC courses run by the WEA.

It was not obvious, however, to the WEA. David Connor, the District Secretary, backed Dave Eva to the hilt.

It was not obvious to ASTMS official Dr David Bird. Glancing up from his copy of 'Marxism Today', he told Eileen that he could not take up her case. Realistically she had no chance of success.

Deserted by her own union, Eileen was helped independently by Andrew Davies of the GMBATU. At the Liverpool Industrial Tribunal on May 8, the WEA agreed to pay Eileen £500 in return for her withdrawing a sex discrimination case against the Association. As a Ford shop steward said, "You don't pay out that kind of money unless you are guilty as hell".

Eileen's case doesn't only underline once more the cant, hypocrisy, and double standards of those in the unions and in the WEA who prate about equality and don't lift a finger to fight discrimination in their own backyards.

It also draws our attention to the importance of trade union education.

This area has been neglected by socialists. Yet every year thousands of activists attend courses organised by the TUC and by individual unions.

The TUC courses are financed largely by an annual grant paid by the Tories. Rather than employing their own staff, the TUC farm these courses out to colleges, universities, and to the WEA.

The TUC have always done their damndest to keep political discussion out of the courses and

to feed the membership with a restricted diet of narrow skills, like 'How to interview a member' and 'how to follow procedure'.

Things have got worse in recent years. Whilst the TUC barons argue that the EETPU and the AUEW should not take state money for ballots because of the strings attached, they are busy jumping to the jerks that the Tories give to the strings attached to state support for union education. The grant is therefore used by the Tories to mould union education.

In 1982 the TUC stopped running 10-day courses on the Employment Law because the subject was politically dicey. In 1983 the TUC accepted that a certain proportion of their courses would be vetted by management. In 1984 they began discussing with the government how 'economic awareness sessions', i.e. propaganda for Thatcherism, could be introduced into course.

In the north-west of England, the TUC education officer is a person named Arthur Johnstone. Arthur used to support a party to the right of Labour. Now he is doing his best to pursue a career in our movement by becoming a Labour MP.

He has done his utmost to ensure that the TUC line is followed in courses, and has tried to exclude dissidents from teaching.

The result can be seen from a report written by shop stewards on a recent TUC course tutored by WEA employee and CP member Terry Molloy.

"There were political criticisms of the methods used on the course. Stewards linked them with the TUC's 'New Realism' approach. There is a crucial

necessity for stewards to be politically aware and motivated. More leadership is needed from the tutor".

'Marxism Today' has drifted even further right than we thought! Yet most tutors on these courses would, like Molloy, advertise themselves as left-wing socialists. But as the TUC has cracked the whip, they have disregarded their principles and looked to their careers.

Prominent right-wing supporters of the new realism in the north-west are Eddie McDonnell (ex-SWP), Alastair "I only teach what the TUC tell me" O'Riordan (ex-SWP), and Glyn Powell (ex-SWP). Powell left the SWP not to pursue his career, but because it was discovered that whilst urging revolutionary ideas on shop stewards he himself owned shares in a well-known company.

These people have done everything in their power to aid the TUC bureaucracy in driving the left out of union education and keeping politics out of the courses.

Eileen Healey's case is one small but important example of the kind of thing that is being done in the name of ten million trade unionists. The kind of education we provide for trade unionists is of concern to all in our movement. It's too important to be left to the right-wing, the bureaucrats, and the careerists.

Isn't it about time you started taking an interest?

Contact

BASINGSTOKE. Contact: Alan Fraser, 20 Cotswold Close. SO is sold in the Town Centre, outside Dolcis, 12.30-1.30. Meetings: alternate Fridays, 7.30pm at Chute House, Church St.

BIRMINGHAM. Contact Jim, 194 Dawlish Rd, Selly Oak.

CARDIFF. Contact: Martin, 492988. SO is sold at the 108 Bookshop Salisbury Rd. Meetings: alternate Sundays, 7pm, at 56 Richards Tce, Adamstown.

COVENTRY. Contact: Bryan, 55 George Eliot Rd. SO is sold at the Wedge bookshop and on Thursdays and Fridays at Warwick University. Meetings every Thursday, 7.30: contact for details.

COLCHESTER: contact c/o London.

DURHAM. Contact Gary, 0783 860506. SO is sold at the Community Co-op bookshop, Old Elvet, and Saturday 11am-2pm in the Market Place.

DERBY, WORKSOP: contact c/o Nottingham.

EDINBURGH. Contact c/o Glasgow.

GLASGOW. Contact Stan, 63 Dixon Ave, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at 'Changes' bookshop, at Partick underground (Friday teatime), and at Hamilton shopping arcade (Saturday morning). For meetings, see paper sellers.

HARROGATE, SCARBOROUGH: Contact c/o York.

LEEDS, DONCASTER, HUDDERSFIELD: Contact c/o London.

LEICESTER. Contact c/o London.

MANCHESTER. Contact Tony, 42 Duxbury Sq. SO is sold at Grass Roots bookshop, and Thursday 6pm-7pm outside Quiksave, Rusholme. Meetings: alternate Sundays, 7.30, UMIST student union, Sackville St.

MERSEYSIDE: Contact Debbie, 11 Afton, Hough Green, Widnes. SO is sold at News from Nowhere, Progressive Books, and Lark Lane Books. Meetings: Sundays 7.30 at Birkenhead unemployed centre.

NOTTINGHAM. Contact: Pete, 16 Drayton St; 620947. SO is sold at the Mushroom Bookshop. Meetings: Mondays 7.30 at the International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd.

SHEFFIELD. Contact Rob, 589307, or Dave, 348395. SO is sold outside Boots on Fargate, Saturday midday, and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Meetings: alternate Mondays, 7.30, at the Foresters, Division St.

SOUTHAMPTON, SALISBURY: Contact c/o London.

STOKE: contact c/o London.

STOCKPORT: Contact Patrick, 40 Fox St, Edgley; 429 6359.

YORK. Contact: Mark, 39 Melbourne St. SO is sold at Community Bookshop and Saturday midday, outside Woolworths. Meetings: Fridays 7.30, inquire for venue.

NORTH LONDON. Contact: Nik, 278 1341. SO is sold at Highbury and Holloway tube stations, Wednesday 5pm-6pm, and at Bookmarks, Central Books, and Collets. Meetings: discussion meetings every other Thursday, 8pm at the Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd; business meetings alternate Thursdays.

EAST LONDON. Contact: Will, 791 0247. Discussion meetings held monthly, phone for details.

WEST LONDON. Contact Tom or Gerry, 789 7587. Meetings: alternate Sundays, phone for venue.

SOUTH LONDON. Contact: Ian, 609 7459. SO is sold at Bookplace, Peckham Rd, SE15. Educational meetings fortnightly, general readers' meetings monthly: phone for details.

Anger at GCHQ

TRADE UNIONISTS at GCHQ who left the union and then re-joined it should pay back the £1000 they received from management. That is the suggestion made by civil service union leaders last week, after Robert Armstrong, head of the home civil service, said that the declarations signed by employees to abide by new GCHQ conditions are legally binding.

GCHQ workers who are defying the ban on union membership are angry at the suggestion. Many left the union unwill-

ingly when the ban was first imposed, and re-joined when the High Court ruled that the ban was illegal — a ruling later overturned.

They argue that when they originally signed the declaration they did so under duress, and the money was compensation for loss of rights under the Employment Protection Acts, and not for loss of union membership.

The Tory-sponsored 'staff federation', meanwhile, has been a failure. Only about 20% of GCHQ staff have joined it.

a socialist organiser
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**the fight for
trade union
democracy**

**The
Broad
Lefts**

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they
are and
what
they
must
become

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CPSA: rough ride for Broad Left '84

Bradford City fire: Avoidable tragedy

AT LEAST 52 people have died from last Saturday's terrible tragedy at Bradford City football ground, and (on Tuesday morning, 14th) 18 are still missing.

It was an avoidable tragedy. The football ground — which would have had to be completely renovated when Bradford City moved up into the Second Division — was a known fire hazard. What is more, the available evidence is that the club manager had been told of the dangers.

Though the club claims never to have received the warning letters from West Yorkshire's chief fire officer, it is clear that the whole of the Main Stand was known to be a monstrous fire-trap long before between 50 and 70 football fans were suffocated or burned to death.

The fire spread rapidly. Many died because they ran to get out through back gates that had been locked.

The whole event demonstrates the absurdity — and the potentially criminal irresponsibility — of Chelsea's notion of electrified fences to control crowds and hooliganism. In Bradford the pitch was the main



Bradford City ablaze

escape route, and the consequences if there had been an electric fence scarcely bear thinking about.

The tragedy also highlights the financial problems of Third and Fourth Division clubs.

The big clubs make money.

But the Third and Fourth Division clubs' gate receipts are too small to improve the grounds wholesale. They depend on networks of volunteers to raise money through lotteries and so on.

34 grounds are considered to

be probably unsafe. Many rugby stadiums are also wooden structures without adequate emergency exits.

The government should put up the money to make sure that another tragedy like Bradford does not happen.

Murder? It was class war

LAST WEEK three class-war prisoners went on trial for murder at Cardiff Crown Court.

All of them pleaded not guilty, and one, Anthony Williams, was immediately cleared on the direction of the judge, who said that he had no case to answer.

The other two, Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland, are being tried for the killing of scab-herding taxi driver David Wilkie. Wilkie was killed when his chest was crushed by a concrete block thrown from a motorway bridge as — escorted by a police land-rover — he was driving a scab to work during the miners' strike.

Two miners died on the picket line during the strike, one of them under the wheels of a recklessly-driven scab lorry. But nobody will stand trial for killing Joe Green and Davy Jones.

Mrs Thatcher openly boasts and crows about the victory over the heroic miners which such savage disregard for working class people and their lives gain-

By John O'Mahony

ed for her class.

During the miners' strike they sent thousands of police scab-herding for the Coal Board, and allowed them to act outside the law when necessary. The ruling class makes up new laws or disregards existing laws as they need.

They can disregard it and illegally stop people moving freely about the country, as they did during the strike; and they can use it to take revenge on individual miners, as they are doing now. They aim to intimidate other workers in future bitter strikes. The law is their law, not ours.

Nobody set out in cold blood

to kill the miserable scab-herder Wilkie. The contrite Dean Hancock told the court: "As the [escorting] police land-rover came under, I just pushed the block

Free the prisoners! Re-instate the sacked miners
March: Sat. June 8, 2.30,
Hyde Park, London.

Called by NOMPAS.

and ran. I heard a crash, a smash. I heard a siren go off. I was terrified. It was a blur of lights, that's all I could see... It was just a protest gesture against David Williams [the scab in the taxi]. We weren't there to ambush anyone. I didn't think anything bad was going to happen... We couldn't believe what

had happened".

When Joe Green got killed, they said it was an accident of the class war and that was the end of it. They have different rules and other standards for a dead scab-herder. They call that murder.

It wasn't murder: whatever Dean Hancock now says in the dock, Wilkie died because a group of young miners tried to fight seriously, if in this case unwisely, for a miners' victory in the strike.

Hancock and Shankland are class war prisoners. Drop the charges and release them! Release the other jailed miners, and stop using the courts for Tory revenge against the defeated miners!

Strike shows there's still spirit in the pits

LAST Wednesday, 8th, an angry meeting of South Kirkby NUM voted to return to work after the Yorkshire Area executive had refused to support their strike.

1350 men from the pit, and 500 from the adjoining Ferry-moor-Riddings colliery, had been out for over a week after management sacked two militants on the simple say-so of scabs. It was the longest dispute since the end of the national strike.

The strikers were forced to call off their action when it was beginning to spread. On the Tuesday morning, South Kirkby pickets had pulled out the majority of workers at Houghton Main, Dodworth, and Royston

Drift pits, and at Shafton Workshops. Militants at other Yorkshire pits were also expecting pickets, and were confident of a solid response.

The action was sabotaged on Tuesday afternoon when the area executive ordered the pickets back. They said that the Coal Board would not negotiate until the action was called off.

The climbdown will only encourage management's kangaroo courts, arbitrary discipline, and sackings on the say-so of scabs. Two days after the return

to work MacGregor reaffirmed this policy in the NCB paper 'Coal News'. He used the South Kirkby sackings as an example of management's determination.

He also announced a free-phone service to pit management for scabs to finger militants for alleged intimidation inside or outside the pits.

But the South Kirkby strike shows that there is a growing readiness to translate bitterness at the management attacks into militant action.

By Steve Battlemuch

THE ANNUAL conference of the civil servants' union CPSA began on Monday May 13 with a discussion on the failed 1985 pay campaign.

Nine emergency motions were submitted censuring the executive for their handling of the campaign and their compliance with the 1984 Trade Union Act.

The executive, dominated by the Broad Left '84 group, originally agreed to consult members about industrial action on pay by the normal CPSA method of a show of hands at workplace meetings. Then as soon as an injunction was taken out against the CPSA, the executive capitulated, called off the vote half-way (when it was showing a two-to-one majority for action), and sent out ballot papers. In line with the Tory Act, the papers pointed out that strike action would break our contracts of employment.

The re-run vote showed a narrow majority against action. The confusion created by the executive obviously in-

fluenced the vote.

Conference voted against the censure motions by 533 to 304 on a show of hands. Broad Left '84 argued that they were still opposed to the anti-union laws in theory, but in practice it is impossible to defy those laws in a union of the size and nature of CPSA.

The Broad Left '84 group has made many friends among the CPSA full-timers, and and general secretary Alistair Graham must be pleased about the way they preach pessimism in the name of 'realism'.

Elections

Things have not all gone the way of Broad Left '84, however. In the DHSS section — the most militant and left-wing section — the election results announced over the weekend made the original Broad Left much stronger on the section executive committee, while all the prominent Broad Left '84 people were thrown off.

The national executive election results, which are likely to show a right-wing majority, are due out at the end of the week.

Post jobs at risk

By Greg Birch (UCW, Basingstoke, in a personal capacity)

AT THIS YEAR'S UCW conference, starting May 19, the main issue will be the proposals under the Postal Business Efficiency Package.

After a conference in March, the executive were instructed that there should be no increase in the number of part-timers, and that the productivity scheme (IWM) should remain voluntary.

But the executive, making it clear that it does not want confrontation, is recommending reversal of these two decisions.

Since March there has been industrial action in London over the use of new technology and in Northampton over the delivery of polling cards. Both of these disputes spread when the Post Office

attempted to divert mail. The membership reacted strongly and solidly, but the EC seemed to be frightened of the disputes.

The Post Office has sensed the EC's weakness and insisted on a complete capitulation.

We have been presented with a document, very glossily printed, for endorsement at conference, which details agreements made on Postal Business Efficiency. Part of this agreement is a payment of up to £250 for compliance. £100 has already been paid, recoverable if the agreement is not ratified.

Basingstoke branch protested to the EC that the prior payment was a form of blackmail. Despite this, conference still has a chance to throw out this agreement, and although it will mean an immediate and very bitter confrontation the line has been drawn.

Jail for nuke protest?

NINE women face jail sentences for refusing to pay 'compensation' to British Nuclear Fuels Limited. Five of them are appearing in court this week.

The compensation payments, together with fines, were imposed after a demonstration at the BNFL plant at Capenhurst, on the Wirral. The women were protesting about the use by BNFL of uranium from Namibia, where the black majority is held

down under South African rule. They also condemned the planned use of the Capenhurst plant for the Trident programme.

The nine women have paid the compensation money to SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement, rather than to BNFL.

Contact: Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts, 01-267 1941-2.

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