

Socialist Organiser

Keep our
unions

LABOUR
PARTY

LABOUR

No.239 August 7 1985 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

VICTORY TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINERS!

On August 25, black South African coal and gold miners will — unless the mine-owners back down — begin the most important strike ever in the country's history. By an overwhelming majority in a legal ballot, members of the South African National Union of Mineworkers voted to take strike action in pursuit of a 22% wage increase.

The NUM has also called for a boycott of white businesses in protest at the recently declared state of emergency. And it has threatened strike action against deportation of any of the 200,000 foreign workers in the mines.

Test

It will be a major test of strength between the black working class and the racist apartheid state, and threatens to be a long and bitter fight. Although the strike is legal, it will undoubtedly, like all mass movements in South Africa, be met with violent resistance from the police.

The South African miners are to strike knowing that some of them will die, and hundreds may be injured.

The NUM has unionised about 130,000 of South Africa's 490,000 coal and gold miners. It is the

country's biggest independent trade union in industries central to South Africa's economy. They expect many non-unionised miners to join the strike.

The union is legally recognised in 18 of the 44 mines in South Africa. Observers believe that strike action would spread to unrecognised mines.

There is some chance of the South African Chamber of Mines making concessions to head off the strike. They realise what a successful strike would mean.

Against a backdrop of rising mass resistance to apartheid, and intensified repression, the non-racial trade unions have increasingly come to the fore. It is here that the power lies to cripple apartheid. The NUM is central to the new workers' movement, and its struggle could galvanise the whole opposition movement.

The whole international labour movement must throw its weight behind their struggle. They will need every ounce of solidarity that we can muster.

They must win. A victory for the South African miners will be a colossal blow to the apartheid system. It will point the way for all the oppressed and exploited in South Africa. The strike itself will paralyse the

racist state's most crucial industries. A victory here will spur on further victories.

And a defeat for the South African state will be a victory for all workers, everywhere. It will be a defeat for apartheid's British and American bankers; a defeat for the multinationals and banks who prop up the apartheid system and make fat profits on the backs of the black working class. Their defeat is our victory.

We must mobilise solidarity just as if it was British miners going out on strike again.

Trade unionists must follow the example of the Southampton dockers and boycott South Africa.

Trade unions, Labour Parties, YS branches, black sections must organise collections for the South African NUM — in the labour movement and on the streets. Collect outside railway stations, in shopping centres, factory gates. Picket firms — like Barclays Bank — who make their profits by exploiting South African workers. Give out leaflets explaining the issues and explaining what is at stake.

Victory to the South African miners!

Send money to: NUM of
South Africa, PO Box 10928,
Johannesburg 2000. Tel:
011 294561.



FIGHT APARTHEID TERROR

INSIDE S Africa p5 Fowler Reviews p6-7 Miners p2-3 Palestine p8-9

Putting down markers

The last year in Parliament has seen the whole force of the state thrown against the miners and it has seen the disastrous unpreparedness of the leadership of the Labour Party and TUC to seriously fight against it.

I do think the role a number of MPs played — particularly in the Campaign Group — was excellent and showed the way Parliament can be used to support an industrial struggle. Since then the Campaign Group has kept this up by supporting the Amnesty Bill which Tony Benn drafted and which has been introduced into Parliament and arranging a series of visits to sacked and imprisoned miners and supporting all calls for their reinstatement.

We're also faced with the problem of the Notts breakaway Spencer union. I think it is important that everyone refers to it as the bosses' union and doesn't give it the credibility of being a normal mineworkers' union.

We're insisting that there be no recognition, either tacit or formal, of the Notts breakaway and that they be refused affiliation to the Labour Party and TUC.

Everything the NUM have been forecasting for the last four years has been proved completely correct. They rightly predicted the number of pits that would close; the initial loss of

Jeremy Corbyn MP reviews the parliamentary session and the work of the 'Campaign Group' of left-wing MPs

jobs; the cost of the strike.

Two weeks ago we went through the disgusting spectacle of the Tories announcing on one day that they were freezing or lowering apprentice rates in Wages Council industries which are already disgracefully low and then three days later telling us that the 'top people's' pay review would be accepted in its entirety.

I don't believe we should seek power through divisions within the Tory Party, but when the opportunity arises to embarrass them, then the Labour Party ought to be able to mount its complete vote in Parliament. Yet a very large number of Labour MPs were absent.

It's the first time since I was elected to Parliament that a lot of local people have asked me what went on in Parliament and making absolutely certain that I was there to vote! It's to the shame of the Labour Party that we didn't manage a full vote. The issue was discussed at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party and letters of criticism have gone to those who

failed to attend but whether anything more will happen, I don't know. The National Executive Committee and Constituency Labour Parties should take issue with these MPs.

What we in the Campaign Group have been trying to do through the Bills that we have introduced is to put down marker posts for the future. We've supported Harry Cohen's Bill to make acts of racial harassment a criminal offence; we've introduced the miners' amnesty Bill and Tony Benn has also drafted a Bill on common ownership of the land. So we're putting down clear lines for the future.

On particular issues, like the government's changing of immigration rules to exclude Tamils from this country — we've demanded that the Labour Party and labour movement take these issues up — and turn the debate onto the inhumanity of the immigration laws rather than the alleged case for strict immigration controls.

I've also been involved on a number of international issues and was able to expose the nauseous hypocrisy of the government's arms sales to Chile. The leaked document and the campaign against arms exports to Chile have led to the decision not to export an armoured vehicle to that country.

We've also been heavily involved in support for the

Sandinistas and in opposing US and indeed British policy in that region.

The Parliamentary recess is far too long. The government can get away with an awful lot during that time. For example, shortly after the recess began, the government tried to censor the BBC.

What I'm looking for at Labour Party conference is the start of the road to the next election and the start of developing party policies for the next election. I hope there will be serious discussion about two main areas of policy: international — including NATO membership and the practicalities of carrying out unilateral nuclear disarmament and secondly, economic policy.

Strategy

If we don't put forward an economic strategy that seriously challenges the control of the economy by the City of London then the next Labour government will be weak in exactly the same way that the last one was.

We must resist all calls for a wages policy as part of the price for controlling inflation and electing a Labour government. The job of a Labour government is to redistribute wealth and power in favour of the poorest people in the country.



was three times its current size.

The job of Young Socialists now is to shake up the LPYS, democratise its structures, change its politics and make it accessible to radical working class youth so it becomes a healthy youth movement, not a tiny sect with young members.

Debating in the rain

DESPITE a substantial increase in the number of Socialist Organiser and Class Fighter supporters, overall attendance at this year's Labour Party Young Socialists summer camp was well down on previous years. Supporters of the majority tendency, the Militant, seem to have been demoralised by their passivity during the miners' strike.

This year's camp was marred by three things. The food, about which the less said the better: the incessant rain; and the Militant's habit of relating to other political tendencies in the YS by sub-political denunciation.

Socialist Organiser supporters, who were the major opposition, bore the brunt of this.

But we did do something about the food. On the Sunday Cardiff SO supporters came over to cook kebabs for the camp.

By Dave Brennan

We dominated many of the debates and workshops, taking on Militant not just about single issues, but over what socialism will look like, and how it can be achieved.

Unfortunately Militant's standard response to this was to lie about our positions. They claimed for example that we argue "revolutionaries should not use parliament", or that we support the Afghan rebels against the Russian occupation because "like the Liverpool Black Caucus, they're all pimps and gangsters".

Well, away from the main political debates of the week, Socialist Action supporters provided some light entertainment.

On arrival, they pitched their tents in two separate camps — one for the "Scargillites" and one for the "Bennites". They then

proceeded to denounce each other for being in the wrong camp.

Complicating the situation, the four comrades from the Labour Coordinating Committee decided to set up shop between the warring factions. Presumably becoming the "Scargill-Benn axis" Socialist Action is so fond of.

Summing up on the week, Labour Party youth officer Andy Bevan (a Militant supporter himself) declared that the 'tone' of the camp had been wrong.

Andy Bevan was completely right. The YS needs to be an open organisation, whose membership are encouraged to think about the world, and develop their own politics. At the moment the YS is politically moribund with a shrinking, demoralised membership.

It needn't be like that. In the early '60s, YS membership

Political argument or clan loyalty?

In the middle of Thursday night-Friday morning a gang of comrades from Merseyside, egged on by more experienced comrades from the West Midlands and Wales, set upon the tent of two young non-Militant women.

Pretending to be the security patrol, and waving heavy sticks, the lads entered the tent and demanded to know if our comrades condemned violence in the labour movement!

For Reb and Roxanne it was a toss-up whether they would be raped or beaten up.

The tent was slashed and poles broken. The tent was ruined.

Class Fighter comrades were able to take the sticks away from the gang, and fortunately enough people were woken up to ensure that no one was hurt.

The following morning Andy Bevan — Labour Party youth organiser and a Militant supporter — came down to the Class Fighter caucus. We demanded that the comrades responsible were sent home, that the tent was paid for and that the camp be a neutral zone.

The LPYS national committee called a meeting to discuss the incident. The way the incident with the Black Caucus was handled paved

By Jane Ashworth

the camp was entirely wrong. He said that political debate — "as sharp as you like" — is fine, but that everybody must remember that Socialist Organiser is another socialist tendency, and not the YS's enemy. The meeting then passed a motion condemning the attack.

It was also said that the guilty comrades' YS branches would be asked to ensure that they would not hold an officer's position.

The comrades responsible were sent home.

However, there was more to it than that.

Many more experienced and older Militant people in the LPYS treat the minority in the YS like muck. We are lied about or ignored and never asked to explain our politics. And often, when raw youth behave in a foolish way they are applauded by more experienced comrades.

Take for example the Class Fighter meeting the day before the Black Caucus. The same youths who were "lied" about in the labour movement.

fire, and generally tried to wreck the meeting.

But the more experienced Militant people there refused to quieten them; in fact they held them up as a good example of raw working-class school students!

During the Tuesday of summer camp, Liverpool comrades were called to an emergency meeting to hear the council's side of the story about the Black Caucus's attack on a public meeting called by Liverpool City Council. The YS members were told that the Black Caucus had stolen an address book and therefore everyone was under physical threat. How should they respond? They were told that supporters of the Black Caucus were at camp, and everyone should "remember that" when Socialist Organiser supporters spoke.

Of course Socialist Organiser supporters didn't yet know details of the Liverpool meeting, and so we reserved our comment, while saying quite clearly that whoever was to blame, we condemned violence in the labour movement.

The way the incident with the Black Caucus was handled paved

Keep No

By John Bloxam

Notts and South Derbyshire will be balloted in September about breaking away from the NUM.

This will be the climax of a long campaign by Notts scab leaders Roy Lynk and David Prendergast, hand in hand with the Coal Board. NCB boss Ian MacGregor has told the Sunday Telegraph that he hopes that a breakaway will cripple the NUM, making national action impossible. Company unionism; more divisive bonus schemes; victimisation of militants; mass pit closures; privatisation — that's the NCB's programme.

The result of the ballot won't stop Lynk, but it will determine whether he takes a feeble rump organisation or something much bigger. A lot depends on how pro-NUM miners organise in Notts over the next few weeks.

A lot of activity is already underway: the special issue of the Miner; rallies in the pit cillages; leaflets and stickers; model resolutions.

The NUM, the Notts Miners Forum and the Women Against Pit Closures groups will lead the campaign. But the rest of the labour movement needs to be roused, too.

Single

1) Every single Notts miner must hear the NUM's arguments. A copy of the Miner and other literature should go to every house in the pit villages; every doorstep should be canvassed, and more than once.

In 1936, the South Wales area had three officials working full-

time to break the company union in just one pit. We'll need hundreds and thousands of activists now.

NUM branches in neighbouring Yorkshire and Derbyshire can be approached to provide teams to help. Nearly 700 miners nationally have been sacked; they have both the time and the experience to make a decisive contribution.

Sacked

Why can't the sacked miners be mobilised over the coming weeks for the campaign in the Notts coalfield?

2) With Roy Lynk, Don Cannon and others presurising the Labour Party leadership for recognition, the local Labour Parties have a particular role to play. Many would be willing to be organised in teams to explain the issues in the pit villages or wherever the NUM judged it to be useful.

Networks

3) The solidarity networks established during the strike can be revived — with NUM speakers to explain the issues, copies of the Miner distributed and fund-raising stepped up again. In Notts, the miners' forum would be the best convenor for a meeting for trade union and labour movement organisations to discuss assistance for the campaign.

4) Bombard Labour Party headquarters with emergency resolutions on not recognising the breakaway. Put amendments to Labour Party conference resolutions on this issue.

Orgreave

So far 106 miners charged with riot or unlawful assembly after the Orgreave mass pickets last June have been acquitted or have had their charges dropped at Sheffield Crown Court. This shows that the police were arresting and charging people on the picket line without any real evidence.

"We were over the moon. Everyone was very pleased that justice was done. It showed the police fabricated everything. They were trumped up charges. I think it went on for so long that someone high up said 'Enough is enough'."

The court system has been proved adequate this time, but as for the law, when they can prosecute on their trumped up charges it says a lot about the police.

The courts that I have seen such as at Rotherham, have been very fair, but there has been some supermarket justice.

As regards those locked up, I have a lot of sympathy for them. There but for the grace of God go I.

If Bernard Jackson got off on this charge when others

had been locked up on others, then it shows there's something wrong with British justice. I think it's been an embarrassment for them. I think they should be compensated for what has happened — the worry and all that. The union should get their costs back from the police."

Barry Davis, Wath Main NUM

We felt a bit cheated in that they could say what they wanted but we had no chance of response. It was apparent that they were lying through their back teeth — they had three people left but abandoned the case.

When they abandoned the trial we felt relief and thanked the defence and jury. As regards the judiciary they can say what they want. The trial should never have taken place but they intended to take the union to the cleaners. Odds on they'll not waste money on the rest of the cases of riot. We've been called liars for now.

They've been forging signatures. And only one arrested me but at court there were two claimed they had. If it hadn't been for the press and others who took photographs of the events we would have been down.

Bernard Jackson, president Wath Main NUM

Notts national!

Campaign

Paul Whetton (Bevercot-
es NUM) comments in
his weekly column

The campaign against the break-away union is building up quite well. We understand that Lynk is in serious trouble. We haven't been in a position to do very much over the past fortnight, but as the holiday period draws to a close the campaign will build up.

There is no way Lynk will get the degree of support he first counted on getting.

We are putting out issues of the 'Notts Miner', of the national 'Miner', leaflets. The women's groups are actively involved.

There will be a series of meetings in the local communities with national speakers, and while each branch is making its own decision, we have the full cooperation of the national union.

We have no intention of letting MacGregor butcher our industry, and I don't think he's aware of the implications of what he is saying. A substantial reduction of that size will affect not just the pits but also the private sector that provides the pits with equipment.

There may be an effort to phase him out. But when MacGregor has gone there won't necessarily be any alteration to the objective behind its thinking, which is the privatisation of the coal mining industry. It will be resisted most strongly and most fiercely by the NUM.

We got quite considerable

international assistance during our strike and we had ethnic minority groups all over the country recognising the importance of our struggle. So I don't doubt that any action taken by South African miners now will receive the full backing of British mineworkers.

At Labour Party conference we should be backing to the hilt all those resolutions calling for an amnesty and reinstatement for sacked and jailed miners. We must put pressure on Kinnock and Willis.

They may want to hedge their bets but the Labour Party rank and file must demonstrate that it won't stand for people involved in industrial disputes being thrown on the scrapheap by employers and thrown into jail. I would urge all Labour Party members to mandate their delegates to support those resolutions.

Under no circumstances must Kinnock and Willis force onto us another Social Con trick. It led to the downfall of the last Labour government and we won't stand for that sort of thing.

There's got to be more consultation — not with TUC chiefs but with the rank and file of the TUC and the Labour Party.

I would rather see an open commitment by the Labour Party leadership to more socialist policies. If they attempt to foist another Con trick onto us I'm sure it will get kicked into the wastepaper basket where it belongs.



Letter from a Kent miner

May I as a Kent coal miner who has worked at Snowdown Colliery for the past 48 years make this impassioned plea to encourage you to stay in the NUM.

I was born in Notts and my own father was driven out of his own Notts coalfield into the Kent coalfield because he would not join the infamous Spencer Union.

Many more Notts miners were driven from their homes and jobs because they would not join this break-away union, going to the far corners of the British coalfield in search of jobs. Uprooting their homes and their families.

Today, jobs even in the mining industry are rare, there is nowhere to run to. The Kent coalfield has been cut to the bone. The rest of the British coalfield is also threatened with drastic cuts.

I make this appeal to you Notts miners not to make the same mistakes as your forefathers did.

We Kent miners look to you to make history rather than repeat it.

By doing so you will have redressed the balance somewhat. To fragment our union would be suicidal to you Notts miners.

Spencerism can only bring isolation, as it certainly will to the present generation.

Let us therefore remember the old maxim of United We Stand, Divided We Fall.

Yours fraternally,
Richard W. Richardson



Above: lobby of NUM special conference by Notts strikers. Top right: march through Mansfield last May. Photos: John Harris.

Police 'ghost' evidence

CID officers "ghosted" the evidence of witnesses in a major trial, it was discovered recently. The revelation came from Nottinghamshire police officers during the trial of 18 men for alleged riot.

The men, from Coventry, Stoke-on-Trent, Durham and London, were among 60 arrested on May 14 last year in Mansfield, Notts after a massive rally in the town during the coal strike.

The prosecution claims hundreds of demonstrators chanted and threw missiles instead of boarding their coaches to go home; the defence says marchers were regimented and cordoned off, obstructed in some cases from getting on their own coaches, and at one stage physically attacked by officers on horseback and others running with truncheons.

As well as argument about what happened on the day, there have been rows over the way that evidence has been presented to the court.

Several uniformed police witnesses have testified to something that they agree is "unusual": instead of writing their own statements, they were interviewed by Mansfield detectives who wrote their statements for them but concealed this fact.

"Had they lost the use of their hands?" asked defence barrister Peter Hall to the uniformed sergeant who first mentioned the practice. "That is the way the officer leading the investigation decided to do it," replied Sgt.

John Batchelor looks at the miners' 'riot' trial in Mansfield, Notts.

Robert Bean.

That officer in charge was identified by other witnesses as Detective Chief Inspector David Scott of Mansfield CID, who will give evidence later in the ten-week trial.

The interference by the CID in this way is all the more controversial because the defence complain of inconsistencies between three things — police notes taken on the day of May 14, the formal statements they made afterwards and the evidence they gave in the courtroom.

On the day, the defendants were arrested on relatively minor charges like obstruction. The decision to charge with riot was taken the day after the rally by a key group of senior officers in Notts, including its chief constable, Mr Charles McLachlan.

It was Mr McLachlan himself who held a national press conference on May 15 calling for stiff prison sentences and "taking the gloves off in the cold war".

Statements taken after the decision to go for riot contain claims of various things happening — all contested by the defence — which are not to be found in police notebooks written on the day or in statements taken before the decision from above to charge with riot.

There are also some inexplicably long delays between

May 14 and the date when some statements were written — in some cases as much as a month.

The court heard that Sergeant Bean, an officer of 14 years' experience, was not allowed to make his own statement but instead was interviewed four days later on May 18 by a Det. Constable Sanderson. This came out during defence cross-examination of Sgt Bean's testimony that a local resident had walked through the middle of the alleged disturbance, been hit on the head by a rock and carried on unperturbed without looking for cover.

"It just defies believing" said defence barrister Richard Newbury; the officer could not explain the omission of the incident from both notebook and statement. Bean could not explain how the throwing of "several" missiles such as beer cans, bricks and bottles in his notebook had by the time of his statement become other items such as "lumps of concrete" as well, all of which "rained down on us for half a minute".

"These lumps were 8" by 8" by 2" he said. "You put your mind to some evidence that might support a charge of riot, didn't you?" asked defence barrister Kevin McDonald. "No sir", replied Bean.

Mansfield Police Station happens to be the county headquarters of the Nottinghamshire police force's Special Branch, which has its own protected office block within the station's CID accommodation.

Three weeks ago the head of the county force's traffic division told the court he didn't know whether the Special Branch had been involved on the day or not.

But there had been plain clothes CID officers at the rally car park acting as "spotters", gathering intelligence about the dispute, he said. There were also debriefing forms for uniformed inspectors or sergeants to fill in about the day's events, including a space for "titbits and rumours" from the general public.

The Big Brother style forms were made available to the court after a day of legal arguments before the jury — with a "keep mum" condition slapped on their court use. Trial judge Robert Ellis ordered that the forms should not be disclosed to any "third party" — meaning the public.

"I do not want these forms disclosed to the national press," he told the court.

He agreed with prosecutor John Milmo that police officers had a right to send confidential reports to their superiors without looking over their shoulders to possible publication. The ruling means that the public will be prevented from discovering how much the police force overstepped its proper functions in the coal dispute — for example by exchanges of libellous tittle-tattle against people unable to reply, or by deploying resources towards matters not to do with crime.

Does stress make us ill?

THIS week I consider whether there is a link between Reagan's cancer of the colon and the stresses of being top terrorist.

The mechanistic approach of Western medicine tends to ignore or deny that mental state can influence physical health. Such ideas have been the preserve of practitioners of "holistic" medicine who regard the human as a being with inter-linked physical and "spiritual" aspects.

Clearly, if the Western approach is inadequate, then so is the alternative Eastern approach, relying as it does on superstition rather than understanding, with little direct evidence to support its opinions.

But now such evidence is being produced...and from Western-style medical research into the new field of psychoimmunology. This is the study of the effect of the emotions on the immune system.

American researchers have been looking at the function of the immune system in people under mental stress, namely students facing exams.

One study concerned levels of a type of antibody thought to protect against chest infections. The levels fell at exam times, most significantly when students themselves felt they were under most stress. Greatest falls seemed to occur amongst those with fewest friends.

Another researcher studied the activity of certain white blood cells — in particular the "natural killer" cells which destroy invading germs and cancer cells. These cells were least active during final exams, most noticeably among students describing themselves as lonely.

An interesting observation for alternative medicine enthusiasts was that regularly practising relaxation seemed to improve the function of white blood cells. The more relaxed, the better the blood cells.

Psychoimmunologists therefore believe that disturbances in your life can reduce your immune function, thus increasing risk of disease and even cancer.

This was demonstrated in animals five years ago by someone who put mice on a gramophone turn-table and spun them for ten minutes in the hour for six days (how do they think of these things?). This is probably quite stressful for mice. It was found that implanted cancers grew better in the spun mice than in unspun "control" mice.



Science

By Les Hearn

The mechanism by which such an effect might be achieved is not understood. It seems that immune surveillance of the body by white blood cells is reduced by stress, allowing rogue cells which would normally be eliminated to grow into cancers.

This theory seems to hark back to the ideas of Wilhelm Reich*, who thought that repression of people's natural instincts caused them to develop a "psychic armour" as a defence against human contact and emotional release. He thought this armour was detectable as a muscular tension. Like many alternative medicines, his theories spoke of a blockage in the flow of energy through the body.

Blocking it had various harmful effects, including making it more likely that cancer would be developed. Reich also thought people with such blockages were more prone to follow authoritarian ideologies such as fascism or Stalinism.

So what is the connection between Reagan's bum and stress? Probably none! I find it difficult to believe that Reagan's cancer of the colon is caused by stress. We are the ones who are being put under stress by Reagan.

His disease was probably caused by all those jellybeans he keeps eating.

*Wilhelm Reich was a psychoanalyst and communist who tried to combine the two. He was also more than a little mad and the opposition he encountered from all quarters seems to have made his theories get stranger and stranger. I am aware that I have probably bowdlerised his ideas beyond belief and can only appeal for any aggrieved Reichians to have a go at setting the record straight.

On the spot

The new witch-hunt of Militant supporters has spread to Sheffield. On July 17 the Attercliffe Constituency voted to expel members of the Militant tendency for one year to see if that makes them mend their ways.

What a "member" is was not defined, but five people present were named. The vote was won after three counts and much doubt about whether there was an actual majority.

One of the five people named, Geoff Bright, is a member of the NUR, chair of his branch and a vice-president of the District Council.

At the NUR AGM, general secretary Jimmy Knapp secured the defeat of a resolution that would have committed the NUR to campaigning against witch-hunts in the Labour Party on the basis that there was no witch-hunt in the Labour Party, just a few local problems. Therefore, he said, there was nothing to campaign against.

Jimmy Knapp is now going to be put on the spot, since Geoff Bright is one of the 12 elected NUR delegates for this year's Labour Party conference.

Berries

The Tories assure us that they're generously helping the famine victims in Sudan and Ethiopia.

True, all the aid sent is being

diverted from other parts of the aid budget, which in total is being cut — but the British government says it is doing something to help the continent despoiled for nearly 400 years by British slave traders and colonial rulers.

What's the scope of it? Famine victims in Sudan's westernmost province of Darfur have been getting four times as much sustenance from desert berries and dates as they have from American and Common Market grain shipments, according to an investigation by one of the leading voluntary aid agencies.

City profits

Still worried that aid to Africa might be sapping Britain's wealth? The City banks, which extract big debt charges from many Third World countries, should put your mind at rest.

Last year the City made £6.1 billion net profit from abroad. Britain's total aid to the Third World runs at about £1.5 to £2 billion a year.

New Jews

Thousands of Ethiopian Jews escaped the famine when they were airlifted to Israel.

But they've found that the Zionist promised land has its problems, too.

Last week Ethiopian Jews at an Israeli "absorption centre" had to fight police with sticks and stones to resist demands that they be "converted" as Jews according to Orthodox rites.

The Orthodox rabbis have a



monopoly in Israel and Jews observing other rites — like the Ethiopians, or for that matter the Reform and Conservative synagogues which organise most of the world's religious Jews — are not recognised.

Racism against black Jews by white Jews also plays a part. In the past Indian Jews have had to make protests similar to the Ethiopians'.

Tax-dodge

Or maybe the rich are being taxed so heavily as to destroy their taste for enterprise?

A US Congressman has just reported that more than 3000 millionaires in the US had their financial trickery so well worked out that they paid virtually no Federal income tax last year.

And in Britain? Customs and Excise has a rule that it's not worth investigating possible VAT fiddles by business people unless the amount involved is over £100,000.

Enterprise

British capitalism, according to the Financial Times on July 29, still leads in one field of enterprise.

"The British Treasury has

received delegations from more than 20 countries — including Socialist France and Communist China — asking how to privatise state companies."

Crusade

China's bureaucrats, diligently taking lessons from the Tories on how to privatise, have moved a long way from the days of the Cultural Revolution.

And Cuba's leaders have moved a lot further from the days when Che Guevara proclaimed: "either a socialist revolution or a make-believe revolution". (Though indeed they had a lot further to fall).

Fidel Castro is now launching a "People's Crusade" to persuade Latin America's capitalist governments to stop debt payments. He told journalists, in maybe semi-conscious mockery of Guevara's calls for "two, three, many Vietnams" that such a stop on payments would be better than "two, three, or four revolutions".

Sceptical Latin American capitalists point out that Cuba itself keeps on the best of terms with its Western Creditors — and with the USSR, which subsidises Cuba by about \$8 million a day.

Tranent steps up witch-hunt fight

Members of Tranent Labour Party branch (near Edinburgh) are stepping up their fight against the decision of East Lothian Constituency Labour Party to expel branch chair George Thomson and suspend the branch for three months.

George Thomson was adopted by the branch as a prospective Regional Councillor in January of this year, but the right-wing CLP — backed by the Labour Party Scottish Executive — refused to endorse the branch's

decision.

As punishment for campaigning against the CLP's dictatorial behaviour, George Thomson was expelled in June and the branch suspended until September. But a majority of the branch has consistently refused to recognise either the expulsion or the suspension.

The branch has continued to meet over the summer, with George Thomson continuing as chair and has maintained a high level of activity — including

leafleting the whole of Tranent to explain the situation and appeal for support.

Now the campaign is being taken outside of Tranent, through mailing branches and leafleting and getting speakers into branches.

The Tranent Labour Party appeal for support "urges all socialists to form a united left front to fight for socialist policies, to fight for Party democracy and to stand firm against witch-hunts and victimisation

within the movement...Let's stop running away from the right wing, turn the tide, stand and fight."

They have received sympathetic coverage in the local press and even in Tribune, despite its recent entry into the camp of the witch-hunters.

But Militant, formerly supported by a number of members of the branch, has maintained its original position of opposition to fighting the expulsion and suspension.

The CLP right wing, led by local Labour Party full-timer Noel Foy (a member of the Labour Party Scottish Executive) is clearly not yet finished with its witch-hunting.

New members recruited to the Party by the Tranent branch have not been endorsed by the CLP. And the CLP is planning to set up a new branch in Tranent, with its first meeting scheduled for September 3.

By blocking new recruits on the one hand, and by mobilising the local passive paper membership (plus remaining Militant supporters!) on the other hand, Foy hopes to provide their puppet branch with an appearance of legitimacy.

Members of Labour Party branches and branches of affiliated unions should join the fight back against the witch-hunt in East Lothian by moving resolutions demanding reinstatement of George Thomson and his acceptance onto the Regional panel, and condemning the right wing's attempts to set up a puppet branch to replace the existing one.

Resolutions should be sent to East Lothian CLP, c/o the secretary, Noel Foy, High Street, Tranent, East Lothian; and to Labour Party Scottish Council Executive, c/o Keir Hardie House, 1 Lynedoch Place, Glasgow. Send copies also to Tranent Labour Party branch, c/o the secretary, T. Kerr, 92 John Crescent, Tranent, East Lothian.

Labour Party conference resolutions

By Colin Foster

Last year the miners' strike dominated Labour Party conference. It should loom large this year, too.

30 motions — the second biggest block in the agenda — call for an amnesty or review for sacked and/or jailed miners.

Arthur Scargill was outvoted on the NUM executive, and the NUM motion, no. 122, calls only for a "review of all cases of miners jailed". A number of other motions, however, for example no. 136 from Basingstoke, call for "dropping of all outstanding charges and release of all imprisoned miners".

Amendments to these motions should ensure that the issue of Roy Lynk's breakaway 'union' is debated.

Block

The biggest block of motions is on welfare cuts. Most of the 47 motions call for a campaign against the Fowler Reviews; some demand that the next Labour government restore all Tory cuts.

South Africa should be a major item at conference, though there are only six motions. The best of a weak lot is no. 331, apparently Militant-sponsored, from Paisley North CLP.

28 bodies have submitted motions on peace, 12 of them supporting versions of a text sponsored by the Labour Coordinating Committee which demands, rather vaguely, more campaigning. Five demand withdrawal from NATO. One (Weston-super-Mare CLP, no. 256) suggests a comprehensive alternative mili-

tary policy based on territorial defence and democratised armed forces. None dares to question Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament.

That section is typical of the general tone of the resolution book. On the whole the right wing is not trying directly to overturn policies, but equally the left is not pushing forward.

Two exceptions: there are nine motions on lesbian and gay rights, which should ensure a debate this year, for the first time ever. Twelve motions support black sections (one opposes them; another suggests also that Labour women's sections should be banned!)

The EETPU, the National Union of Labour Clubs, and three CLPs call for individual ballots in parliamentary sections. Five CLPs call for CLPs to get a bigger share of the vote at Labour Party conference (at present they have less than 10% and the unions have about 90%).

Despite the current wave of local purges, only one body — Ogmour CLP — has felt bold enough to submit a motion supporting witch-hunts.

There are 31 motions on economic policy (some under 'public ownership', some under 'economic and industrial policy'; the Conference Arrangement Committee's allocations are baffling). Many stress the importance of public ownership. Import controls are less in favour, but a new nationalist panacea has taken

their place: a ban on the export of capital.

Of the 16 motions under the heading 'Incomes Policy', none supports incomes policy and many explicitly oppose it. 14, including NUPE's motion, support a national minimum wage.

Housing attracts 18 motions; the NHS, 14, including some advocating more democratic control of the health service.

There are 13 motions on the famine currently killing tens of thousands in Africa. Most, unfortunately, are very weak, not venturing to ask for anything more than Britain increasing aid to the UN target of 0.7% of national income (or, in a couple of versions, to 1%). Stockport CLPs is by far the best, "recognising that the food shortage is the legacy of colonialism, imperialism and capitalist oppression", and calling for massively increased aid and cancellation of underdeveloped countries' debts.

Police

11 motions on police powers take up the lessons of the miners' strike; most call for more elected control of the police.

By the time conference comes round, Liverpool's defiant City Council will have run out of cash and been forced into head-on confrontation with the government. Liverpool Broadgreen CLP's motion, no. 271, "to support industrial action in defence of councillors", is therefore very important. It needs amendments to tie into Liverpool's immediate crisis.

Get ORGANISED!

Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance — groups are established in most large towns. We ask £5 a month minimum (£1 unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/I want more information.

Name

Address

.....

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



A workers' party based on the unions

The new, independent non-racial trade unions pose huge problems for South African capitalists, and for their state.

Under normal conditions, individual capitalists and capitalist governments can count upon being able to diffuse workers' struggles by relying on a trade union bureaucracy heavily shaped by its dealings in the corridors of power and channels of negotiation, and to a large extent cut off from the needs and mood of the rank and file.

No such bureaucracy exists in the new unions. They have concentrated on building up strong rank-and-file organisation, shop stewards structures and direct worker involvement. Strict accountability of leaders — who are to obtain mandates from their members for all that they do — has helped prevent the leaders from being coopted by industrial conciliation bureaucracy.

Even where unions have

participated in industrial councils [negotiation boards with management] it has been on the basis of strict rank-and-file control over representatives, and freedom to pursue their interests at a local level.

Many unions have kept their distance from the main political opposition group, the pro-ANC United Democratic Front. Despite overtones of narrow trade unionism, such distance is good.

The UDF deserves our full support against apartheid. But it is a typical popular-front national liberation movement, with a programme for a capitalist South Africa, and Stalinist controlled.

The working class needs its own political voice, independent from the ANC or the UDF. Such a voice — a new, working class party — could be built on the independent unions, the NUM, FOSATU and the Council of Unions of South Africa.

Unions lead the struggle

By 62,216 votes to 1,869, the South African NUM last week voted to risk death by going on strike to win a 22% pay increase. Following further mass meetings, its 150,000 members will begin action on August 25. Many non-unionised of South Africa's 490,000 miners are likely to join the action.

The NUM planned its strategy at a conference on Saturday August 3. They have rejected management's desperate offer of 14.1% to 19.6%, insisting that 22% is the minimum they will accept.

And they are calling for protest action against the State of Emergency declared two weeks ago by the Botha regime — a boycott of white businesses in mining areas. Protests are also being urged against government attempts to deport foreign black workers under the State of Emergency.

The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) with over 100,000 members, is also planning action if the State of Emergency is not lifted.

The NUM's first legal strike was last September in Anglo-American Corporation mines. After 24 hours, 250 miners had been injured in the police repression. Ten were killed over the next week, and hundreds injured in illegal follow-up strikes.

In March, the NUM declared an official dispute over a 10% pay claim. A strike followed disciplinary sackings. 17,000

By Clive Bradley

strikers were sacked by Anglo-American.

Although negotiations resumed, Anglo-American continued to take a hard line, closing down the Liberal 'Rand Daily Mail' newspaper.

The NUM knows full well what it is up against. They are fighting now because they have no option. Strikes are always dangerous in South Africa. To be prepared to take action, the workers must know that their organisation can maintain it.

The public confidence of the South African Chamber of Mines that the strike now can be averted is therefore misplaced. In fact, they know it: they have offered to re-open talks with the NUM, which broke down in June. But unless they are prepared to concede victory to the workers — which seems improbable — the strike will go ahead.

Inevitably the NUM is also up against the State of Emergency. Since its declaration on July 20, 1430 people have been detained — according to police figures. The real number is certainly higher. Minister of Law and

Order Louis Le Grange has begun to sign certificates calling for extensions of detention beyond the 14 days allowed under the emergency regulations.

Rioting has continued against police repression. About 500 people have been killed since the explosion of 'unrest' a year ago. Many have died at the hands of the police — including in police custody. The opposition has focused its anger both on the security forces and on black collaborators.

Revolt

At the forefront of the revolt in the townships are the youth, organised particularly through the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), founded in 1979, and affiliated to the United Democratic Front. COSAS has played a major role in the uprisings since last year — collaborating with the unions in organising the mass stay-away — two-day general strike, in effect — in the Transvaal last November.

Ever since the Soweto uprising in 1976, school students have been prominent in organis-

ing resistance and voicing the demands of the township communities — for the police out of the townships, abolition of the racist age-limit, abolition of corporal punishment, an end to sexual harassment of young women in school. Their struggles are consciously viewed in the context of the trade union issues.

16 leaders of the UDF are now facing a show trial for 'subversive' activities. Last week they lost one of their lawyers. Mrs Victoria Mxenge was shot dead by four gunmen outside her home last Thursday. The assassins have not been identified.

The policy of the state has been to arrest UDF leaders for association with the illegal African National Congress, rather than ban the UDF itself, although they allege that the UDF is an ANC front. But they have failed to crush the UDF — which now has 600 affiliations from political and community organisations.

On the other hand, liberal leaders like Bishop Desmond Tutu have already indicated that they become more willing to abandon the struggle, the more revolutionary its character becomes.

The miners' strike will focus all opposition to apartheid. To overtly take up political demands would result in the banning of the strike, exposing it to further repression.

Nevertheless, the threat of strike action against deportation of any of the 200,000 foreign workers in the mines is effectively a challenge to the State of Emergency. It shows tremendous heroism. Undoubtedly, the regime would like to divide workers along national lines, and part of the motivation for deportation threats is to encourage such divisions.

The NUM's unity in the face of such divide-and-rule tactics is a model of working class solidarity.

British and Irish workers boycott S African trade

For over a year, eleven workers at Dunnes stores in O'Connell Street, Dublin, have been on strike in protest at apartheid.

In July 1984 Mary Manning was suspended for implementing the policy of her union, the Irish Distributive and Allied Trade Union, for a boycott of South African goods. After refusing to handle South African grapefruit, she was suspended indefinitely. Ten full-time work-mates [and, initially, two casuals] walked out in her support.

Dunnes management have drafted in part-time scab labour to beat the strike and to beat the union. But the strikers have fought on.

The strike has focused attention in Ireland on apartheid and has pointed the way forward to building solidarity with South African workers. It has, rightly, become an international cause celebre, too.

The strikers and the company chair, were invited to go to Soweto last month to see apartheid for themselves. Ben Dunne Jr. turned down the offer; but the strikers agreed to accept the invitation from Desmond Tutu. In the event they were held for eight hours under armed guard in Johannesburg and then flown back.

One of the strikers, Theresa Mooney, told The Guardian [July 23] of her feelings and summed up the enormous value of the experience.

"We said from the beginning we didn't come out as martyrs for South African blacks. We were just following union directives. We didn't know much. But now we know more. And when, if, we go back, we won't take the same shit as before. This hasn't just taught us about South Africa, it's taught us a lot about how the system operates here."

Dockers in Southampton have refused to handle equipment intended for arms production

bound for South Africa.

Members of the TGWU learned last Tuesday, July 30, of the secret contents of containers on their way to Durban. The equipment — a milling machine — is being supplied by Borex Machine Tool Co. Ltd. to the Atlas Aircraft Corporation, who provide production and servicing for all South African military planes. It is thought that it would be used for re-sparring the airframes of Mirage aircraft.

The docks shop stewards immediately refused to handle the machine, in accordance with union policy of support for UN mandatory embargo of arms to South Africa.

Other workers must follow the example of Southampton dockers.

At the British Library, London, a small group of CPUSA members working on the "Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue" project are refusing to process records from South African libraries.

This action began before the South African authorities declared the 'state of emergency', but recent events have given added stimulus to the blacking. A letter of support has been received from SACTU [South African Congress of Trade Unions], stating "Actions such as yours not only serve towards the isolation of the regime but are also a major source of inspiration to black workers in South Africa in the struggle for trade union rights."

Meanwhile, management have been reluctant to take disciplinary action, no doubt wary of the bad publicity that would ensue at the present time.

There must be many workplaces in Britain where similar action could be taken by even quite small numbers of workers.

Bankers for apartheid

Barclays Bank is the largest foreign company operating in South Africa. At the beginning of this year, the bank's total South African assets stood at around £10 billion. Its pre-tax profits for 1984 were £58 million.

Barclays lends vast amounts to South African state institutions. In 1976 it bought £6 million worth of South African government Defence Bonds, thereby directly funding the armed forces. The bonds were

sold after an international outcry, but Barclays has helped finance arms sales to apartheid.

Barclays directors are trustees of the South Africa Foundation, which distributes pro-apartheid propaganda abroad.

In 1980, Barclays published a report, 'Doing Business in South Africa', that encouraged investment in the country. It commented, 'the [political] situation is well under control and generally the labour force

is content.'

Barclays' operations in Namibia contravene United Nations rulings.

A recent Barclays video film, 'The Visionary Eagle', shown to all new staff, covers South Africa, but does not even mention apartheid. As the 'Barclays Shadow Report for 1985' comments: 'It is a classic example of how Barclays views its place in South African society, as part of the existing economic and social system.'

Squeezing a billion out of the poor

When the Tories published their Green Paper on Social Security (the Fowler Reviews), shares in private insurance companies rocketed while anti-poverty campaigns and organisations responded by condemning the Green Paper's proposals.

These different reactions sum up pretty clearly who will gain and who will lose from the government's plans for "simplifying" (i.e. cutting) social security.

The abolition of State Earnings Related Pensions (SERPS) means handing over 50% of the working population to private insurance companies. Whereas SERPS administrative costs are a mere 1½% of income into the scheme, the administrative costs of private pension schemes are 18%. This is an indication of the profits raked in by such companies from contributions into their pension schemes.

But those who will benefit most from the Fowler Reviews are to be found in the upper income tax brackets. The £1 billion to be "saved" on social security expenditure by the Fowler Reviews' proposals is to be handed out to the already

Stan Crooke looks at the implications of the Fowler Reviews and the response of the labour movement.

better off in the form of higher tax allowances and reliefs.

But for the millions at the other end of the social pyramid, the impact of the Fowler Reviews is to be thrust even deeper into poverty.

Housing Benefit is to be slashed and all unemployed will have to pay 20% of their rates. Supplementary Benefit is to be axed and replaced by different rates of "Income Support". Additional weekly payments are to be abolished and single payments (for furniture, etc), replaced by recoverable loans. Death and Maternity Grants are to be abolished, whilst Family Income Supplement is to be replaced by a more stringently assessed "Family Credit" system.

One reaction to publication of the Fowler Reviews has been to encourage "take-up" campaigns, i.e. to encourage claimants to claim for additional social security entitlements. While claimants should be urged to make full use of their limited entitlements under the present

system, it is certainly no way to fight the Fowler Reviews.

Another "bright idea", is for millionaire "socialist" dogooder Robert Maxwell to run a "claimants' bingo" in the Mirror Group of newspapers. Negotiations are apparently well advanced about this scheme, which involves Maxwell providing a free fortnight's holiday for any claimant who manages to get all his/her extra social security entitlements from the DHSS.

Nothing could be better calculated to trivialise the whole affair, create illusions about how "easy" it is to claim extra payments from the DHSS, breed cynicism about the problems faced by claimants, and undermine efforts to create a unified fight between employed and unemployed.

Nationally there are two different campaigns against the Fowler Reviews — the National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts (NCSSC) and Action for Benefits (AB).

Both of these organisations have essentially identical aims and virtually identical lists of organisations supporting them, as well as publicising each other's activities and publications. What rationale there can be, therefore, for two separate campaigns is difficult to see.

AB has put forward two specific demands since the publication of the Fowler Reviews' proposals: for the government to spell out the actual benefit levels resulting from implementation of the proposals (the Green Paper itself does not give any figures for the proposed new benefits and rates of benefit); and for no action to be taken on the proposals until they have been put to the public in the Tories' manifesto for the next General Election.

The first demand makes sense given it is easier to mobilise opposition to the Reviews once they have been translated into specific cash amounts and claimants can see how much money they stand to lose.

The most recent conference of the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA), the largest union in the civil service, committed the union to continued campaigning against the Fowler Reviews, including "maintaining and developing the industrial action aspects of the overall cuts campaign".

Whilst clearly a step in the right direction, hard work will be needed by union activists to build upon this commitment, given the current right-wing domination of the union leadership, the present divisions within the union's Left, and the gov-

ernment's success to date in cutting staffing levels in the civil service and the living standards of those still employed in it.

Strike action would be in direct breach of the Tories' anti-union laws. It needs to be extended beyond CPSA to other unions.

What, therefore, needs to be done? I would suggest:

*Formation of local groups campaigning against the proposed social security cuts, comprising delegates from claimants' bodies and other community groups, and from local Labour Party and trade union bodies; no-one to attend such local groups in a "professional" capacity.

*Fusion of NCSSC and AB into a single national campaign, with the local groups as its local affiliates, plus the organisation of regional structures to provide a network of communication between local groups at regional level.

*Submission of condemnations about the Green Paper's proposals by all organisations involved in the local groups (the closing date for such submissions is September 16), coupled with demands for publication of the figures for benefit levels if the proposals were introduced.

*Take the campaign into the Labour Party: for a campaign of



parliamentary obstruction MPs; for restoration of social security cuts by the Labour government; for genuine review of the social security system by claimants and representatives of civil service trade unions.

*Take the campaign into the unions: for unions to finance campaigning against the Fowler Reviews; for unions, collectively, to start recruiting the unemployed; for campaigning within unions now to lay groundwork for an escalation campaign of industrial action against the Reviews from early autumn onwards; and for campaigning within the CPSA in particular to turn this year's conference resolution into action.



Fowler Reviews: designed to make the rich richer.

How to

Monday September 16 is the closing date for submissions by individuals and organisations on the changes proposed by the Fowler Reviews. Many of the local and regional campaigns will be sending delegations down to London to hand over submissions and petitions.

Follow-up national activities will include a mass lobby of the Tory Party conference in Blackpool on October 11. Claimants' marches to Blackpool over the three weeks preceding this are already being planned from Newcastle and from Merseyside and Manchester.

The TUC is calling a national demonstration against the Fowler Reviews on Sunday October 27.

Local anti-Fowler groups should be set up where none exist yet. The initiative might come from a Labour Party branch, claimants group, community group or trade union branch. All such bodies should be drawn into the group, wherever the initiative originally comes from.

Local groups should not get trapped into the routine of leafleting, petitioning and public meetings, which, in some areas, social workers have sought to impose on them. The fight against the Fowler Reviews is a political struggle and demands labour movement orienta-



One in seven are now dependent on supplementary benefit.



Norman Fowler. Photo: John Harris.

Money not for need but for the 'deserving' poor

Eight million people in Britain — one in seven — now depend on supplementary benefit. Another 1.4 million are entitled to it but do not claim it. The Reviews propose that supplementary benefit be

renamed Income Support and claimants be categorised into four different 'client groups': unemployed; single parents; sick and disabled; aged over 60 years old. The unemployed will receive

the Income Support basic personal allowance (except that those under 25 will be paid at a lower rate on the grounds that they are not fully independent). The three other categories will receive the basic personal allowance plus a special premium.

Meanwhile, all extra payments will be abolished.

62% of claimants receive an AR ("additional requirements" payment for, e.g., heating, diet, laundry, etc., of some kind. In December 1982, 87,000 claimants received ARs of £7 or more per week. Some disabled claimants receive ARs of up to £30 or £40 per week. 90% of pensioners receive ARs.

ARs will be completely scrapped.

The number of SPs — one-off "single payments" for such things as bedding, furniture, removal expenses, etc. — has grown from 0.8 million in 1981 to three millions in 1984. In 1983, nearly two million SPs were made, at an average amount of £75.64. These give the supplementary benefit system some limited flexibility to respond to need. Under Fowler's scheme, need won't count.

Abolition

SPs will be replaced by loans from a new "Social Fund", administered on a discretionary basis by the local DHSS office management.

Those most in need will suffer the most: they are the most dependent on AR and SP, and will therefore suffer the largest drop in living standards as a result of their abolition.

All claimants will have to meet (at least) 20% of their rates bill out of the Income Support, instead of having it covered in full by their monthly Housing Benefit giro as at present. There will be no compensating increase in basic benefit rates. Claimants will also have to pay water rates and residual housing costs.

Present arrangements for help with claimants' mortgage

interest payments will be scrapped over a period of time. As the Green Paper puts it, the Tories are wanting an arrangement "whereby less of the burden — particularly for people on benefit for a short time — falls immediately on the social security system.

Capital limit

There will be a new Capital Limit (i.e. the amount of savings a claimant can possess before s/he is denied benefits) of £6,000. Now it is £3,000. But weekly benefits will be cut by 40p for every £100 of savings between £3,000 and £6,000.

The earnings disregard (i.e. the amount a claimant can earn each week before it is deducted from his/her benefits) is also to be increased from £4 to £5, with certain categories of claimants being entitled to an earnings disregard of £15.

A racist new length-of-

residence list will be introduced: "the claimant will need to have been present in the country for a set period to qualify for Income Support.

The Social Fund will be the only element of flexibility in response to need — to cope with "the exceptional circumstances and emergencies faced by a minority (!) of claimants." It will be administered by the local DHSS office. Payments out of the fund will be on a discretionary basis, and most payments will be in the form of recoverable loans. The Social Fund will have a fixed, cash-limited annual budget.

'Discretion'

The idea of any entitlement to extra money is to be scrapped, almost entirely, in favour of "discretion".

In practice, this will mean more means-testing, and a lower take-up rate. (Only 50% of those

entitled to means-tested Family Income Supplement, for example, actually receive it. About £1 billion of benefits goes unclaimed each year).

There will be no appeal beyond the local office where the original decision was taken. One of the objections contained in the Green Paper to the current method of making single payments is that the rate of appeal is too high. (In fact, it is now 21%, as against 45% in 1976).

But the Institute of Directors argued in their "evidence" to the Fowler Reviews: "some think these low take-up rates a weakness of the present system; we think them a strength. First, a low take-up saves large amounts of government spending. Second, it is in substantial measure the result of self-selection among the potential users of the welfare system.

"Some people are reluctant to accept such payments for reasons of self-respect. We see nothing wrong in this sentiment, and many would consider it admirable."

Kitty

And what happens when the kitty runs out, maybe three or four months before it is due to be "topped up" again?

Anyone planning on dying should do it in the first six months of the financial year. The death grant, a miserly £30, is to be abolished and replaced by a means-tested loan from the Social Fund.

Similar calculations should be made by mothers to ensure maternity grant: the current grant is to be scrapped and replaced by a means-tested grant from the Social Fund, paid out only to low income families (e.g., those on Income Support).

The decision to create a Social Fund has clearly been influenced by the American system of public assistance, which is predominantly discretionary, administered at local level and often made conditional on modifications in the behaviour of claimants.

organise

Local groups should affiliate to the National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts, 43 Broughton St., Edinburgh EH1 3JU, phone 031-557 0213. Affiliation is £5 per calendar year.

Labour controlled authorities should back anti-Fowler campaigning by providing both finance and facilities with no strings attached. The GLC is providing £7 million.

Priority should be given to preparing for the Week of Action, in particular strike activity on the Friday. This should include: joint campaigning between local anti-Fowler groups and CPSA branches; Labour-controlled local authorities pledging full support for employees who strike on that day; unions with pay claims in the pipeline (e.g. NUT and EIS) calling for strike action; TUC and regional TUCs calling strike action as well.

Especially given the lack of funds of claimants' organisations, trades councils and other labour movement bodies should be providing and subsidising transport for the demonstrations during the Week of Action and on October 27, and the LPYS should be backing the marches to Tory Party conference.

The Parliamentary Labour Party must be committed to campaigning against the Reviews outside of Parlia-

ment and to a campaign of Parliamentary obstruction at Westminster. Local anti-Fowler groups should demand this of local Labour MPs, and the demand should be taken up by the Labour Party nationally.

The TUC must be forced to drop its sectarian stance towards national campaigns against social security cuts. And the demand for TUC action against the Fowler Reviews must also be linked up with renewed campaigning for unions to accept the unemployed as full members and for the transformation of unemployed workers centres into centres of political campaigning.

The "Action for Benefits" campaign, set up by civil service trade unions, has raised the demand that the Fowler Reviews should not be implemented until the Tories have stood in a General Election on a manifesto containing the proposed cuts. This demand could be taken up to add weight to the general demand for a general election.

Most important of all, a genuine alternative to both the existing social security system and the Fowler Reviews needs to be developed by the labour movement and claimants organisations, coupled with campaigning for its implementation by the next Labour government.

Week of action

September 7 to 16 is a week of national protest against the latest attacks on the social security system proposed by the Tories in the recently published Fowler Reviews.

A lot of the action will be locally organised by the anti-Fowler groups and campaigns which have already sprung up across the country. Activities will include public meetings and leafletting, plus "dole-festivals", and overnight vigils and 24-hour hunger strikes outside DHSS offices.

Tent Cities will also be a prominent feature of the Week of Action. These are already being set up to provide temporary accommodation for young people made homeless as a result of

the Tories' changes in legislation governing board and lodgings payments. Many young people have already been made homeless because of them. Soon entire families will be.

Another proposed local activity for the Week of Action is a "take-up" campaign, encouraging claimants to apply for all their entitlements.

Two major demonstrations are being organised at the beginning and close of the week: in Merseyside on September 7 and in Glasgow on Saturday September 14.

On Friday September 13 there should be a national strike in all DHSS offices, though there are problems with the attitudes of the union leaders.



The 10% majority

First the good news: people in High Places are concerned about the representation of black people on TV.

Michael Grade, controller of Beeb 1, explained on the "Black and White Media Show" what he was doing to combat racist portrayals — including killing the very popular "Mind Your Language" when he was at ITV because it had degenerated into a string of racial/national stereotypes.

The situation would really improve, he said, only when there were many more black programme-makers, script-writers, etc. That such an Important Man thinks it's worthwhile to give space and his own time to look at the problem is good news indeed.

And the bad? The same Michael Grade said, in a liberal, concerned way, that "minorities" don't get much of a look-in on TV. "Women, blacks..."

Minority

Hang on, son, you've just dismissed most of the world's population as a "minority". The white male "majority" is perhaps 10% (probably 2% if you are only counting able-bodied adults).

So, we get a programme which fairly thoroughly documents the construction of racist images but leaves huge question marks over the causes and the way racism is experienced differently by black men and women.

In explanation of where racism comes from, we are told racism is not natural but passed on through the prevailing (white) culture, it's learned. But why was it taught in the first place?

All we get is repeated reference to "old-fashioned" ideas and images (Cusoe and Friday, Uncle Tom, etc). In the absence of any statement to the contrary, the implication is that at some time in the past the idea of white superiority was appropriate, but now it's outmoded: the blacks really were ignorant, child-like savages who needed the white man to civilise and educate them.

Examples of how relatively recently such images of blacks

GERRY BYRNE'S TV WATCH

were recreated and for what political purposes, could have been taken from the "End of Empire" series.

I had always thought, for example, that "Mau Mau" in Kenya was purely an invention of white racism. I learnt that it wasn't quite so simple.

Interviews with articulate black politicians who revealed themselves as ex-members of the Mau Mau Central Committee explained how they had with a certain cynicism picked up the white racists' nonsense and turned it to their own advantage. For the whites to have admitted that they were faced with an organised guerrilla army committed to a modern political objective — independence — would have undermined their whole position as "civilisers" of a people who could not be trusted to govern themselves.

So Mau Mau had to be presented as tied up with savage rituals, oaths and sacrifices (just as early trade unionists were transported for oath-swearing and secret societies, not for organising to improve their conditions!).

While the British rulers might admit it by their actions — like putting most of the urban black male population in concentration camps — they could not openly avow that the independence movement was largely a working class phenomenon. The working class at home might have had something to say about it.

Which brings us back to the "Black and White Media Show". They did give us an example of the way news cover-

age (words and pictures) is slanted to chime in with prejudices of blacks as violent, troublemakers, etc., the Imperial Typewriters strike. They showed a news item as it was actually broadcast contrasted with a reconstruction, using pictures, interviews and facts available at the time, to convey a totally different picture of the dispute.

The reconstruction was undoubtedly more accurate and informative. But it did rather beg the question: would the story have been any different if it were white workers on strike, against both management and their corrupt local union bureaucracy?

How often do unofficial strikes, whatever the colour of the workforce, get a sympathetic presentation? Aren't they always led by outside agitators?

Peculiar

The other thing it underlined was that peculiar inability to see a black woman even when they are in front of the camera.

The people with the worst grievance at Imperial Typewriters were the Asian women. They suffered sexual-racial harassment in addition to the discriminatory payments system. They were unrepresented both by the official union stewards and on the unofficial strike committee.

The reconstruction "how the strike could have been covered" still ignored their specific grievances.

All quibbles aside, that the programme could happen at all and at a reasonable accessible time, it a sign of changing times. Over at Brookside, where all human life is before it happens, those nice nurses have been suffering a terrible hostage crisis at the hands of John, the mother-fixated nutter. (I have to say I don't approve of all this melodrama and stereotyping of head-cases — who do they think they are, Dynasty?).

As it draws to its close, who should be in possession of all the courage, resourcefulness and sense but Kate, the black nurse.

From token black/feminist/vegetarian to heroine of the hour. Don't let it go to your head, girl.

Racism will until Israel is

THE article by John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas (July 3) calling for the establishment side by side with Israel of a Palestinian state, fails to understand the specific features of the Israeli state that prevents it from becoming a 'normal' western capitalist state with a working class capable of moving from economic to political struggles.

Tony Greenstein, secretary of the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine.

Mapam — the so-called Marxist Zionists — supports such a state.

Precisely which forces in Israel would push for such a settlement? At least Arafat recognises that only the United States is capable of exerting pressure to achieve such a state as part of an imperialist solution to the Palestinian question, not that they display the least inclination to do so.

Such a state would become an Israeli Bantustan, in which the Jordanian regime held the whip hand. It would be dependent on the Gulf regimes and Israel economically and its first actions would be to crush the Left and Trade Unions in order to guar-

antee its existence. It would be a state where confessionalism reigned supreme. Surely the example of partition in Ireland demonstrates this?

Far from uniting the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian working class, it would erect state borders between them whilst providing the opportunity for mass expulsions from Israel and the opportunity to remove even the most marginal rights that Israeli Arab workers possess. It would reinforce the feeling of privilege and racist supremacy that Israeli workers possess.

Zionism

O'Mahony and Thomas demonstrate that they don't really understand the nature of Zionism. Zionist settlement began in earnest after the First World War under the British Mandate and the alliance



The Palestinian refugee camps have been battered time and time again

SO summer school

Friday to Monday, August 23 to 26, at the Camden Estate Tenants' hall, off Peckham Road, London SE15.

Workshops, plenaries, debates, and videos on:
Anti-semitism, Zionism, and Palestine;
The labour movement after the miners' strike;
Republicanism and class politics in Ireland;

Issues in the women's movement today;

What we mean by socialism;

and many other issues.

Cheap food, free overnight accommodation and creche.

Cost: £5, £2 for unwaged.

To register, or for more information, write to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

remain destroyed

between the Zionists and British Imperialism lasted until 1945.

It is factually incorrect to say that the core of the Israeli state when it was founded consisted of refugees from European anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The latter came to Israel after its founding.

Immigration

As Lenni Brenner and others have documented, the Zionists used these people as a battering ram to open the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration whilst at the same time supporting immigration controls against Jewish refugees in the USA and Britain, just as today they oppose Soviet Jews settling in any other country bar Israel.

But what has this to do with the nature of the Israeli state? Did not the Plymouth Brethren feel oppressed when they colonised America? And the Australian settlers? And what about the pieds noirs in Algeria, amongst whom there was a far stronger Communist Party than ever existed in Palestine and some of whom had fought against Franco

in Spain.

All that this demonstrates is how reprehensible colonialism and Zionism are, in that it creates racists out of the most progressive of people, including socialists. And weren't the Afrikaners the first victims of (British) concentration camps?

Instead of an analysis of how Zionism created a settler working class which never fought for its own independent class interests, we are told of a "chronic national antagonism" between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian/Arab workers. Not a hint of where this comes from nor any attempt to differentiate between the nationalism of the oppressed and oppressor.

Racism

The racism of Israeli workers derives from the settler colonial state they live in, it doesn't magically appear when different peoples come into contact. Until the Israeli state is destroyed, the racism and chauvinism of Israeli Jewish workers will remain, indeed increase if there is a re-partitioning, and they will never



Palestinian youth

go beyond a rudimentary economic class consciousness.

The same holds true of the South African white working class and the Loyalist working class.

Instead Israeli workers will cling to their privileges and see their main enemy as the Palestinians. It is little wonder that the Israeli working class has been unable to create its own independent trade unions, still less a Party, and instead is contained within Israel's largest employers' federation and economic empire, Histadrut.

I don't accept that a Jewish nation exists in Israel, but even if it did it would still be an oppressor nation like the Afrikaners. It has no right to a separate portion of territory. What they do have is the right to live in a democratic, secular Palestine and enjoy all the same religious, cultural and individual

rights as others.

The question of 'self-determination' of the Israeli Jews does not arise because they are not an oppressed group. They enjoy a high standard of living precisely because of the role that Israel plays in the Middle East, financed but not exploited by the USA.

Dynamic

The comparison between Israel and the British state is thereby false. Israel is a settler colonial state and has an expansionist and racist dynamic of its own.

In contributing to this debate we hope that Socialist Organiser does not abandon the fight against Zionism and go for a muddle-headed, middle of the road approach that tries to walk a tightrope between the oppressor and oppressed.



Poverty and oppression among the exiled Palestinians: but also a will to fight

Is Militant so different?

To check whether some of the criticisms of Militant made in Socialist Organiser and Class Fighter are fair I bought a copy of that paper.

According to Clive Bradley in Class Fighter no. 20, "whether some Militant supporters believe it or not, what they actually say is that a Labour government could — through Parliament, and peacefully — introduce socialism". And, Militant has "no answer to the prob-

lem of ruling class violence other than the vague hope that under the pressure of a 'mobilised' workers' movement the ruling class will just give up."

However in the Militant I bought, of April 26, a columnist writes that the British Royal Family "have enormous potential power under the British constitution and just because it's not used at the moment doesn't mean that it won't be at some stage in the future." There

seems to be an understanding here that the monarchy would be used to block any attempt to introduce socialism "legally" through Parliament.

Moreover in this Militant it is observed: "It must be made absolutely clear to the police and the courts that when the police do nothing about gangs of fascists attacking black communities then those communities will defend themselves." Those attacked violently must be prepared to answer with violence.

Is this "vague"?

Clive Bradley says further that Militant "is soft on world Stalinism". But in this Militant there is an article sharply critical of the role of Stalinism in Vietnam.

Of course there are differences between Socialist Organiser and Militant. But are they really so fundamental that the advantages of keeping separate organisations outweigh those of forming one tendency?

DAVID HARRIS.

Letters

The Red and the Green?

I find it surprising that Les Hearn should be so taken in by Plaid Cymru President Dafydd Elis Thomas MP (Science Column, SO 235).

Speaking at the AGM of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association it is to be expected that he should lay great emphasis on Plaid's environmental policies.

Indeed, some of these policies represent a serious attempt to come to grips with issues like nuclear waste and acid rain which leave the Welsh Labour Party standing. However, it is precisely the combination of 'Red and Green' policies which Les mentions that is crucial, and it is essential in this respect to place Plaid's Green policies firmly in the context of their overall political outlook.

Resignation

In the first place, Thomas cannot claim to speak for the whole of his party. 'Hydro', the right-wing faction in Plaid aligned to former party president Dafydd Wigley MP, has called for the resignation of the entire executive committee after the disastrous showing in the Brecon and Radnor by-election. They claim that the party's lowest ever vote in a parliamentary contest was the result of the 'left wing policies' of the committee.

With his own party so divided it is hardly honest of Thomas to talk of a 'coherent' Plaid attitude and to refer to the Welsh Labour Party as if it were a right wing monolith. In fact the Labour left in Wales, including the NUM leadership, is actively involved in environmental issues, particularly those involving nuclear waste and environmental pollution.

This is no light-minded moral stand, as Britain's single biggest polluter, the Pharnacite smokeless fuel plant in the Cynon Valley, is a major local employer in an area of high unemployment, as is the ROF Llanishen factory in Cardiff which produces casing components for nuclear weapons.

The difference in emphasis between Thomas, who gives the Forestry Commission as a suitable target for workers' control, and the Labour left's concentration on industrial priorities, is very revealing of Plaid's retreat to its rural heartlands.

Plaid has been in a state of constant decline since the early 'seventies, when it received a large number of protest votes from Labour supporters in South Wales who were disillusioned by local government corruption and bureaucratic inactivity.

As local councils 'went Plaid' it rapidly became obvious that it was business as usual and that the nationalists could not provide a coherent socialist alternative to right-wing Labourism.

Their control was short-lived and electoral defeats were followed by defeat in the devolution referendum in 1979. The Brecon and Radnor result is the lowest point so far in this rout.

Dafydd Elis Thomas himself has responded to the by-election by proposing that Plaid should

abandon any pretension to win seats in the industrial South and concentrate instead on key rural seats.

Routine denunciations of Labourism continue, but he is attempting to reunite his 'socialist, decentralist and feminist' party around...the radical nationalism of rural Wales.

All of this is in contradiction to the nonsense at the SERA AGM about Plaid merging with the Labour Party if only it had a 'Welsh section'. Take away the pale pink filter and Plaid is still the party of TV producers, teachers and small farmers like Gwynfor Evans, the tomato grower who, as the novelist Gwyn Thomas once put it, was 'up to his arse in fascism and ketchup'.

In this context the link with the Communist Party might be surprising, but only until you realise that the latter has adopted a nationalist perspective wholesale in an opportunistic, and partially successful attempt to poach Plaid's intellectual members.

Plaid worked closely with the CP in the miners' strike, even to the extent of supporting the CP-inspired witch-hunt of those Labour activists in Cardiff Central Labour Party who had initiated the Cardiff Miners Support Committee.

Popular Front

Once again, the contradictions — in this case between the 'decentralist socialism' of Plaid and the bureaucratic Stalinism of the CP, are glaringly obvious, even if conveniently forgotten in the attempt to stitch together a popular front of miners, bishops and farmers.

The most telling difference between rhetoric and reality lies in the fact that Plaid is ultimately a nationalist party. Whether it concerns ideas about workers' control or Lucas Aerospace type plans for the nuclear and defence industries, Plaid's writ only runs to Offa's Dyke and the English border.

This is highlighted by references to 'dirty' Notts coal as opposed to the 'clean' Welsh stuff, a remark that will hardly go down well with those Notts miners who have recently gone back to digging 'dirty' coal after a year on strike. Plaid claims to be able to overcome the disastrous effects of the international capitalist crisis by hiving Wales off as the nation it has never been.

Thankfully, the Welsh working class will have none of it, as demonstrated by the massive vote against devolution a few years ago and, more recently, by Plaid's forced retreat to its rural fastness.

It is no longer possible, as Liberal MPs and Lib-Lab miners leaders used to do, to 'play the Welsh card' and divide Welsh from English. The unity between the working class in England and Wales should be supported as a starting point, not decried as an obstacle to the development of a mythical, and mystical, Welsh nation state.

Yours
MARTIN BARCLAY.

Woody Allen feminist? Not quite

Edward Ellis reviews Woody Allen's new film, 'The Purple Rose of Cairo'.

I can remember being about twelve and watching 'Everything you wanted to know about sex but were afraid to ask'. I thought nothing could be funnier than jokes about the sexual habits of sheep.

But some time ago — when I saw 'Manhattan', to be precise — Woody Allen films started to bore me; and since then, I've avoided them like the pox.

He just seemed a bit old still to be having adolescent sexual hang ups. And it seemed very unfair that he was able to make countless films about them.

I'm sure no one would laugh at films about mine; so how come he gets away with it?

I was with some trepidation, therefore, that I went to see Woody Allen's latest offering, 'The Purple Rose of Cairo'.

But there were no adolescent sexual hang-ups to be found — or no male ones at least. Rather, this somewhat bizarre little fantasy is to do with the bad time women get in the hands of men, and the power of the silver screen to provide escape — and therefore disguise and cancel out, as well as soothe — the miseries of women's lives.

Fair stab

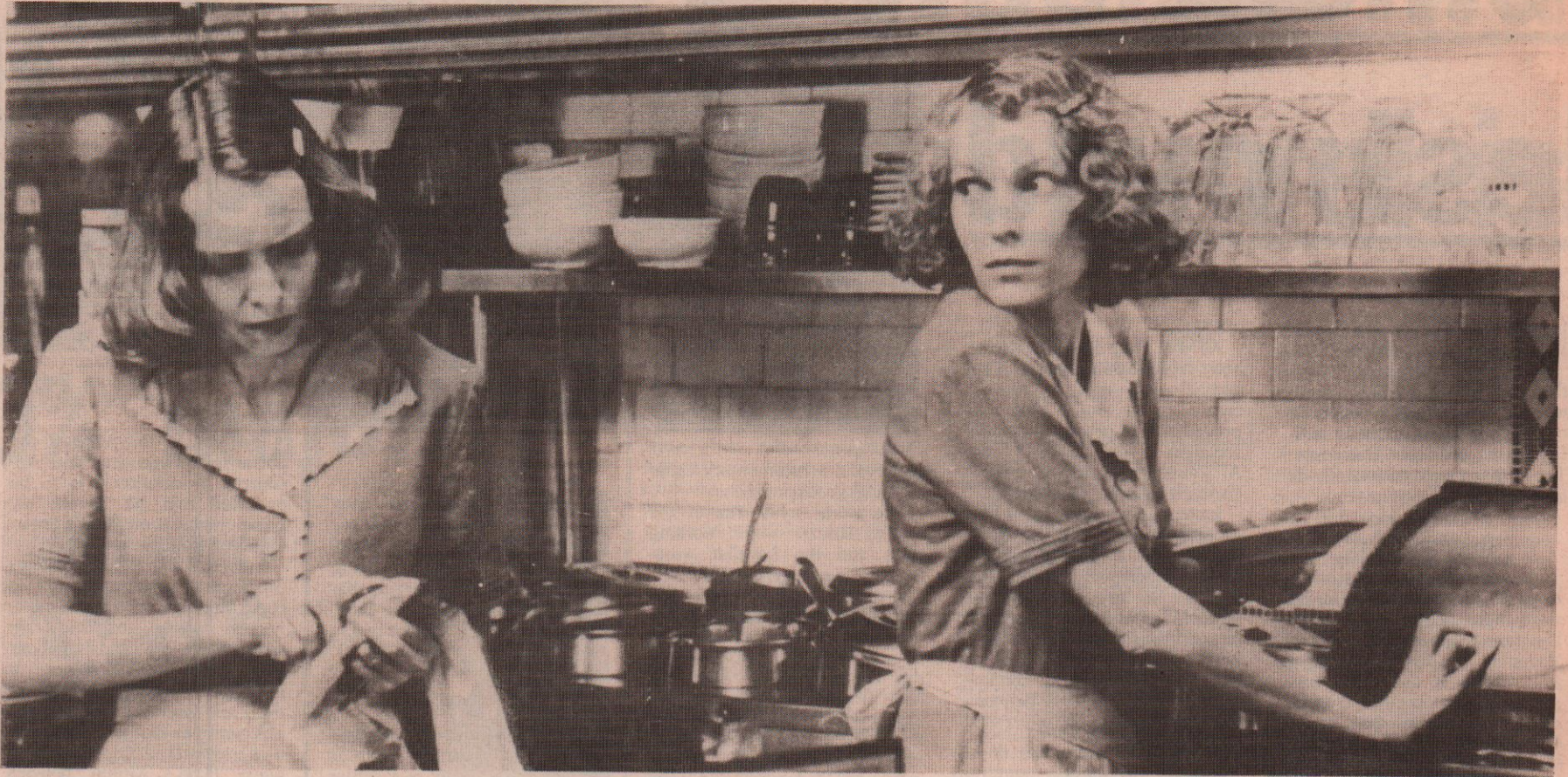
Woody Allen goes feminist? Well, not quite. But he has a fair stab at it.

In case you, like me, didn't know what the film is about and expected lavish Nile Valley scenes with plenty of sun, sand and palm trees, I will fill you in.

Mia Farrow plays a very ordinary woman, scraping together a bare existence in the American depression, whose pig of a husband doesn't love her any more and beats her up. Her only release is the movies.

And it is to the movies she turns after a particularly bad scene with the husband. She spends an evening watching, over and over again, her latest favourite movie, a romantic comedy, 'The Purple Rose of Cairo'.

Half way through the performance, one of the characters — Tom Baxter ('Adventurer, poet,



Mia Farrow (right) and her sister Stephanie as two waitresses

explorer) — leaps out of the screen, and drags her out of the cinema declaring undying love. As you would expect, all hell thereupon breaks loose.

The film company, perplexed that their celluloid characters have developed a will of their own, send the actor responsible for the recalcitrant her off to catch him. The actor claims in the meantime also to fall in love with Mia Farrow, but is, we suspect, more concerned in fact with his own ego and his movie

career.

Meanwhile the film hero himself has to cope with a world far more down-to-earth and downright seedy than that of movie imagination, whilst back on the screen the deserted characters moan about their predicament and exchange abuse with the bemused cinema audience.

The viewers of any movie are expected, as the theatre critics say, to 'suspend their disbelief' — to accept that what

they are viewing is not 'real', and thereby to impose new norms of 'reality' on what is being viewed.

Allen's trick is to subvert the new norms of 'reality'. The movie characters insist on their own fictional status, and on the fictional status of Baxter (Mia Farrow comments wistfully on her new lover: 'He's fictional, but you can't have everything').

Yet the world 'behind the screen' serves to remind us that the 'real' characters to us, are

also 'behind the screen' and so equally unreal in fact.

It's a trick that has been done before, but it's no less effective for that. It is to Allen's credit, it should be added, that he doesn't labour the point.

Dilemma

What gives the film poignancy, and rescues it from being just 'clever', is how the real/unreal dilemma particularly affects the life of a down-trodden working class woman. For her the fantasies are vital for her very survival, even when the fantasies themselves merely add to her day-to-day misery. And though being so vital, the romantic fantasies serve to keep her helpless: she resigns herself

to the helplessness.

In the end — the only possible end under the circumstances — she goes back to watching the movies, a naive glow in her face.

You would expect that conclusion from a film about film's effects on consciousness by a film-maker.

But its message is false. There is an escape; and its source is to be found in the real world: the strength to smash the illusions.

Charm

Woody Allen has made a good film, a story told with simplicity and charm. It won't have you rolling in the aisles, but it might make you think a bit.

Afghanistan and Stalinism

When the Russian army went into Afghanistan at the end of 1979, most would-be revolutionary Marxists supported it — or at least argued against calling for its withdrawal. Socialist Organiser, (and Workers' Action, one of the groups that launched SO) were pretty isolated in stating firmly that the troops should get out.

Now most Trotskyists have changed their minds. The facts of the USSR's brutal 'mini-Vietnam war' have forced them to.

Clive Bradley reviews 'Forum' no. 3.

But in Europe, and in Britain, the labour movement is riddled with all sorts of pro-Stalinist ideas which make people excuse or minimise what Russia is doing. And the biggest would-be Trotskyist group in Britain, Militant, still argues against Soviet withdrawal.

Socialist Forum no. 3 is devoted to a long article by SO editor John O'Mahony on Afghanistan. It tells the history; it examines Militant's theoretical justifications for their positions, and it spells out the Marxist attitude to the USSR's occupation.

The only real alternative to Soviet withdrawal is full-scale genocidal conquest.

Militant's position is based on the idea that the USSR will drag Afghanistan into the 20th century. It is cruel, perhaps, but progressive.

Militant present this as hard-headed, unsentimental Marxism. Yet in truth it has more in common with the attitude of some socialists in the early years of this century who supported the British Empire because, after all, it would bring railways, schools and law-courts to the 'lesser breeds'.

The argument is not just about Afghanistan: for Militant has an entire theory that sees the rise of brutally anti-working class Stalinist states as the only and the inevitable way forward for most of the world.

Nationalised economy is the way forward, says Militant; given the poverty in the Third World and the pressure of the USSR, no workers' democracy is possible there; therefore nationalised economies will be created, like it or not, by Stalinist-type bureaucracies arising from the middle class.

It isn't pretty, but it's progress so we should support it.

This means supporting a 'next stage' for most of the world which, by Militant's own account, puts the working class under totalitarian oppression.

Socialist Forum no. 3 is important both for the general case it puts against Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and for the detailed critique of a central part of Militant's theoretical armoury. It should provoke discussion on the left as a whole, and in the LPYS in particular.

Socialist Organiser 50p
Number 1 February

Socialist FORUM 50p
Number 2 March/April 1985
Ireland 69-85

Socialist FORUM 50p
Number 3 July 1985

Socialist Organiser 40 PAGES 60p
SPECIAL ISSUE

Illusions of POWER

Socialist Organiser
STARVED, BATTERED, DEFIANT
MAGNIFICENT MINERS
THE 1984-5 STRIKE

Socialist Forum: no. 1 on the 'British Road to Socialism', no. 2 on Ireland, no. 3 on Afghanistan — 50p each. Socialist Organiser specials — on the miners' strike 75p; on local government, 60p. All available from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY: add 20p for postage.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



Hallelujah, I'm A Bum!

(Tune: Revive Us Again)
Hobo parody of the last century, adapted by Spokane IWW winter of 1908 for use on song card of that year, preceding songbooks).

O, why don't you work
Like other men do?
How in hell can I work
When there's no work to do?

[Chorus]
Hallelujah, I'm a bum!
Hallelujah, bum again!
Hallelujah, give us a handout
To revive us again.

O, why don't you save
All the money you earn?

If I did not eat
I'd have money to burn.
[Chorus]

O, I like my boss —
He's a good friend of mine;
That's why I am starving
Out in the breadline.
[Chorus]

I can't buy a job
For I ain't got the dough,
So I ride in a box-car
For I'm a hobo.
[Chorus]

Whenever I get
All the money I earn
The boss will be broke
And to work he must turn.
[Chorus]

Will the TUC split?

By Martin Thomas

Will the AUEW and the EETPU be expelled from the TUC? Will Roy Lynk's breakaway from the NUM be the pioneer of a whole breakaway TUC?

Is 'Mainstream' — the right-wing group with the EETPU and Lynk affiliated, and AUEW president Terry Duffy chairing it in his personal capacity — the core of that 'alternative TUC'?

Will Liberal leader David Steel's hopes be fulfilled for the TUC to split into two groups — "an open-minded progressive group ready to talk to the alliance and the Government as well as Labour", as he put it, "and an old-fashioned Socialist group which revolves around Labour politics"?

Probably not — yet. On July 24 the TUC General Council voted by 34 to 5 to begin disciplinary proceedings against the AUEW because it has taken Tory government money for its postal ballots, in violation of the April 1982 Wembley TUC decisions.

EETPU general secretary Eric Hammond was defiant, saying that the AUEW and the EETPU together "could raise a very attractive banner for a lot of other unions".

There are three reasons why a fudge or compromise is more likely, in the short term, than a sharp break between the right wing unions and the TUC.

First: several other unions have effectively ditched the Wembley decisions.

The position of the AUEW and the EETPU is rather like that of the pioneer Revisionist, Eduard Bernstein, in the German socialist movement in the early years of this century. Bernstein openly advocated reformism and class collaboration, and socialist congress after congress passed thundering votes of censure against him.

Bernstein

Meanwhile many trade union leaders practised exactly what Bernstein preached. One of them, Auer, wrote sorrowfully to him: 'My dear Ede: One does these things. One doesn't say them'.

The EETPU and the AUEW do flamboyantly and defiantly what other union leaders do discreetly and hypocritically.

The Colliery Managers and other small managerial/supervisory unions also intend to take Tory ballot money.

The NUR — probably the union whose leaders did best in terms of solidarity with the miners — has decided at its AGM to obey the Tory law on strike ballots.

Lots of unions have been involved — usually in shame-faced fashion — in ballots over closed shops.

David Basnett of the GMBU and Clive Jenkins of ASTMS came out for a revision of the

Wembley policy of non-compliance with Tory laws late last year, and in February the TUC's employment committee, mumbling about "flexibility", decided to ask unions how they thought the policy should be revised.

The EETPU has drawn a lot of flak for its 'no-strike' deals, like the one it has just agreed with Eddie Shah for his new paper. "The electricians' union," comments the Economist magazine, "prefers to call such agreements no-strike deals, because employers like them better that way."

"Other unions...even the left-led Transport and General Workers Union, have agreed similar deals but say they are not no-strike agreements at all".

Second: the TUC did exclude the NGA and the Bakers' Union for registering under the Industrial Relations Act 1971. But that was a temporary move covering unions with well-defined industrial patches.

A decisive break by the AUEW or EETPU from the TUC would leave those two unions — organised across a wide range of industries in which other unions are also active — wide open to membership raids by the TUC.

The AUEW and EETPU have right-wing leaders, but many left-wing activists who would much sooner join a TUC competitor than help build up a rival pro-employer trade union centre. The right wing break-away would be liable to decimation.

Hammond declared that if excluded from the TUC he would seek links "in self-defence" with the anti-strike groups that have developed in recent years, such as the Professional Association of Teachers and the Professional Association of Railwaymen. That sums up his problem. The PAT is the high-flyer of that lot. It has only 30,000 members. And there are many more anti-strike teachers than there are electricians.

The big majorities in the trade union ballots over political funds show that — Professor Hobsbawm notwithstanding — Labour and trade union loyalties are far from dead in the rank and file.

Third: ties to the Labour Party are important to trade union leaders for a lot of reasons which have nothing to do with working class principles.

Seats in the House of Lords, places on official committees, jobs on nationalised industry boards, political careers for those so minded, are all at stake. The SDP-Liberal Alliance, with its tiny handful of MPs, cannot offer the same gravy. It won't be

able to until its steady electoral support rises much higher.

Altogether the AUEW executive had very good reasons to rebuff Hammond and reject any notion of an alternative TUC.

Behind the whole affair stands a problem common to all the trade union leaders — dwindling membership.

Mainly because of the rapid decline of traditionally well-organised industries, TUC affiliated membership has dropped from 12.2 million in 1979 to 9.9 million now.

APEX membership has dropped 37%; TGWU membership, 29%; EETPU, 15%. The AUEW has lost well over 20% though the figures are complicated by the merging of the engineering, foundry and con-

struction sections.

The only unions that have grown are the Banking, Insurance and Financial Union; Nalco; and some that have profited from mergers, like NGA, SOGAT, and TASS.

Closed shops have declined from 5.2 million workers in 1978 to about 4 million today.

Rather than any bold new organising drives, the unions' main response has been to scramble cap-in-hand after employers setting up new plant. Eddie Shah's paper is one example. No union talks of boycotting it; instead SOGAT is begging for crumbs left after the EETPU has got the bulk of the franchise. SOGAT — by no means a maverick right-wing union — is also trying to deal

with Murdoch over his new Wapping plant, if necessary despite and against the other print union, the NGA.

In the wake of the miners' strike — which some, like the NUR, helped inadequately, and other union leaders didn't help at all — defeatism reigns throughout the top ranks of the trade unions. That is why right-wingers like Hammond and the AUEW's Gavin Laird are able to set the tone and dominate debate.

Let that defeatism continue and grow, and in time Hammond and his SDP friends (like John Grant, EETPU press officer and leading SDPer) will have the forces to create an "alternative TUC".

A shorter-term objective for

them would be to get the EETPU disaffiliated from the Labour Party and to organise the non-Labour-affiliated unions in the TUC — which include some sizeable ones like NALGO, BIFU, and CPSA — into an SDP-Liberal-oriented bloc.

At present these non-affiliated unions trail politically behind the Labour unions, and their leading figures, like the CPSA's Alistair Graham, are individual Labour Party members. In 1983 (for the first time) the whole TUC officially called for a Labour vote at the election.

Success for Hammond and the SDP is still a fair way off. But the markers that they're putting down should be a warning to us all.



The AUEW's Terry Duffy and Gavid Laird. (Photo: John Harris).

Bruntsfield

Bruntsfield Hospital in Edinburgh was relieved from closure last month after an 18 month campaign. But now, the battle has begun afresh. The Lothian Health Board has just announced that it intends to keep the hospital open, but close all the beds, making it into a clinic.

Bruntsfield is the only remaining women's hospital in Scotland. It is widely used by women from all over the Lothians.

It is the only hospital where women can be guaranteed to see a woman doctor, and it is one of the main hospitals for the treatment of cervical cancer.

In February 1984, Bruntsfield Hospital was threatened with closure, a vigorous campaign was initiated by the local Labour Party at a public meeting.

Many local people who had not been politically active before joined the campaign, as did local organisations such as the local area community council and women's groups.

We managed to get a lot of press coverage from public meetings, petitions and leafleting.

The local Tory MP, Michael Avicram, asked the government to backtrack, feeling that his seat was threatened.

We hope the campaigning group will now widen. The Lothian Health Board has announced it cannot open the Royal Victoria hospital extension for the elderly in Edinburgh. It says it cannot afford both Bruntsfield and the extension. But can we afford not to have both?

We must now fight to see the

extension opened.

The confidence of the unions in the Bruntsfield Hospital has increased with the victory to keep it open. That confidence and ours must be strengthened and built on. Help save your local hospital. It can be done! More information from Beth Cumming, 13 Drumdryan St., Edinburgh.

Morris

WORKERS at the Morris furniture factory in Glasgow are into the eleventh week of industrial action against a management attempt to impose a 41½ hour week, in contravention of a national agreement on 39 hours.

After leaving work on completion of a 39 hour week on Friday May 24, 35 members of the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union (FTAT) received letters sacking them. Nine of them are apprentices.

The FTAT has made the strike official and is paying benefit but they still require financial assistance from the wider trade union movement.

The union has also organised regular mass pickets and support has come from factories such as Jarrows and Govan shipbuilders.

Contact: FTAT District Organiser, R.H. Callum, 46 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5 9TQ.

Iran refugee

Five weeks ago Yazdan Paresh, a third-year Southampton Polytechnic student, was sentenced at Winchester Crown Court to

six months' imprisonment and recommended for deportation.

Yazdan was arrested earlier this year in mysterious circumstances and held virtually incommunicado in Winchester Prison.

He was eventually tried on a minor charge. The sentence is not only harshly punitive but carries strong political and racist overtones. Yazdan is an Iranian. Just weeks prior to his arrest he had sought political asylum in the UK. Did the Iranian Embassy exert pressure on the Home Office?

The extent of official collusion is not certain but Iranian students and labour movement supporters are facing harassment by CID cops apparently trying to sabotage the defence campaign.

Messages of support/help with the defence campaign, c/o Flat 3, 118 Gordon Avenue, Portswood, Southampton SO2 1DA.

Barking

Domestics on strike against private contractors at Barking hospital have linked up with workers fighting privatisation elsewhere to form a National Action Committee against Privatisation.

At present the committee consists of representatives from Barking, Addenbrookes (Cambridge), Chesterfield and Newcastle. The first meeting took place in Barking last month, and the next will be on September 28 in Cambridge. All NUPE members on strike over private contractors, or considering strike action, are invited to attend.

The impulse for this rank and file committee was given

when NUPE officials withdrew recognition from the Barking picket line, which has been going on for 16 months. On July 8 the strikers received letters delivered by courier to their homes, instructing them to withdraw their picket from the hospital within 24 hours.

They continued picketing nonetheless, and a mass picket on July 17 drew 400 people. Five GMBU members on strike have been instructed by their union to continue picketing, and NUPE officials have now been put in a position of once again having to support their members on the picket line. The strikers are meeting NUPE officials again on August 6.

* NUPE general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe has described Barking as the NHS's Cortonwood. Bickerstaffe and his officials are certainly not the NHS's Scargills.

Contact: Barking strike committee, 01-592 5038; or Sylvia Burton, Addenbrookes Strike Committee, c/o 31 Thorleys Rd., Cambridge.

BRMB

THE nine week strike of NUJ members at BRMB radio in Birmingham has ended.

After having consistently refused all offers of compromise from the NUJ, BRMB last week agreed to replace two of the jobs with freelance NUJ members while the dispute goes to non-binding arbitration. The situation will be reviewed when the mediators report in three months time.

The journalists believe the deal is the best they could have achieved in the circumstances.

Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post.

RATES: £8.50 for 6 months. £16 for one year.

Name

Address

Please send me months' sub. I enclose £

To: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialist Organiser

Labour's programme

Radical?

TO JUDGE by Tory reactions, you would think that the new TUC/Labour Party programme, 'A new partnership — a new

Britain', was the most radical political tract since the Spartacus revolt in pre-imperial Rome. Tom King, the Employment

Secretary, said it would send a 'shudder of horror' around Britain. Energy Secretary Peter Walker warned that 'if you want Mr Arthur Scargill to run the nation you will only have to vote Labour at the next election'.

And Tory chair John Gummer raved: 'It amounts to the most extreme left-wing programme ever proposed by a Labour party in Britain'.

Have they been taking mind-expanding drugs? Unfortunately their denunciations are all rubbish. The TUC/Labour Party document barely proposes anything, never mind anything radical. It's got less to say than a packet of cornflakes.

It attacks the Tories for "six years of confrontation and social division" that have "weakened the economy and made Britain a much less equal society". It bemoans the squandering of North Sea oil money, deliberate unemployment, and the decline of Britain in world trade.

It sets three main priorities for a Labour government/TUC partnership.

- The creation of jobs for the unemployed.
- The improvement of living standards for those most in need
- The improvement of living standards for the rest of those in work.

Shuddering with horror?

How will Labour and the TUC put these aims into practice? Does the document perhaps propose hitting back at the Tories' class war with some class war of our own? No.

It suggests a 'National Economic Summit' to start "a new process of discussion and consultation with all sections of the community"; an "immediate and substantial programme of public investment and repair"; exchange controls; and a National Investment Bank.

Most of the document calls vaguely for more popular participation, for people to be nicer to each other, and for everything to turn out all right in the end.

In so far as it is a political programme, it is an utopian call for a slightly nicer capitalism — based on repeating the experience of the last Labour government.

The 'partnership' is designed to revive the whole nation, millionaires and misery-stricken alike. "Britain must become a positive force in Europe and the world. As a nation, we should be leading... coordinated recovery in Europe... to meet the challenge from the US and Japan".

For a real answer to the problems facing the working class, we need a radically transformed labour movement, and a challenge to the Labour and TUC leaders. This document is merely an indicator of how hard we are going to have to fight.

Why BBC banned Irish film



Jim Denham saw the banned BBC film 'At the Edge of the Union' on Tuesday 6th. He reports:

The 'Real Lives' team reckoned that this film gives Martin MacGuinness (of Sinn Fein) and Gregory Campbell (of the Democratic Unionist Party) 'a lot of rope' (to hang themselves?).

The BBC Governors reckoned that the film treated terrorism too sympathetically. It contained no clips of IRA violence but showed 'policemen clubbing demonstrators with batons' — an unheeded-off occurrence in Northern Ireland, surely.

Worst of all, it also pictured MacGuinness with a baby on his knee. The next thing you know, the BBC will be suggesting that IRA men are human beings motivated by something other than a pathological desire to kill!

Notice, by the way, that all the furore has been directed against MacGuinness, not Campbell. In fact Campbell comes over as by far the more fearsome of the two.

Apparently the producer had hoped to end the film with the two men sitting down together. MacGuinness thought about it. Campbell simply replied: 'It would be an insult to the bereaved... They want action. Something has to be done to finish this trouble once and for all, and the only way to do that with the IRA is to kill them'.

Campbell's view is echoed by his friend Ian Paisley, addressing a DUP election rally: 'Let me remind Sinn Fein that they have never faced the Protestant people as yet. But a day will come when we, the Protestant people of Ulster, will take on the IRA'.

The film does not attempt to put the 'Troubles' into any overall political context — apart from some newsreel film of a civil rights march being smashed up by the RUC in October 1968. A 'sol-

ution' is only discussed in the most vague terms by MacGuinness: 'What divides Protestants and Catholics is the British presence. Take the British presence out and there will be peace'.

No-one will believe it is as simple as that after hearing the rantings of Paisley and the cold, calculated determination of Campbell.

Campbell's own view is that 'there will be untold violence and loss of human life. What we've seen up to now will have been a picnic. It will be a doomsday situation'. He makes no secret of his willingness to go out armed onto the streets to oppose a united Ireland.

Thatcher and Brittan don't want the working class of Britain to see a film like this because they don't want any rational discussion of the Six County situation. Ironically 'Real Lives' could also shake up some of those naive people on the British far left who dismiss the Protestants as merely a pawn of imperialism.

For all its shortcomings this film does show us how very, very difficult it will be to win the working-class Protestants away from the bigots; and how futile any proposed solution will be that does not try to do just that.

All socialists should make an effort to see it.

Benefits reprove

THE Board and Lodging regulations introduced on April 29, which set time limits of two, four or eight weeks during which young people under 26 can stay in any one area before having their benefit cut, have been declared illegal by the High Court. These regulations have been suspended forthwith. Therefore:

*Any young person who has received a letter from the DHSS telling them that they must leave should ignore it and stay put.

*Those who have had their benefit cut as a result of these regulations should claim that money back from the DHSS now.

*Action has to be taken to help those who have been made homeless find proper accommodation.

The court ruling is only a reprieve. When Parliament reforms in September, Fowler will reintroduce these regulations. That gives us a couple of months to get properly organised against these attacks by government, on young people. It will be necessary to use that time to build a strong base to campaign from.

Oct 10

October 10: lobby Tory party conference!

No cuts in colleges!

No cuts in benefit!

Grants not loans!

No conscription onto YTS!

Called by Manchester and Tyne Tees Area NUSS.

Details: Simon Pottinger, 01-272 8900.

It is not true that the A-bombs were dropped on Japan in a last unavoidable effort to force them to surrender. Japan's defeat was certain. The A-bombs were a show of imperialist strength — primarily to cow the USSR and set the tone for the post-war world.

Ronald Reagan believes he could fight and win limited 'theatre' nuclear war. He would be prepared to condemn us to the nuclear winter for the sake of US profits and power.

His predecessor Richard Nixon has recently revealed that he seriously considered using nuclear weapons four times while he was president.

Disarm them before they destroy us!

Disarm the bosses!

GROUP Captain Leonard Cheshire VC was Britain's man on the spot forty years ago when the A-bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing 200,000 people and bringing World War 2 to an end.

In the Sunday Times of August 4 Cheshire describes his memories and his conclusions.

"The bomb is decisive and final", he says. "You cannot fight it and survive as a nation." Cheshire is convinced that the destruction of those two Japanese cities in 1945 has kept the world at peace in the four decades since. What is more, that is what he believed it would do at the time.

"I cannot describe the feeling of relief that flowed

over me. It was by no means my only reaction — there were, after all, fellow human beings under that seething, impenetrable cloud — but it was the first. I felt convinced, and remain so today, that the scourge of world war died at Nagasaki, and was buried there for ever".

Cheshire suffers from a sick imagination.

The threat of Armageddon has not kept the peace for the last forty years, and only someone safe in their imperialist ivory tower could believe that it has. Ask the people of Cambodia — where one in ten of the population died as a result of US bombing during the Indochina war, and millions more died under the Khmer Rouge terror which follow-

ed — if they have had peace.

Ask the people of Vietnam, struggling for thirty years against French and then American butchers.

Ask the people of Algeria, where a million had to die before the French colonists got out.

Ask the people of Mozambique or Angola. Ask the people of Namibia, Chile, Lebanon, Korea. Of Iran or Iraq. Of Korea, Cyprus, Ireland, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, El Salvador...

The list of long, bitter battles against colonialism, imperialism and Stalinism could go on and on. The claim that there has been world peace since 1945 is cynical, racist rubbish.

FUND

Cardiff SO supporters did a highly appreciated bit of fund raising last week when they cooked and sold kebabs at the Labour Party Young Socialists summer camp.

Details of how much they made for the fund next week. In the meantime, thanks to Chris Whytehead for a donation of £50, and Alan Johnson for £10.

Send donations to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.