

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 16. April/May 1987. 70p



AFTER GREENWICH

No. 16. April/May 1987.

Final copy date for this issue March 27, 1987
Printed by DOT Press (TU), Oxford.
Published by Socialist Viewpoint,
BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

OUR FINAL ISSUE

THIS is the final issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*.

We have succeeded in our political task of raising the level of debate and opening up serious dialogue with sections of the Marxist left.

Born in late 1984 as the response to sectarian and bureaucratic actions by the leadership of the *Socialist Organiser* current, and having fought consistently for a serious political regroupment to build the kind of leadership required by the labour movement, *Socialist Viewpoint* has helped lay the basis for a new step forward.

Early in May our forces and resources will be turned towards a new magazine, to be published jointly with supporters of the present *International* journal. In the autumn, the new magazine will move to regular monthly publication. It will offer a major increase in our circulation and in geographical coverage compared to that covered by *Socialist Viewpoint*.

Though we have been forced to endure a political split a 3-year period of relative isolation, *Socialist Viewpoint* has never accepted the role of a permanent small group. We have attempted to address central tactical as well as programmatic issues relating to the major class struggle issues of the day in Britain — the Miners' strike, the Printworkers' struggle, the Labour Party crisis, struggles for women's liberation, and against the oppression of black people, lesbians and gay men — and internationally, with regular analysis of Central America, South Africa, Palestine and Ireland. We have consistently developed the Marxist historical analysis of Stalinism, including the Cuban variant, carried regular educational articles explaining such issues as Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolu-

tion, and attempted to shed a little light on the debates taking place in the WRP as it has struggled to shake off the wretched political legacy of Healyism.

The strengths of this tradition will continue to make themselves felt in the new magazine, which will also draw on the talents and experience of the *International* supporters.

The new publication takes place at a time of sharp, testing crisis for much of the Marxist left, which has not recovered from its abject failure to offer any serious political leadership in the Miners' strike, and followed this by abstention and tail-endism in the Wapping dispute. With Kinnock & Co. searching for scapegoats for what threatens to be a dire, farcical rerun of the 1983 Election debacle, the necessity for Marxists to root themselves firmly in the organised labour movement is stronger than ever.

Socialist Viewpoint has consistently held an anti-sectarian stance towards the labour movement and towards other currents seriously committed to the fight for regroupment. We see the launch of the new magazine as a significant step on the road to reversing the miserable history of splits and subjective posturing that have done such damage to the post-war Marxist movement. The new magazine will take its place at the centre of the fight for a serious programmatic response to the crisis of working class leadership in Britain and on the international arena.

Our subscribers will be mailed the new magazine; other readers are urged to subscribe — or contact your usual SV seller to ensure you get your copy. Regular readers might like to do more: why not join with us in this step forward, and help launch the new magazine?

After Greenwich

Time to challenge Kinnock

The case of

the campaign that didn't

MARGARET Thatcher's declared intention to "banish socialism from the political agenda in Britain" can obviously be taken as another example of her renowned "determination". Yet little credit has been given to Neil Kinnock for not only sharing this objective, but for showing equal determination to bring it about!

It is not that the Tories are popular: far from it. The consensus that the Tories would govern in some mythical "national interest" has been broken down. Clearly the NHS is not safe in their hands; nor are the trade unions themselves, pay and conditions at work, nationalised industries, the entire welfare system, the education system from nurseries to the universities, many civil liberties, freedom from being randomly murdered, injured or otherwise plotted against by the police, directly or indirectly — the list is endless.

So why is Labour not riding high in the opinion polls and winning by-election after by-election? Mainly, it is because the ruling class has no need at the moment of a Labour government.

Certainly, individual capitalists are suffering under the Tories, as long lists of bankruptcies of individual enterprises show. This is much outweighed, however, by the advantages they are gaining. Profits

By CHRISTINE FRASER

continue to soar; new sectors of industry are being delivered into the greedy hands of the capitalists under Tory privatisation, returning profits to the private sector, and, most fundamentally, the Thatcher onslaught is delivering a greatly chastised workforce, ripe for increased exploitation. There is no sign of a militant working class which has to be pacified by the return of a Labour government.

The main tool used by the ruling class to keep Labour at bay is the media — and the media has much to work on in attacking Labour as a credible Party of government.

The right managed to hang on to power in the Labour Party throughout the surge of the left in the late seventies, with a few concessions on Party democracy (reselection of MPs, an electoral college for Leader and Deputy) and escaping the threat of Tony Benn winning the Deputy Leadership contest. Following Benn's defeat, the left largely fell apart as far as united action on a national level was concerned.

Where the left did not fall apart was on a local level. Many, particularly in the major cities, went into local government, and began working out and implementing "left" policies on a local level. Also, groupings of the specially oppressed began joining

together with the left to implement radical policies to meet their needs; and the organisations of the specially oppressed grew.

This activity has led to a growing discrepancy between the Labour Party constituencies and national level — a discrepancy the media has exploited with relish. The "loony left" in the councils, the "Militant infiltrators", and the "London effect" have been cited to embarrass Kinnock — who has obligingly disowned them all.

As Thatcher plays the racist card, the media have increasingly turned on the Labour Party Black Sections to scare the punters away from the Labour Party. Again, Kinnock obliges by promising to drive the strongest anti-racist current — the Black members themselves — out of the Party.

To add to the increasing bewilderment about what the Labour Party actually is, many of the local councils that are supposed to be the homes of the "loony left" are confusing the matter by attacking their workforces, raising the rates (still), making cuts — and still, essentially, *not delivering*.

Finally, if anyone is still in doubt, there is always the spectre of the last Labour government to rely on. One consensus that has not effectively been challenged is the economic "consensus": and we don't want another Labour government with all that nasty inflation, and the horrid



Steve Bell, The Guardian

PHOTO: Jez Coulson (Report)



No right wing sabotage hampered Nick Raynsford in Hammersmith & Fulham

unions going on strike all the time, do we?

In short, Labour can offer no credible alternative to the Tories.

Along with the media attack on Labour, disgruntled voters are left with the other non-Tory Party — the Alliance. Labour is being singularly inept at campaigning against the Alliance, which is hardly surprising. If Labour refuses to wage a class battle against the Tories, and depict them as the Party of the ruling class as they are, Labour is unlikely successfully to be able to show the Alliance up as a party of the same class.

Labour has, instead, fallen into the only road open to it under Kinnock's guidance: try to compete with the Alliance. In face of a poor imitation, voters will go for the real thing. With no national record behind them, the Alliance seems to offer hope that there is a different answer; after local government and by-election gains, it is even becoming credible as a Party of government.

The Greenwich by-election is a sad warning of how a Kinnock general election will be run. Certainly, Greenwich suffered from having the spotlight upon it; certainly, the Alliance won't be able to turn out as many canvassers to each Constituency when all are being contested simultaneously: but the parallels are still clear.

The Greenwich Party was known locally as left wing. Not in the forefront of "left" London councils in the same way as Haringey, Brent or even Islington, there was still some truth in this: although quiet about it, Greenwich was one of the last Councils to set a rate in the 1985 no-rate-setting campaign.

The press eagerly predicted that a left wing candidate would be selected, and would be unsuitable to

Walworth Road. They trumpeted with glee when the local Party seemed to oblige by selecting Deirdre Wood.

Some of the London left with longer experience of Deirdre Wood felt less confident about her left credentials. Yes, she had been one of the "GLC 10" who, led by John McDonnell, had voted against setting a rate on the GLC; but her record as Chair of the GLC staff committee was less glorious.

The National and Regional Party stepped in to run the campaign; and they must bear the main blame for the bizarre election material, which, rather than say anything about politics seemed concerned with presenting Deirdre Wood as a rival to Julie Andrews — walking across Greenwich park with happy, smiling children in tow. But the takeover of the campaign took place with virtually no resistance from the left in the Party or the candidate.

At no time was the presence of Walworth Road "minders" challenged by the Party explaining what their policies were; "awkward" questions about Deirdre's alleged positions on "radical" issues like Black Sections, Ireland, etc., were answered at press conferences by heavy-handed representatives of the "official" Labour Party.

Known as a unilateralist, with an anti-NATO position, Deirdre answered an open question about defence at one public debate with "I'm with Mountbatten on this one", and pointed out that whatever she was rumoured to believe, Party policy was not against NATO. This is not the best way to promote unilateralism.

Left wing MPs were actively discouraged from helping in the campaign, though every right winger in the book was sent down. One story

is circulating the London left about two well-known left wingers having to creep into the constituency with a borrowed loudspeaker van to add the mild support of touring the constituency urging a Labour vote — and that was on polling day itself.

The lesson of Greenwich drawn by much of the left has been that Labour needs to fight on "socialist policies". After all, Deirdre Wood managed to win an ILEA seat on her own in the same constituency less than 12 months ago when no one was looking.

Unfortunately, as far as a general election is concerned, this view is too superficial to be an adequate answer.

Any constituency fighting even on Labour Party conference policy on an individual basis in a general election will find its efforts to get Labour Party policy across virtually swamped by media coverage of the Labour Party's national campaign. Such constituencies will be in the position of putting out leaflets headed "Labour will", while "Labour" will be reassuring the electorate at large not to worry because it won't.

So what can be done? First, the left must recognise that they will stand or fall on the contact they have with the electorate day to day. Workers on strike against local Labour councils will instill no confidence in a Labour government to stand up for working people. Labour councils must stop managing capitalism to maintain their positions, and come down firmly on the side of the workers.

A council which prevaricates about why it is not doing council house repairs will still be seen as a problem by tenants: councils must tailor their budgets to meet need, not Tory cash limits, and stand with the tenants in a campaign against the Tories, winning support for Labour against the real enemy.

Constituencies must go a step further, and make real links with those in struggle against the Tories. Practical support for workers in dispute will forge alliances that the press can less easily break. This will mean, for many CLPs, breaking the habit of a lifetime and not just passing a resolution in support of the workers down the road, but actually getting out of their armchairs and down the road on to the picket line, on the demonstrations with the banner and behind the duplicator.

The links with the specially oppressed must continue, and grow. A Labour Party reaching out to women isolated in the home, to youth cast on the scrapheap by the Tory government, to Black families terrorised in their homes by white thugs encouraged to attack those who, the Tories imply, are the cause of the problems, can win massive stocks of votes by en-

franchising those who usually don't vote at all. More than this, it can rejuvenate itself, and harness greater forces for the struggle for socialism.

If this kind of political activity can become routine for Labour Party members, rather than having to resort to the *passive* "Labour will" campaigns, Labour Parties will be able to say "join us and fight!" — and be believed and supported.

However, all this will be in vain unless the left in the Party can wake up to the destructive role of the Party leadership and take the appropriate action.

The fight will not be easy. It will be difficult to harness even the forces that fought the democracy campaigns in the early seventies: many of these forces are still sitting on the fence, or have moved, under the prevailing pressure, to the right. The

way forward does not lie through loose coalitions of the Labour left, where too many are still reluctant to challenge Kinnock for fear of "rocking the boat" — and are desperately seeking alliances with the forces to their right in an attempt to seem larger than they are.

If we are to reorientate the Labour Party towards a class approach, a challenge to Kinnock must be built with those who have the same problems with his backers — the union bosses. The Party left must build alliances with all the forces prepared still to fight in the trade unions, and wage a common fight for our interests as a class.

The leaders have clearly shown what kind of agenda they want. It is up to us to put socialism *back* on the agenda.

Perhaps it is clearer to see in the trade unions. In dispute after dispute, trade union leaders have put their own position, their own interests above those of their members. They will not fight, they will not offer a strategy to take on the Tories' attacks and win. They will manoeuvre to keep the membership docile, to deliver what the Tories want, in order to be useful to the ruling class and be allowed to keep their privileges.

It is these same union leaders who installed Neil Kinnock at the head of the Labour Party.

After the press had attacked the Labour Party Black Sections for holding an AGM, some members of Black Sections made an approach to Neil Kinnock, imploring him to let the press attacks go by, not to answer them, so as not to provide further ammunition for attacking Labour and ruining Labour's electoral chances.

Up until the Wednesday morning Neil Kinnock denied any knowledge of any moves to discuss the issue at the National Executive Committee: by Wednesday afternoon he was supporting a resolution attacking Black Sections, distancing the Labour Party from half a dozen of its prospective candidates at the NEC meeting.

The left must realise the implications of the leadership's actions. It is not just that they are junking Conference policies. It is not that they are refusing to reverse the Tory attacks. The Labour right would actually prefer to pay the price of losing an election, of letting Thatcher in for a third term, if they can defeat the left — by throwing them out the Party if necessary.

The left must not stand silent about Kinnock. "Unity" in the interests of getting rid of Thatcher has not worked. As always, "unity" has proved to be unity with the right wing — on their terms. Action at local level to provide a Labour Party which stands up for the working class must be coupled with action to show that there is a fight on at national level.

Lesbian and Gay Pride Carnival Parade Solidarity Contingent 27 June 1987

IN VIEW of the mounting hostility towards lesbians and gays this year's Pride Steering Committee has decided to appeal for support from predominantly heterosexual organisations.

We hope that as many working people's organisations as possible will be represented in the solidarity contingent of the carnival parade.

Our slogan is *Equal Rights for All — Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights*.

We encourage you to take up the task of raising our model resolution within trades unions, trades councils, and political parties.

If you would like further information concerning the work of the Pride

Committee's solidarity work, please contact Mary Harper, 11 Rushton House, Albion Avenue, London SW8 2SE, tel. 01 720 7139.

Model Resolution:

"This rejects the attempts of the gutter press, bigots and right wing politicians to make use of the fear of AIDS to whip up hostility against gay men.

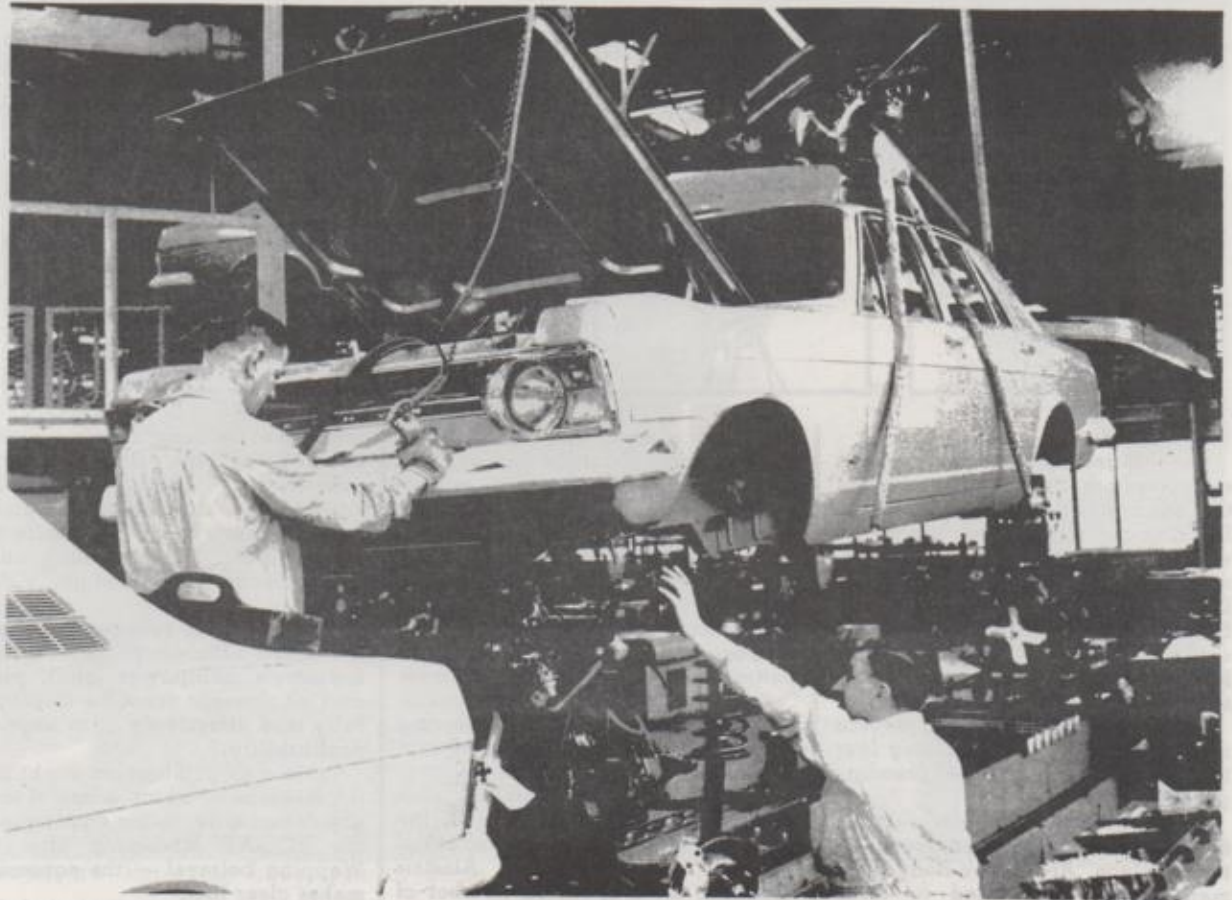
We are deeply concerned that the denial of rights to lesbians and gay men, and the increasingly common calls for greater repression are now being justified as legitimate "public health" measures.

In view of the mounting violence, discrimination and hatred being directed against lesbians and gays we believe that it is imperative for this to stand up and be counted.

We support the organisers' standpoint of *Equality for All — Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights* and we resolve to send our banner and as many of our members as possible to march in solidarity behind the lesbian and gay organisations in London on June 27, 1987."

Please add a clause pledging a donation, if the standing orders of your organisation permit this.

Please return a copy of the resolution you passed — including any amendments made to the model, and numbers of votes for, against and abstaining — to Mary Rushton at the above address.



Bosses count on union collaboration

SPEEDING UP THE JOB LOSSES

TORY Chancellor Lawson, always noted for his economy with the truth, pointed to at least one correct set of statistics in his post-budget TV broadcast: the substantial increase in the productivity of British industry.

Where has this 'productivity' come from? At source it arises from an increase in the level of exploitation of workers — from a speed-up on the shop floor, affecting almost every sector, but most savagely hitting workers in manufacturing industry.

With manufacturing output of the supposedly 'booming' 1987 economy still well below 1979 levels, the increased productivity comes from producing less with even fewer workers: hence the total loss of

By **JOHN LISTER**

750,000 jobs since 1979, and unemployment — open and hidden — at around 4 million.

One obvious case of this kind of attack has been British Leyland, which, under a succession of hammer blows from Michael Edwardes and his successors, has been hacked back and hived off to leave essentially only the volume car production units of the Austin Rover Group.

A brutal management regime, using repeated waves of voluntary redundancies to help weaken and demoralise the once-powerful shop stewards movement, and aided and abetted at each stage by full-time union officials who readily sign away the jobs, pay and conditions of their

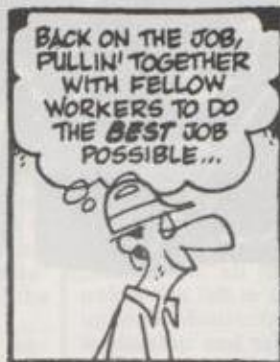
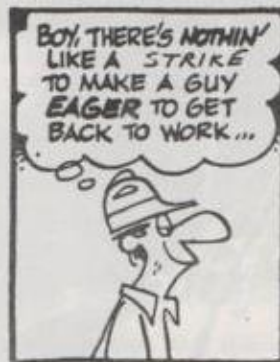
members, has dramatically speeded up production workers in BL.

Nor has the pressure been relaxed as the company has equalled and surpassed European productivity levels.

Management continue to exploit the national chauvinism of union officials and convenors in order to pressurise them into concessions in the quest for 'viability', seeking to make the firm 'competitive' against 'foreign' competitors (while BL management itself becomes more and more entwined with Honda, the Tories flog off Leyland trucks to the Dutch, and offer other prime cuts to Ford — or any other multinational with ready cash!)

Fearful of 'rocking the boat', BL union leaders pushed through a pay deal last November which gives only

MOTLEY'S CREW



5% with strings — over 2 years!

Encouraged by these retreats, the company has become so arrogant that the bonus in all the main plants has dropped to wipe out almost the whole pay increase: in Cowley, wages are now only 50p above the level before the review, while Swindon are down £5! This was the deal about which TGWU negotiator Mick Murphy said he was "over the moon".

The company is also trying to force in a new shift system involving four 9¾ hour shifts, with no premium payments.

With conditions under attack, there is also tremendous speed up taking place. At Cowley Body plant management have tried to force skilled workers onto production work.

The shop floor response has been different from their official leaders. A 5-1 vote for strike action by skilled workers at Cowley forced management to retreat. A mass meeting at Swindon voted against acceptance of the new shift system.

At Cowley Body Plant, Rover 800(XX) workers have been baning overtime for 6 weeks over the bonus cuts. Others have promised to join the action if their bonuses sink below £20 again. This militancy comes despite a decision from a full meeting of Body Plant shop stewards to urge the overtime ban be called off.

At Longbridge, too, there have been strikes over bonus payments. Two hundred stopped work recently when management sacked a worker without going through procedure: but the unions' works council persuaded them to return to work.

The BL management drive for "flexible" working lines up with the full-scale offensive of the Engineering Employers' Federation. They are seeking to exploit opportunities for speed-up arising from proposals for the eventual phased introduction (over a period of years) of a 37½ hour week.

With the willing assistance of the right wing leaders of the AEU, other bureaucrats from the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (Confed), the EEF has set its

sights on a major intensification of working throughout the industry.

A scandalous joint report drawn up by the EEF and the Confed proposes — among other things — a blank cheque for employers to increase the working week at will, without paying overtime rates. Under the heading "variations in working hours", come proposals to encourage a "flexible" pattern of weekly hours to meet "seasonal" and other fluctuations in demand: in effect engineering workers would be transformed into casual labour.

Indeed, the EEF/Confed plan overlaps with the campaign of the dotty-but-dangerous Industrial Society (Director — Alastair Graham) for a specified number of hours of a "working year" to replace the present 40 or 39-hour week.

The EEF/Confed scheme also spells out that where unions and employers did not agree, management would have the "right" to impose variations in the working week. If adopted, these measures would effectively destroy the guaranteed week, lay off agreements, overtime, and other premium rates.

Another section of the document focusses on Demarcation, declaring:

"The main purpose of this proposal was to remove demarcation lines where these existed purely because of union membership (1). (...) Tasks would be required to be undertaken commensurate with individual capabilities and training."

The net effect could be a wholesale loss of skilled jobs — and skilled workers being forced onto production tracks.

It is clear from this text that union leaders are working hand in glove with employers to generalise precisely the kind of attack on working conditions that is being imposed in Austin over.

But the employers' offensive goes much wider than engineering. One clause stands out in the EEF/Confed proposals — a mutual commitment to better utilisation of resources and working time.

This is closely echoed by the wording in the new pay offer to thousands of SOGAT members

working in the general print industry, covered by the British Printing Industries Federation. The agreement — strongly recommended for acceptance by SOGAT leaders — spells out a specific union endorsement of speed-up. "Both sides" agree that:

"costs must be recovered through increased efficiency; and that the industry's manpower (sic!), plant and equipment must be deployed fully and effectively ... to improve profitability."

In case a printworker might miss the message — which is one of total, abject surrender to the employers by the SOGAT leadership after the Wapping betrayal — the agreement makes clear that:

"Increases in productivity and the reduction of unit costs can only be achieved through efforts being made at individual company level, including the introduction of new technology to its full potential (1) The parties encourage regular discussion on means of improving all aspects of performance."

SOGAT members' noses are further rubbed into this mess by the additional insistence that

"It is agreed that management

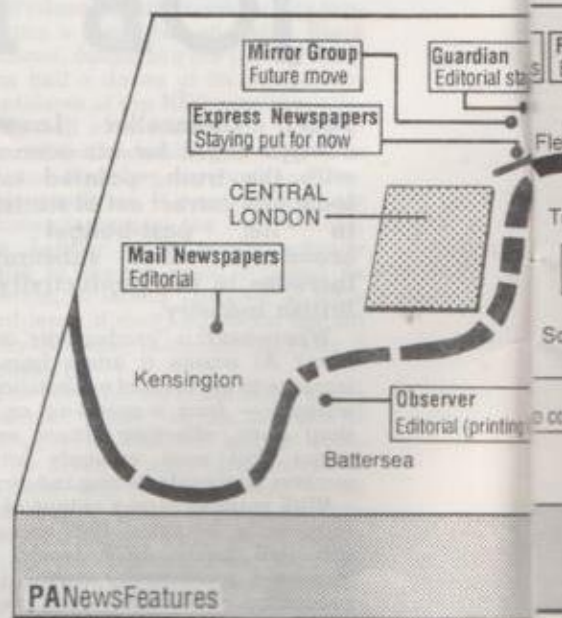


PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)



Police at Wapping help press home new technology and speed-up

and chapel representatives will cooperate fully in identifying, discussing and implementing any changes necessary to achieve increased output and lower unit costs through the most effective use of people, materials and machines."

This is nothing more or less than an invitation for the employers to force home whatever speed-up proposals or job-slashing new technology they may feel like. All in exchange for a

pathetic £6 increase — which employers have already said they will not pay if they don't want to: the BPIF has stated that:

"Where a critical situation exists (in a member firm) as a result of this Agreement the companies concerned should notify their employees, the unions and the regional office of the BPIF ... so that direct discussion can take place on means of alleviating the problems involved."

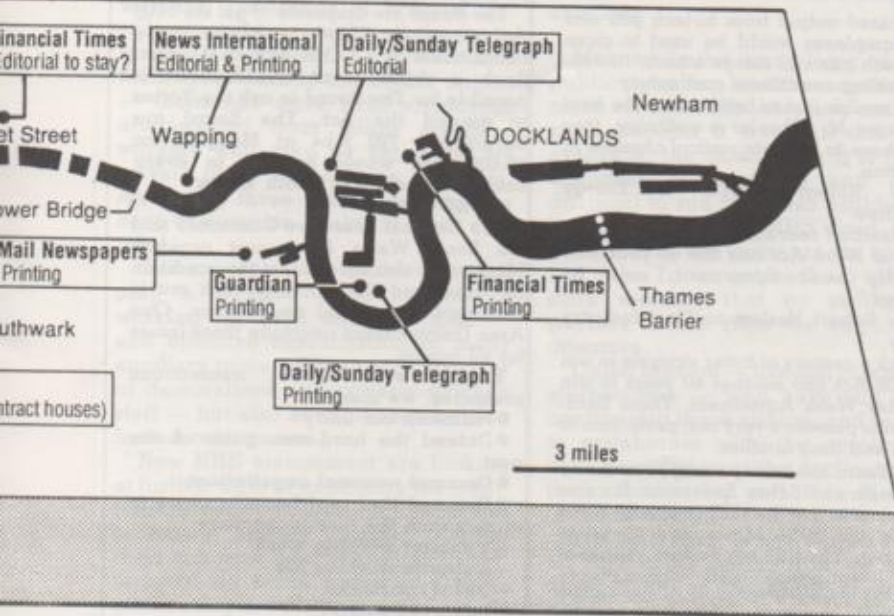


Rupert Murdoch

A similar clause proposed to the NUJ by the bosses of the Newspaper Society was sufficient to persuade journalists to withdraw from the charade of a national agreement in provincial papers: but SOGAT leaders just grin while their members are left to bear it.

Elsewhere, too, management are now looking to smash up national negotiating machinery and national agreements in order to play off one section of workers against another.

The most obvious example is the Coal Board's cynical move to force in 6-day working, 9½ hour shifts, and further speed-up, picking off the rightward moving South Wales NUM





The Telecom sell-out has ushered in new attacks

as a means of breaching the 40-year old five day week agreement.

The issues involved in this offensive affect every mineworker, as the excellent leaflet produced by Dearne Valley NUM (box) shows.

But speed-up and attacks on national agreements are not restricted to heavy industry and manufacturing. The recent British Telecom dispute and struggles on the rail have cen-

tered on management drive for intensification of working. 1.2 million workers in the health service have also been under the hammer.

Government action in press-ganging health authorities into putting NHS ancillary services out to competitive tender has not produced the vast private takeover that was once predicted: the vast majority of contracts have been awarded "in house".



What's behind the Margam proposals?

THE Coal Board are piling on the pressure.

So far the Board's approach has been furtive to force in drastic changes in working practices colliery by colliery. Now they are showing their hand forcefully on Margam, by demanding acceptance of continental shifts.

What's at stake?

● **Productivity**

"A productivity target of 10% yearly increase should be within our reach."

—Sir Robert Haslam to the Coal Industry Society, March 2, 1987.

The Board want an overall Output per Man Shift (OMS) of 6 tonnes, up from an average of 3.25 tonnes at present! This productivity increase is to be delivered by forcing through The Wheeler Plan — heavy duty face equipment, 6-day coaling, 8 or 9 hour shifts, changed role for craftsmen, deputies and other grades, new incentive schemes and deregulation of health and safety.

● **Jobs**

"The natural wastage on that (the total workforce) is something like, I would guess, 12,000 a year, maybe more."

—Sir Robert Haslam to the Commons energy Committee, November 5 1987.

The effect of the Wheeler Plan on jobs would be savage. Up to 50,000 jobs would be lost — 12,000 a year over four years. The deep mine output of 90 million tonnes

would be produced by only 70,000 men. Even if demand for coal picked up, the extra production would be taken from hi-tech superpits like Selby, which require few miners.

● **Pits**

Increased output from hi-tech pits and mine complexes would be used to close lower tech pits and merge others.

● **Working conditions and safety**

"We realise that to bring about the kind of changes Mr Wheeler is outlining, there would have to be quite radical changes in legislation."

—Sir Robert Haslam to Energy Committee.

"Outmoded restraints, such as the 1908 Hours of Work Act and the 40 year old, five day week agreement, must be removed."

—Sir Robert Haslam to Coal Industry Society.

It took a century of bitter struggle to win the 1908 Act and another 40 years to win the 5-day Week Agreement. These hard-won gains provide a very real protection to miners and their families.

The Board has been putting pressure on the Health and Safety Executive. It came as no surprise that the HSE is now trying to replace the 1954 Mines and Quarries legislation. The HSE has drafted a series of vague regulations and non-statutory Codes of Practice to replace our safety regulations. The NUM, NACODS and the

TUC are blocking this attempt to downgrade safety in the pits.

● **The first targets**

The Margam Drift Mine must be sunk. But it won't be producing for 5 years. The first targets for 6-day coaling and 8-9 hour shifts are the high investment pits in every coalfield and pits awaiting major investment.

Haslam has already told Selby miners they must work 6 days. Miners in the coastal pits of the North East have been told to accept 9 hour shifts now.

The Wheeler Plan makes it crystal clear — six day coaling and longer shifts must be introduced in all collieries.

The Board are desperate to get the 1908 Act amended. They are demanding a commitment to a CONCEPT at Margam. Such a commitment would make it possible for The Board to ask the Tories to amend the Act. The Board are bargaining 780 jobs at Margam for 50,000 that would be lost in every coalfield, including South Wales.

● **NEC**

The National Executive Committee said the South Wales Area must organise Margam. It also agreed that the condition on hours and the working week must be subject to national negotiations. One Area Union cannot negotiate these issues for all miners.

Faced with these tremendous pressures, we must:

- Maintain our unity
- Defend the hard-won gains of the past
- Demand national negotiations
- Demand that real benefits come to miners from the new technology
 - a shorter working week
 - a shorter working life
 - better conditions
 - improved safety.



Nurses - now health comes under the hammer of speed-up

But the exercise has achieved its objective: in the tendering process upwards of 40,000 jobs have been axed, bonus payments have been slashed, hours of work for tens of thousands of part-timers have been cut below the 16 hours which give pension and sick pay entitlement — and national union agreements and organising structures have been dismembered up into a multitude of local contracts. In almost every case the victims have been women workers. Thousands of hospital ancillary workers employed by anti-union contractors now find themselves outside the health unions — thousands more NHS employees are isolated from fellow ancillary workers who may be employed by private firms in the same hospitals. And every three years these workers have to compete again for their own jobs!

The impact of this shake-up is not only a massive intensification of working for most ancillary staff — and effective casualisation of many ancillary posts, with a rapid turnover of demoralised and poverty-stricken staff — but also an increased burden forced onto nurses.

Now NHS management are looking at further ways of exploiting the traditionally poor unionisation and lack of militancy among nurses. Among their schemes are revised shift patterns of up to 10 hours at a time, eliminating "changeover" shifts

where student nurses are trained — and possibly tearing up national pay agreements and instead looking for local deals.

While nurses are in desperately short supply in London — where NHS pay of £87 per week for a staff nurse is less than the newest office secretary could expect — there are less shortages outside the South East of England. The employers want to exploit this difference and only offer extra cash where nurses are short in numbers.

Meanwhile the crazy logic of Tory public spending limits means that the more efficient the hospital, and the more patients it treats in the beds available, the more likely it is (as in the case of Rochdale and other districts) to run into cash problems.

Nevertheless the NHS (and local government will come under similar fire if the Tories get back in) offers a stark warning that no section of workers is safe from the employers' offensive.

Union leaders — like Bill Sims of the steelworkers — who have run from confronting these attacks, and sought to collaborate with the employers, have presided over the decimation of their membership and the run-down of the industry.

The AEU, too, is now facing a major cash crisis arising from its fall in membership as thousands of redundancies have gone through

uncontested.

SOGAT and the NGA are already finding this to be the case in national newspapers, where every major employer encouraged by Rupert Murdoch's success, is now looking to relocate and to ditch hundreds or thousands of printworkers. Some local papers are even hoping to get rid of all their unionised typesetters and replace them with direct input and casual workers off the dole using the new technology.

The fight for an independent working class line of defending jobs, wages and living standards, rejecting employers' threats and looking towards a socialist solution to the crisis may seem utopian and "over the top" in today's climate of collaboration and "new realism".

But it is the only coherent alternative to a wholesale loss of jobs and the sacrifice of pay conditions painfully won over decades of struggle.

The task facing Marxists is fighting for this kind of class struggle perspective in the unions is far from easy. Yet without the development of a core of political militants in every industry and workplace able to combat the manoeuvres of right wing and Communist Party officials, any amount of resolution-mongering and electoral politics in the unions or the Labour Party will prove ineffectual in the fight against the ruling class.

NUM Vice President election

When is a "Broad Left" not a Broad Left?

THE BALLOT for the Vice Presidency of the NUM took place at pit heads on March 18th. As this magazine goes to press, it has just been announced that Yorkshire candidate Sammy Thompson has held off a challenge from Scotland's Eric Clarke.

Though Thompson clearly enjoyed the support of Arthur Scargill, while Clarke has been closely identified with Communist Party attempts to oust him from the Presidency, our special correspondent WILLIAM HEAD argues that there is little to choose between the two candidates.

Though there were four candidates, it was clearly always a two horse race between Eric and Sam, both presented as left contenders: Eric Clarke comes from the peripheral Scottish coalfield, while Sammy Thompson is based in the central Yorkshire coalfield.

Clarke is a star pupil of the old "Stalinist State School of Scotland", coached personally by headmaster Mick McGahey — a post formerly held by Mick's dad.

Previous pupils on the same roll of honour have included Lawrence Daly; but there have been Stalinist star turns in Yorkshire, too, including Davey Miller, who sold his job and his "left" credentials when he quit Kellingly at the end of the strike (he is now rumoured to be managing some sort of NCB enterprise project on a former pit site). Another old time Stalinist is Yorkshire's *Morning Star* circulation officer Frank Watters (not a member of the NUM, but appearances can be deceptive); though he was retired from his post during the CP split, Watters has for some reason recently been made an Honorary Member of the NUM — a status he shares with Nelson Mandela! There are five or six other lesser-known Stalinists at Yorkshire pits such as Sharlston; and there is a newly-launched group of "Selby Star Readers" in the super-pit complex.

Mick Appleyard, from Sharlston, writing in the *Morning Star* last September, pointed out regretfully that unless Eric Clarke won McGahey's job it would be the first time a leading Communist or CPGB member had not been part of the NUM leadership.

The "Selby readers" are part of an exclusive club inside the NUM, misleadingly called the "Broad Left".

McGahey, Daly, Clarke and Appleyard are members; so is Kim Howells, the research officer who helped orchestrate the South Wales moves to end the Strike. Frank Watters is a member, even though not a member of the NUM. Membership of this "Broad Left" is only offered to those who can deliver branch card votes, or to prevent someone making waves. It is nothing more or less than



Sammy Thompson at David Jones memorial march

PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

DAVID GARETH JONES Remembered for ever!

DAVID Jones died on March 15, 1984, on picket duty at Ollerton Colliery.

David was the first victim of the 1984/5 miners' strike; but the death of Joe Green, who died 15.6.84 outside Ferrybridge Power Station, was further indication of how far down the road of repression Thatcher's Britain was prepared to march.

Saturday March 14 1987 saw another memorial march to show that David, killed in the class struggle of the miners' strike, may be dead but he will never be forgotten. The march was well attended and numbers were up on previous years.

The speakers from Yorkshire, Jack Taylor and Sammy Thompson, spoke strongly and were supported by the National President Arthur Scargill.

Scargill spelt out National Union opposition to the S. Wales decision to endorse 6 day production at Margam. National negotiations must be retained as it is an essential ingredient of solidarity that uniform conditions and terms of employment are maintained for all grades of miners in the industry.



Scargill - under fire

Yorkshire President Jack Taylor

an electoral machine. The strange thing is that in this election it has put up two rival candidates for the same post — Clarke, and *Sammy Thompson*, who is also a member!

On policies, Eric Clarke has been making the running against Scargill. Like South Wales, he opposes forming a regional organisation of the Justice for Mineworkers campaign; Scotland and Wales are the only two NUM Areas not to build regional campaigns.

During the Strike, Clarke supported the calling of a ballot; though

of course he did not say so until afterwards! He worked with the South Wales leadership to sell out the strike in March 1985. Now he supports the UDM rejoining the NUM, complete with leading scabs Lynk and Prendergast. He holds this view despite the adamant opposition of the Notts NUM rank and file who insist they should not and would not put up with such a move.

Clarke also supports the retrograde regional policies adopted by South Wales in relation to the six-day week and the nine hour day. How

many years is it since Eric Clarke spent four hours down a pit — let alone nine hours on a shovel?

(Yes, we do still have shovels, and still no toilets or basic washing facilities; we still only get a 20 minute meal break; even members on the surface only get the same 20 minute snap break: and what other heavy industrial workers only get an extra 25p per hour on night shift?)

So what, then, of Sam, the "bread and butter" man?

He's our man, or so he's have us believe! He is supported by Scargill,

Right wing gain in Yorkshire area NEC

ELECTIONS for Yorkshire Area seats on the NUM's National Executive took place on the same day as the Vice Presidency ballot.

Twelve candidates put their names down to contest four seats — but large numbers of spoiled papers could be seen, with miners throwing their papers away in disgust or writing in "none of the above".

The four elected were Area President Jack Taylor, Financial Secretary Ken Homer, sitting NEC member Brian Dak- ing and Area Agent Johnny Walsh — the most vociferously anti-Scargill of those elected.

Walsh's win is a disappointment to the militant who campaigns vigorously against his right wing ticket. Except for sections within the local NUM, he had already been discredited in the labour and trade union movement.

The four elected were Area President Jack Taylor, Financial Secretary Ken Homer, sitting NEC member Brian Dak-

elections

By H.M. GREENAWAY

ing and Area Agent Johnny Walsh — the most vociferously anti-Scargill of those elected.

Walsh's win is a disappointment to the militants who campaigned vigorously against his right wing ticket. Except for sections within the local NUM, he had already been discredited in the labour and trade union movement.

His right wing base was the same Glasshoughton Colliery that spawned Sir Jack Smart (knighted by Thatcher) and Bill O'Brien MP. Glasshoughton has since closed without opposition from Walsh — but he is now turning his attentions to the Selby coalfield.

The failure of Dave Douglass from Hatfield Main to win election to the NEC is another setback for the left in Yorkshire, though Douglass himself is a maverick figure.

Formerly the British leader of the bizarre Posadas current, Douglass still doesn't seem to know where he stands politically. He has worked with the *Militant* and SWP-dominated "Miners' Broad Left" (as distinct from the Stalinist "Broad Left"). Recently he wrote in *Workers Press* supporting Sammy Thompson for Vice President — yet at the same time arguing the need for a rank and file candidate like Terry French: so why didn't he get Hatfield to nominate Terry for election? Even worse, Douglass also did the left a real disservice by writing an attack on left involvement in the Strike, entitled "Bores under the Floor".

Walsh's victory strengthens the right wing and Stalinist-led block ganging up against Scargill on the NEC, and brings the danger of demands for a re-election of the national President.

An NUM rank and file bulletin, the *Armthorpe Tannoy* characterised Walsh as "a rat in our midst". Scargill will soon become even more painfully aware of his "enemies within" the NEC.

and Sam says he supports Arthur — after all they are both from Yorkshire.

Thompson was forced by financial pressure to form a regional group of the Justice for Mineworkers campaign, since the National Solidarity Fund had dried up in June 1986. He uses the campaign to raise much-needed finance for the sacked miners; but insists that all money raised in Yorkshire should stay in Yorkshire. The campaign meetings are called and bureaucratically controlled by the Yorkshire NUM leadership, and Thompson opposes the Kent NUM's campaigning approach to the Justice Campaign, urging sacked miners to keep their heads down.

Thompson is equally opposed to associate NUM membership being offered to Women Against Pit Closure, or any other Miners' Support Group. Statements such as "They're all Trotskyist lesbians" were used to discredit the Women Against Pit Closures movement.

Thompson says he is against Lynk



PHOTO: Wayne Edginton

and Prendergast of the UDM being allowed to rejoin the NUM, and has opposed the South Wales line on Margam and the 6-day week. But he is himself known as a regionalist/federalist, and has openly spoken of the Yorkshire Area breaking away from the national structure of the NUM.

While tactically opposed to Scargillism, Thompson claims to be a prisoner of the "Barnsley bureaucracy". Yet he has used that same bureaucracy to his own advantage, cynically exploiting the Davy Jones memorial march to promote his electoral chances, and using the last issue of the *Yorkshire Miner* to say "Sam's your man".

So what's the difference? This is the question more and more miners will be asking, whoever wins the election.

But what else should we expect? Thompson is a member of the same "Broad Left" at regional and National level as Eric Clarke.

They both "piss int' same pot"! And when they get fed up with that, they'll piss on the members.

CAMPAIGNING WINS EXTRA NHS CASH FOR LONDON

(Reprinted from the latest "Health Emergency", April 1987)

HEALTH campaigners have been quick to claim the credit for pressurising the government into giving an extra £15m to London's health districts.

The new cash comes after years of annual cuts in London NHS spending, and by pure coincidence was announced in what everyone believes to be an election year.

"I don't think we would be exaggerating to say that if London Health Emergency, local campaigners and health unions had not been so persistent and energetic in opposing the cutbacks in London's hospitals, this money would not have been forthcoming," commented LHE Information Officer John Lister.

Norman Fowler's allocations of small sums of extra cash to relieve waiting lists, and further money to alleviate the loss of resources from London to other regions, mean that all but six of London's 30 health

districts have received unplanned bonus handouts.

Ten London health districts share a total of £2.1m for projects to trim soaring waiting lists: nineteen districts divide up another £10.6m additional cash compensating for the impact of "RAWP" cuts; another £2.4m extra goes to London-based Special Health Authorities. All the sums are for one year only.

Of course the £15m total falls far short of the extra £22m needed to enable London's NHS to keep pace with rising costs and growing demand this year. And it is a drop in the ocean compared to over £200m that would be needed to restore London's NHS to the levels of care provided in 1982.

But it clearly reflects government sensitivity to growing public alarm at the visible decline in the capital's cash-starved hospital services.

In some districts, such as Riverside, the extra money may be sufficient to stave off embarrassing

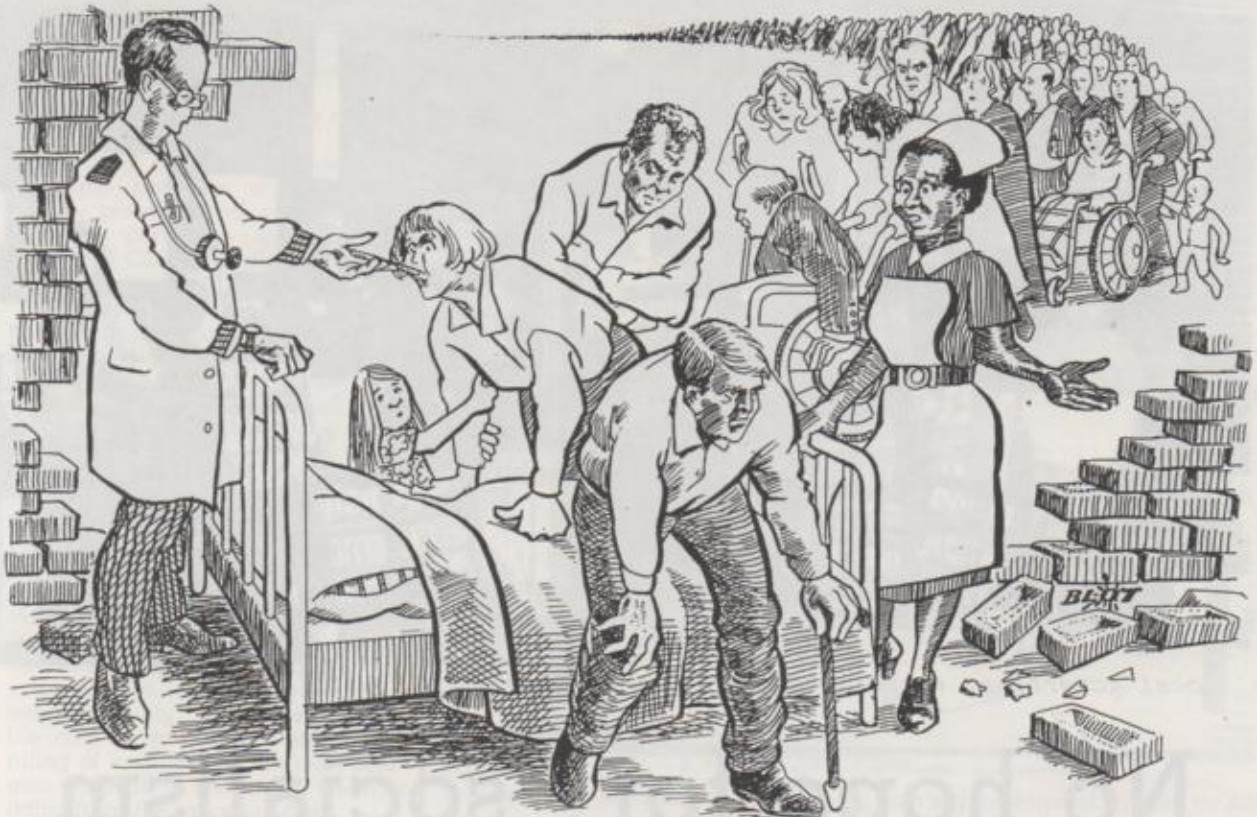
new hospital closures until after the next election.

Among the six districts which get no relief from the extra cash is Barnet, containing Margaret Thatcher's constituency, where waiting lists have been rocketing out of control; crisis-ridden Ealing, facing a new £1.3m cuts package; and Waltham Forest, whose waiting list is the tenth largest in the capital.

However, campaigners will see the latest concessions as an encouragement to step up their activities, which have succeeded beyond expectations in bringing the scale of the health crisis to the public eye. As John Lister added:

"Norman Fowler's announcements confirm that it is possible for campaigners, unions, and watchdog bodies like London Health Emergency to push back government attacks.

"If we had left the health authorities and the media to their own devices, and not set out to



publicise each and every cutback, the government might have got away with their original plans.

"As it is, the very fact that this extra money has been produced underlines our argument that London's NHS - and the health service nationally - is grossly under-funded.

"Now it looks as if the West

London Hospital, at least, will win a further reprieve and some other cuts may be held back.

"But of course what is really needed is not a short-term pre-election hand-out, but a fundamental reverse in policy. We want an end to the annual cuts in London's NHS budget - which threatens further bed losses and

closures right up to 1994; instead we need a massive increase in the national NHS budget, to repair the damage that has been done, and expand the health service to meet demand and clear up the waiting list."

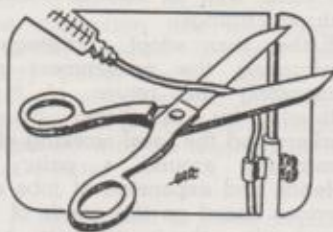
Desperately seeking dropouts

THE inexorable rise in national and local waiting list figures despite highly publicised commitments to reduce them has driven NHS management to new, desperate measures to manipulate the statistics.

The result is that a fall in the official figures is probably more likely to result from management action to "validate" the list than from treating extra patients.

This has already happened in Kingston, where management admit to having cut 552 names off the list without performing a single operation.

Recent reports in the *Health Service Journal* show how managers are discussing the best ways of cutting back the lists. At a recent seminar at the Kings Fund centre attended by grocery-NHS boss Sir Roy Griffiths, one unit manager boasted that he had reduced a surgeon's 200-strong list by 51% through "validation".



After initial inquiries to see which patients had died, moved, recovered, found treatment elsewhere, patients left on the list were written to, asking them if they still wanted treatment!

Of course the superficial improvement in waiting lists brought about by these tactics does nothing to increase resources in the hospitals or remedy the delays and frustration of patients for whom still no treatment is available: those left on the list will still wait just as long unless more funds are made available.

These latest efforts to fiddle down the figures to produce the illusion of progress follows the 1979 trick of crossing off day care patients from waiting lists, and the preliminary "cull" ordered by Norman Fowler in 1984 with the objective of trimming 10% from the lists.

Cutting the lists at source

A NEW, sinister move artificially to reduce queues for outpatient and in-patient treatment appears to be in the offing.

The Department of Health is conducting a survey on the possibilities of imposing quotas restricting the number of patients each GP could refer for hospital treatment.

If this were introduced then waiting lists could be "reduced" by preventing patients even getting a hospital appointment!

North Lincolnshire's DHA's general manager summed up the ruthless logic of the scheme:

"Given that demand will always exceed supply, we are talking about rationing, so we ought to try and make it rational rationing."

Another handy by-product of this scheme from a government point of view is that it would be a step towards imposing cash limits on GP services which (unlike hospitals) have until now enjoyed an open-ended budget.

PHOTO: Jon Dobie



Local government workers in dispute with Islington council

No hope for "socialism in one borough"

IN mid-March the High Court rejected the appeal by 47 Liverpool Councillors against surcharge and a ban from office for 5 years. With the District Auditor now thought unlikely to take action against any of the other Councils which delayed setting a rate in 1985 this brought to an end a phase in the resistance to the government's attack on local government.

Yet the Tories' attack continues, even though their plans to force councils to privatise some services have been withdrawn for the time being. However, unlike in 1985, there has been no attempt by the left councils to fight the government cut in funding.

In 1987 all the rate-capped councils have resorted to a mixture of "creative accounting", capitalisation of revenue, massive borrowing, lease-back arrangements, deferred purchase schemes and, in some cases, rent and rate increases to bridge the shortfall between income and expenditure. Thus the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) is leasing back the school desks from a finance company (next step the

By JOHN PETERS

students?) and Brent Council is doing the same with its council tenants' bathroom fittings.

Rather than adopt a strategy of confronting the government and demanding the return of funds withheld by mobilising council workers and the local working class community around a policy of defence and expansion of jobs and services based on the needs of the community, these councils have chosen to evade this fight and adopt a variant of Kinnock's "dented shield". Rather than declare that they will spend what is necessary regardless of restrictions placed by central government (a "deficit budget") and begin to organise now for the confrontation, they have chosen to rely on the financial wizardry of Directors of Finance. Instead of studying where those who *did* attempt to fight, such as Liverpool and Lambeth, went wrong and to draw the lessons for future battles they have chosen to declare a fight impossible and save their own necks.

The "creative accounting" strategy, while avoiding a fight, simply builds up the financial problems for councils in future years

with debt charges and lease-back payment to be met. They are relying not on the mobilisation of the working class but on the goodwill of a government bailing them out at sometime in the future. Yet Kinnock has declared he will not do this (if Labour is elected) and the price of any relief would probably be massive cuts.

Three of the Councils which went Labour in May '86 but which are not rate-capped — Ealing, Waltham Forest and Hammersmith & Fulham — decided on the equally disastrous strategy of massive (50-60%) rate rises to implement their manifestos. Supported by many on the left, dubious arguments have been put forward to justify this policy — that after years of Tory rule the rates were considerably lower than in other, equivalent London boroughs, that they will be rate-capped anyway next year so they had to do it all in one go, etc.

The fact remains, that unlike income tax, rates are not a progressive tax and the *best* that can be said for the rate rises is that they hit the better off sections of the working class more than the unemployed and those on a very low income. But what kind of a socialist strategy is it that sees the answer in transferring resources from one section of the class to another?

The chances of gaining support for any struggle against rate-capping next year are drastically reduced by such high rate rises.

Whether or not cuts in jobs and services are contained within "creative accounting" budgets becomes not a principle but one of how much leeway previous such measures still leave a particular council. Thus Liverpool City Council, just prior to the debarment of the Labour Councillors, could claim that a windfall from the abolition of Merseyside County Council together with a 5% rate increase would prevent any cuts, whereas ILEA even with all such measures is still likely to be about £51m short.

Inherent in creative accounting is that it is extremely difficult to get clear information about the exact financial situation and exactly what a particular budget means, making it hard to prove cuts are intended. Thus despite Liverpool's "no cuts" claim, 700 jobs have gone in the last year. Sheffield council is asking "all employees to look at ways to work more efficiently," while posing possible cuts in its teaching staff. Non-filling of vacancies is the most common cut of all — and one of the most difficult for the unions to fight.

Alongside this refusal to confront the government is a new wave of disputes between councils and their workforces. Inevitably, once a council decides to make cuts or to strictly define its "priorities" within its budget, conflict occurs with the possibility of the unions either opposing such cuts or raising demands about pay or working conditions which upset these priorities.

While the unholy alliance of Media, Tories, Owen, Kinnock, etc., have attacked the "loony left" councils for their limited attempts to ameliorate discrimination in housing, jobs, education, etc., against women, gays and lesbians, black people and the disabled, they have generally kept relatively quiet about these attacks on workers' conditions and pay.

Thus in Liverpool the last weeks of the Labour Council saw almost every Tade Union in dispute with the council. GMBWU members in dispute over privatisation occupied the Town Hall — the council hired private contractors to break down the doors. NALGO members struck against the council's decision to close down community work teams and teachers struck for 3 days after the Council docked pay from those refusing to cover for absentees.

Both Liverpool and Lewisham have seen major disputes with NALGO demanding security screens in housing offices as protection from violent attacks from those frustrated at their inability to get adequate housing. Manchester NUPE housing branch struck over inadequate housing accommodation. Strathclyde library



PHOTO: Jon Doble

workers and Islington housing officers are engaged in long disputes over pay claims. Over 2,500 Ealing NALGO members struck for a month in support of a claim for Inner London Weighting, something already won by Ealing teachers and NALGO members in neighbouring outer London boroughs.

The ILEA is introducing the most extensive attack on the conditions of its workforce. Until now redeployment of teachers between schools has been voluntary. This year it has introduced a compulsory scheme for moving about 1,300 teachers despite the disruption this will mean in schools. Despite Regional Labour Party policy being against compulsory redeployment, ILEA did not consult with the Party and refused to negotiate with the teachers until the last minute.

A new aspect to these disputes is the way in which councils are attacking the unions. Thus when the Executive of the Inner London Teachers Association was suspended by the NUT for organising a one-day strike against Baker's imposition of a pay deal, ILEA immediately withdrew recognition. Liverpool threatened NALGO with an injunction because there had been no ballot before the strike, Manchester threatened the scrapping of the trade union facility time agreement and to discipline those involved in workplace meetings to hear the housing aid workers' case. Camden only just drew back from taking disciplinary action against NALGO members who picketed a council meeting.

It is clear that as councils pull back

from any intention of fighting for adequate funding from the government they have to turn on those sections of their workers and their organisations which stand in the way of this climb-down. Any pretence of a joint campaign with the unions against the government is dropped in the headlong rush to stay in office at all costs. All the rhetoric about "service delivery", "a prioritisation of resources", and even that NALGO is not a proper union because it is not affiliated to the Labour Party (this often from those who give full support to the teachers) cannot hide the fact that these left leaders have come up against the limitation of municipal socialism — socialism in one borough — and are retreating into their "fortress".

While councils are of course the "local state" and large employers, they have the choice of also acting as part of the labour movement. That means encouraging and supporting the self-activity of the working class (and not just in "distant" disputes, like the NUM, but amongst their own workforce) and not backing away from confrontation with the government over finance, housing, etc. Their attacks on the unions ultimately weaken the whole labour movement including the councils themselves.

For revolutionary socialists the position is clear. We encourage and support councils and councillors where their policies benefit the working class and the specially oppressed and confront the government; but when they attack their workers we stand four-square in solidarity with them and demand that councillors to do so too.

A contribution to the discussion

Marxists and the Labour Party

ALF FILER, a well-known activist in Brent East CLP and a supporter of Labour Briefing, replies to our last issue's coverage of the struggle for Marxism in the labour movement and the Labour Party.

WHILE not disagreeing with the general thrust of the article by John Peters in the last issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*, there is however a need to clarify and extend the debate regarding the role of Marxists in the Labour Party.

This discussion, while dating back to the '30s, and in some senses not having changed that much, requires a more detailed analysis than simply commencing with the need to "smash the ideological and organisational hold of the Labour Party over the working class."

The Labour Party does represent a barrier to the struggle for socialism in this country and at the same time is the only mass working class party within which revolutionaries must function if we are to use these class contradictions in our favour. But that also suggests that in winning militants over to our analysis, we must take care in using crude slogans such as "smash the Labour Party".

The emphasis must be to battle against labourism of the economic, chauvinistic and pro-capitalist form, and counterpose to that our programme of Internationalism, anti-Imperialism and anti-Capitalism. Only when we have carried out a thorough struggle on this basis, having won the ideological battle, can we then project the organisational requirements that must flow from this.

That is not to say there is a stageist approach to building a revolutionary Party, for the two go hand in hand. The issue though is that in winning support for our politics we do not want to build up false barriers between Marxists and the militants we are seeking to win over, who do not yet see the need to "smash the Labour Party".

Of course we must argue for a

Marxist analysis of the Labour Party and not get caught in the centrist trap of putting security of position in the Party above that of programme; but that does not mean either that we overlook tactics, especially when we are being confronted with a witch-hunting NEC who are only looking for excuses to expel comrades.

As the Capitalist crisis worsens, it is even more relevant for Marxists to push forward the slogan "Labour take the power", using this as an opportunity to argue on what basis Labour should take power. (Not to carry out the policies of the IMF and the ruling class but to challenge the power of Capital.)

While fully aware that the Labour and trade union leadership are both unwilling and unable to pursue a proletarian programme, we are aiming our sights at those millions who have illusions in Labour.

We must learn to concretise and update the concept of the Transitional Programme as the lynchpin to mobilising the increasing numbers being drawn into class struggle at different levels. By providing practical assistance in a non-sectarian fashion, we can then earn the right to offer revolutionary leadership. Anything else is merely false posturing which will result in political impotence.

The reality of the modern Labour Party is that there are thousands of militants who are disillusioned with it; many more who won't touch it with a barge pole; others who see it as a vehicle for their own careers, and some who are not really sure why they are in it in the first place.

The sociological make-up of the Party is relevant, not in the sense that it alters the objective role of Labour, but in terms of understanding how different social and political groups respond to the Labour Party and the challenges that emerge as a result.

The issue of representation of Women, Black people, Gays and Lesbians, and other sections must be seen not as just another issue to adapt to, but a need to fundamentally rethink traditional Marxist analysis regarding the nature of the working class in modern capitalist Britain.

A radical break with a Euro-centric analysis which is both sexist and racist by nature does not mean abandoning Marxism, as some have done,

but strengthening it in light of the post Second World War situation. We can not just rely on the limited writings of Trotsky & Co. to understand these developments; but we are able to draw on their rich experiences alongside those of the present day. Marxism is not a straitjacket but a scientific method to enable us to analyse events.

This also has relevance to organisational issues, when attempting to break from a white male dominated hierarchical structure developed by previous groups. In aiming not to replace this with tokenism, we need first to locate discussion on the lessons of the sects in terms of an understanding of the relations between class, sex and race.

Dogmatic crude workerism of the SWP/Militant variety must be rejected. We must admit that even the traditional Bolshevik model is inadequate. To do so is not being revisionist in any sense but to advance the cause by advancing the theory based on practice and experience. Any other approach, by its very nature is anti-Marxist.

Revolutionaries in the Labour Party in Thatcher's Britain of the 1980s are a long way off from "smashing the Labour Party". The NEC may be betraying Conference policies but they are certainly not betraying Capitalism. The so-called "Hard Left" (a very unscientific and confusing term), appears to be shrinking monthly after more boring GMCs; desertions are the name of the game at the present.

This puts even more pressure on these small forces who aim to "smash the Labour Party". If we are to provide an alternative pole of attraction to that of the old and new Right and the many varieties of opportunists, then we must present an analysis and a programme based on principles which can capture the imaginations of all those millions looking for a way out of the mess caused by capitalism.

We must question the routinistic practice of the Labour Party which often dictates the way many of us politically organise if we are to respond adequately. If we don't, then that will prevent many women, lesbians, gays, Black people and those of us with children from being able to participate fully in the struggles for socialism.



South African connection: Hangers strikers protest at bosses BTR

LSE Occupation

Students take the lead against apartheid

By **TOM SILVERLOCK**
(LSE Labour Club,
personal capacity)

SINCE 1978 the Students Union at the London School of Economics has supported the call for the institution to sever all links with the South African state.

At the moment the LSE has £1.7m shares in firms who have significant business interest in South Africa. These include companies like Shell, British Petroleum, Glaxo, and British Tyre and Rubber (the company who sacked the 300 Hangers limbmakers).

In July 1986, the Students Union raised the issue of divestment with the Court of Governors (the ruling body of the LSE) through their student representatives (the student governors). They suggested a criterion — that the LSE divests from companies who employ more than 500 workers in South Africa. This criterion has been adopted by US

Universities and British Local Authorities.

The LSE governors ignored these proposals. The Anti-Apartheid group at the college took up the issue, and a campaign was launched within the college — but to no avail.

On Tuesday February 24 at about 2pm about 50 students occupied Connaught House, the main administrative building. The building had been locked since Monday in anticipation of an occupation, and guarded by porters. The chair of the college Anti Apartheid Group said:

"After years of collecting signatures on petitions, countless successful motions at Union Meetings, winning the support of the academic board, and candlelit vigils, the court of governors has left us with no option but to take direct action to express our anger and disgust, and to place meaningful pressure on them to stop buttressing the system of racial capitalism in South Africa."

We secured all the entrances of the building by locking them or bar-

ricading them, leaving one entrance free to go in and out but with strong security (you had to show your library card to get in and out). By the evening the occupation had increased to about 250 students.

The next day an EGM (Emergency General Meeting) was held of the Students Union inside the occupation itself. All students could come, and it was decided to turn all union meetings into occupation meetings. From then until the occupation finished the following Tuesday there was at least one of these meetings a day, which provided a forum for discussion which had never existed before in the Students Union meetings.

Many students were speaking publicly for the first time. The discussions were heated, but many good ideas and initiatives came from the floor.

There was an occupation committee which was dominated by Students Union officers. There was, however, an opportunity for anyone who wanted to get involved in organising the occupation to stand on this committee.

Leaflets were also produced telling other students at the college what the occupation was about and encouraging them to join it.

Approaches were made to the staff of the LSE through their branch officers of their respective Unions. The unions represented at the LSE are the TGWU (porters and manual staff), the AUT (Association of University Teachers) and NALGO (who represent the administrative staff). None of these unions gave messages of solidarity to the occupation, and the general response was that they supported the aim but not the action.

The occupation has shown the weak links between the staff unions and the students union. There were however individual acts of solidarity when a porter turned on the heating for us during the weekend and when a couple of lecturers joined the occupation for a short time.

The response to the occupation by the Court of governors was to claim that the LSE was in fact not investing money in companies who make more than 5% of their profits in South Africa (Shell, for example, supplies more than 18% of South African energy supplies and has more than 1,000 employees in South Africa but it has less than 3% of its global assets in South Africa!).

By Thursday evening a possession order was granted against us, and two named people and one unnamed were summoned to appear in court on the Monday at 2pm. It was agreed to pay a solicitor to prepare a case and a lot of work was done phoning up Students' Unions throughout the country asking for support and delegations to come down and help picket the court. Many pledges were made from colleges all over the country, and morale was boosted as it broke a feeling of isolation.

Later it was discovered that leading members of the NUS had also been ringing round colleges — telling them *not* to come down to the picket on Monday, because the occupation had not been made official by them!

This sabotage took place despite the fact that members of the NUS Executive had been coming to the occupation and speaking in support of it. Members of the occupation committee immediately went to the NUS offices and asked them to account for themselves.

The NUS backed down and decided to support the occupation officially and promised to undo the damage they had already done.

On the Friday evening a UGM (Union General Meeting) was held to discuss the case, and also to welcome a speaker from Hangers — the lim-makers, where 300 workers had been sacked when they came out on strike in support of 4 workers who were unfairly dismissed.

The link between their dispute and ours was very strong since the com-

pany who sacked the Hangers workers, BTR, also was one of those in which the LSE had shares (21,500 in fact). The Hangers speaker got a long ovation, and suprisingly £71 was raised.

The Hangers workers also pledged to send their banner down to the picket on Monday. There was then a discussion as to whether to fight the case or not.

The SWP through their student organisation SWSO spoke against fighting the case. Their reasons were that the basis for fighting the case undermined the occupation itself. (This was actually true, because the solicitor had told us that we should fight the case on the basis that we were only occupying the lecture rooms, and were in fact waiting for our lecturers to turn up!!). Other people were saying that we should fight the case because we had a good chance of winning it.

The vote went against fighting the case but this was overturned at the Sunday General Meeting, with the SWP this time putting up no opposition. The Monday was the big day. A leaflet was printed to ask all students to strike by boycotting lectures and classes and to support the picket at the court.

Pickets were organised at all buildings of the college. At 12 noon we had a general meeting to discuss what to do if we lost the case. It was decided that we would leave in an orderly fashion when the bailiffs and the police arrived and put up no resistance.

Then about 600 students marched

spontaneously just down the road to the courts, where we heard David Kitson speak and also messages of solidarity from other Student Unions. A few people from the 24 hour non-stop picket at the South African Embassy taught us some ANC songs and we all sang them outside the court.

We made our way back to the occupation; at about 4.15 we found we had lost the case. It was too late for the sheriff to come because he finished work at four! We were then told that the bailiffs would arrive at 10am the following morning. The SWP moved that we should lock the door, and that the police should have to haul us out. This was defeated, and it was decided that when the bailiffs turned up with the police we should all walk out together.

That night there were a lot of drunken students!

The bailiffs eventually came at about 11.30 the next morning accompanied by 4 policemen. There were about 400 of us and we marched out of occupation and spontaneously around the college buildings, shouting and chanting.

Many more students and supporters joined the march. The college authorities and police were obviously surprised by the numbers.

The occupation has turned the Students' Union into a lively debating forum and has created many student activists.

This action is amongst many actions taken by students recently not only in Britain but also France and Spain, and we have many lessons to learn from each other.

LWAC throws in its lot with the NEC

By JANE PRUST

IF you feel an irresistible urge to yawn when you hear the words Labour Party constitution it's a natural reaction. Constitutions are boring things. However, they can also be dangerous in the hands of some people.

The Labour Party leadership are currently using the constitution of the Party to attack and undermine the left, particularly the constitutional reviews being carried out of the LPYS and the Women's Organisation.

In the case of the LPYS the position is clear: it's a blatant attempt to undermine the influence of *Militant* in the Young Socialists. For the women's organisation the issues are not so clear cut.

The 1986 Party Conference voted for a review of the Women's Organisation to be carried out by the NEC in consultation with the National Labour Women's Committee. Most women had no doubt what form this "consultation" would take — a rerun of the Black Sections Consultation, when the NEC totally rejected the views of the Party, which were in favour of setting up Black Sections.

It came as a surprise to many women that one of the most vocal groups arguing in favour of the review was the Labour Women's Action Committee. LWAC has, in the past, supported the campaign for increased power for women in the Labour Party (in fact they initiated it); how then did they come to support a proposal which conceded power over the women's organisation to the NEC? Previously LWAC have always

argued that it should be the national Women's Conference which should decide upon any changes, based upon the existing Women's Conference policy.

LWAC's aim has been to gain more power for women by gaining increased representation for women in the Party. For a number of years now the LWAC demands — the Women's Conference to elect the women's seats on the NEC; the right to send five resolutions direct to National Conference; and others — have been overwhelmingly passed by Women's Conference — and overwhelmingly defeated at National Conference.

They had come up against a dead end in the fight for constitutional change, with the trade union block vote ranged against them. Faced with this, some women in LWAC argued that the time had come to turn the campaign outwards, to build links with other women in struggle, and particularly rank and file women in the trade unions and to learn from other experiences.

Instead LWAC became ever more isolated and inward looking, dominated by a small group of women who claim to be representative of all women in the labour movement. Some of these women turned their backs on campaigning, in favour of doing deals with bureaucrats — always a risk for an organisation whose sole reason for being is to achieve constitutional change. These women argued strongly in favour of the review: they saw the consultation as being discussions and deals between themselves and the trade union and party bosses, not as a campaign among women.

The review does provide us with some positive opportunities. Trade union women have long felt (often with justification) that Labour Party women have little time or respect for their struggles and they are under-represented in the women's organisation and particularly at Women's Conference.

We have the chance to build links between women in the unions and

women in the Labour Party on the base of a common cause — greater power and greater representation for all women.

We need to campaign in the unions amongst rank and file activist women (and men!) in order to win them over to our ideas. But there is no evidence that LWAC is doing this.

We could also demand that women's organisations should have the right to affiliate to the Party. If Women Against Pit Closures, or Women Against Murdoch were to affiliate, the amount of knowledge and experience of fighting capital and vested interests would make a positive step towards transforming the Party.

Yet LWAC oppose giving the organisations already affiliated (e.g. the Co-op Women) any influence or votes in the Labour Party women's organisation. They're certainly not interested in fighting for working class women's organisations to affiliate.

As Thatcher plays racist card

BLACK WORKERS FIGHT BACK

By DAN CARTER

AT A time when a number of anti-deportation campaigns are suffering serious and sinister attacks, the people of Deptford are celebrating the return of Ayse Halil after a three-year long campaign.

In Leeds, Rose Alaso was found guilty of assaulting a police officer despite the fact that she was clearly defending herself against people she thought were immigration officials trying to kidnap her. Dave Roberts, Leeds NALGO branch secretary (of which Rose is a member), spoke to *NALGO News* of the harassment, saying "It is typical of the kind of thing people face who are threatened by deportation."

In Manchester, Viraj Mendis has sought sanctuary in a Church to avoid deportation. With massive

press publicity over his case, especially following outrageous comments by Home Office Minister David Waddington, racist attacks against his supporters have been stepped up, with one woman having a swastika scratched on her hand. Mendis has now been appointed Manchester City Council's Immigration and Nationality Officer, but this appears to have cut little ice with the Home Office, who are determined to go ahead with the deportation.

In Deptford, though, there is proof that sustained campaigning can bring victory in the end. Ayse Halil was deported to Turkey in 1985, being forced to leave two of her children behind. Her case has arisen simply because she hadn't been registered correctly when she reached her 18th birthday.

The campaign to stop her deportation grew from the school her sons attend, involving large sections of the local community, the Labour Party,

MPs and MEPs, issuing regular newsletters and constantly keeping up the pressure. Eventually, the Home Office backed down at the final appeal stage and she has now been reunited with her family.

The Deptford case is proving a much-needed boost to the hundreds of other campaigns being waged around the country, several of which are being co-ordinated from the Hackney-based Anti-Deportation campaign.

Deportation campaigns are one aspect of the growing self-organisation of Black people in Britain. The campaigns over Broadwater Farm, the Trevor Monnerville Defence Campaign in Hackney, the fight of Black Sections in the Labour Party and the formation of black caucuses in the unions, have all combined to make the labour movement take anti-racist work more seriously.

But despite the fact that many black organisations have been rooted

in the labour movement for decades (the Indian Workers' Association, for example), they have been "tolerated" rather than encouraged and supported by people who fail to see the parallels between the self-organisation of Black people today and the self-organisation of the working class that produced the labour movement in the last century. It is only through such self-organisation that the oppressed will overthrow the ruling forces.

It is in this light that we have seen the renewed attacks by the Labour Party leadership on the Black Sections in the Party. The message from Head Office is increasingly one of returning to the racist and in fact unproved line of claiming that "Black people lose votes"; the latest outcries seemingly based on a single council by-election in Hackney. Studies of the London Boroughs and ILA elections in 1986 in fact point if anything in the other direction.

Black people in the Party are again being told to keep quiet and wait for a Labour government to do something for them. If we haven't learnt the lessons of the racist immigration controls, discrimination in employment and housing allocation under the last Labour government by now, we should learn them very quickly.

The Black Sections have defied those critics who claimed they were an elitist clique merely after Parliamentary seats and positions in the bureaucracy, and have turned out to support the struggles of Black people in South Africa, and to take up issues in society as a whole such as education and police oppression.

Their recent Conference has stunned Labour's leaders by stating they would form a caucus of Black MPs in Parliament — but why should the white men in the Shadow Cabinet find it surprising that such a resolution would be passed by a conference of Black Sections? The need for an organised lobby for the Black community in Parliament is clear.

The fact is that Labour MPs are still parroting the racist lies of the Tory press. Joe Ashton recently attacked Russell Profit on TV, claiming that Black bin liners had been banned in London because they were racist. This is an absolute disgrace — but there is no sign of Neil Kinnock seeking to discipline people like Ashton.

The fact remains that the Black Sections have succeeded in bringing new Black activists into the Party and in giving those Black members already there the confidence to stand up and force the Party into anti-racist activity and policy.

There are of course policy decisions adopted by Black Sections that as Marxists would oppose — such as the advocacy of Black-only schools which whilst they would undoubtedly improve the qualifications gained by some Black school students, would do

Friendly bobbies give black ratepayers a taste of Neil Kinnock's "law and order" policies in practice.



nothing to challenge the racist education system, the whole elitist nature of the education system, or indeed the racism of other school students.

But these debates can be had in a healthy way as we move forward together, building a principled Left in the Labour Party. What unites us far outweighs what divides us. The fact is that Black Sections have forced the Left to challenge racism in the Party in a far stronger way than it used to.

In terms of black self-organisation in the unions, it can be no coincidence that it is NALGO, with the strongest Black caucus of all unions that has been most vocal in its support for anti-deportation campaigns and has brought the issue into the labour movement in the cases of its members such as Mohammed Idrish and Rose Alaso.

The inseparable links between activists in the Black community and the labour movement have also been shown over the issue of policing. The demands for police accountability are key, not because it is possible to make an ever-more-militarised wing of the British state genuinely accountable to the community, but because it provides the opportunity for us to raise demands of community defence squads and eventually workers' militias. It gives us the context to raise demands that if raised in the abstract would be rejected out of hand.

As the economic crisis worsens, with Black people bearing the brunt, there will be increasing attempts by the Tories to divide the workforce. As the election approaches, the Tory "racist card".

It is now, therefore, that we should increase the links between the Black communities and the labour movement — and build genuine non-sectarian anti-fascist movements such as Anti-Fascist Action, which now has a high involvement from Asian youth organisations.

We should not "tail-end" demands from Black organisations in the manner of some on the Labour left, who uncritically support every single demand made, in its way that is as patronising and racist as those in the movement who ignore their demands.

We should instead be making clear the relevance of the demands made by Marxists in the Party.

We should increase our anti-racist as well as anti-fascist work, and prove by our example that some sections of the left at least take such work seriously.

The Gorbachev Reforms

WHAT's going on in the Soviet Union is big news. Every week the mass media offer us new revelations and new "radical reforms" in the Soviet Union.

As in every political crisis in the so-called "socialist countries", the bourgeoisie can't make up its mind between two basic responses. Liberal elements crow over the "failure of socialism", and insist that the reforms in the USSR show that the Gorbachev leadership have become "born again" capitalists. For the right wing the reforms are cosmetic and the basic evil nature of the USSR is unchanged.

It is important for the working class movement to understand exactly what is going on in the USSR. In the first place the reforms will have important repercussions and will find reflection in other deformed workers states. The reforms of the Chinese bureaucracy were briefly discussed in our last issue. Similar "liberal" reforms under Gomulka in Poland were the prelude to the rise of Solidarnosc. Husak in Czechoslovakia has recently made a speech along similar lines to Gorbachev, involving himself in a policy U-turn.

In the second place what happens in the USSR has important political implications for socialists in the capitalist countries. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was a beacon and an inspiration to the socialist movement. The tyranny of Stalin both perverted the international communist movement and provided the basis for endless bourgeois slander against socialists. Do the Gorbachev reforms open the way for socialist regeneration in the USSR? If this was a real possibility, the world-wide legacy of Stalinism might be rapidly overcome. But there are other possibilities. The reforms may be really cosmetic and insignificant; or they may, like similar moves towards marketisation, e.g. in Yugoslavia, be the prelude to a crisis of the bureaucratic regime.

It is obvious that the political reforms are extremely limited. The extension of elections, and permission to have several candidates in certain elections is important; but organising around alternative political platforms remains prohibited. The censorship remains in force; many political prisoners re-

By SUE OWEN

main in the camps and psychiatric hospitals.

Gorbachev's "radical speech" to the Central Committee in January went out of the way to praise the work of the KGB. In this context, it is obvious that what Gorbachev means when he calls for openness ("glasnost") is not to unleash the creative potential of the masses. The "criticism" the Soviet leadership is interested in is not criticism of its own policy, but criticism of the past, of its bureaucratic rivals, the Brezhnevites.

Even when it comes to the criticism of the Stalin period, the "reformers'" criticism has a definite slant. Selective quotations from Lenin's Testament are published; a rehabilitation of Bukharin, leader of the Right Opposition, is rumoured to be in the pipeline, but no general rehabilitation of the leaders of the Revolution murdered by Stalin, or in particular of Trotsky and the Left Oppositionists.

It is fairly clear that "democratisation" is a lever to force through the economic reforms that are proposed against the resistance of vested interests entrenched in sections of the bureaucracy.

The key to understanding the Gorbachev reforms, then, is their economic content. Is this in the interests of the working class or not? The speeches are full of fulsome references to workers' participation. But it is not participation in effective decision making which is proposed. Rather workers are being asked to participate (as in participation schemes in the capitalist countries) in "giving a collective guarantee of productive discipline" (*Pravda*, Feb. 25, cited in *International Viewpoint*, Feb 23).

The "workers" councils that are to be set up will "bring together representatives of the administration, the Party organisations, the unions and the Komsomol (CP youth) as well as team councils etc..." (*Nouvelle Revue Internationale*, Oct. '86, cited in *IV*, Feb 23). In other words, the "workers councils" are aimed at representatives of the bureaucratic organisations, not of the rank and file. Strikes remain illegal.

The main burden of the Soviet leadership's proposals is to give more power to the factory managers, and the question is openly being raised of firing surplus workers. An article by Tatiana Zaslavskaya in September in *Kommunist* reports plant managers as saying that where there was more



autonomy for an enterprise, it would be both necessary and possible to reduce the numbers of workers. So the direction of the reforms is to promote speed-up and unemployment.

At the same time the reformers are launching an attack on "irrational" subsidies, low rents and low food prices. The "attack on the black market" involves a small element of criminal prosecutions and a large element of extending the legal market in food and services. This leads to a sharp rise in prices and deepening social inequality. This is why one of the first demands of the Gdansk strikes in Poland was food rationing.

In social policy the orientation of the reformers is to strengthen the family. Bureaucrats talk of "freeing women from physically hard and harmful work," i.e. excluding them from "men's" jobs (IV, March 23, p9). An article on homosexuality in the Moscow Komosol paper blames insufficient differentiation of male and female roles for the "disease of homosexuality":

"The overwhelming dominance of women teachers in our schools contributes to the growing equalisation of sex roles. Who, according to teacher is the best boy in class? — a quiet, obedient one. And the best girl? One who is energetic and active. And we can count the purely male or purely female professions on the fingers of one hand. The common goals and targets that we put in front of our children lead in their minds to a sexually neutral self-evaluation." (Guardian, March 25, front page)

Thus homosexuality is used as a bugbear to reinforce the oppression of women.

In international policy Moscow continues to deepen its orientation of peaceful coexistence. The proposed deal on intermediate nuclear forces, for all the embarrassment it has caused in Washington, amounts in fact to capitulation to US imperialism's demand that disarmament and "Star Wars" be separated.

The statements of the bureaucracy continue to lend support to the proponents of reform and class collaboration in the capitalist countries, and even to right wing bourgeois forces. Conversations with foreign policy officials in Moscow suggest that the Kremlin would prefer a Thatcher victory in the coming general election in this country, as a Labour victory might "destabilise" NATO; and the new initiatives on disarmament offer Reagan his best chance of escaping the Irangate scandal.

The reforms of the Soviet leadership therefore represent a shift not to the left but to the right. Why is this happening? For those who think that the USSR is "state capitalist" there is no problem — of course capitalists attack workers. "State capitalist"

groups like the British SWP simplistically correlate attacks on the workers, East and West, as responses by the ruling bourgeoisies to the international crisis of capitalism. It is true that the Gorbachev reforms are a response to economic crisis.

But the economic crisis of the Stalinist system is a different crisis to that in the "West". Here, over-production produces sharpened competition and the drive for increased profitability and reduction in unit costs brings continual attacks on the working class and unemployment.

But the root cause of the crisis in the "East" is under-production. Far from too many goods being produced to be sold at a profit, too few goods, and goods of too poor a quality, are produced to satisfy the needs of society. The anarchy of the market produces crises, waste and unemployment; the anarchy of the plan, as it is run by bureaucrats who are ultimately unaccountable, produces a different sort of waste, and, more commonly, shortages and bottlenecks.

The sort of attacks that are now being proposed in the USSR demonstrate that Soviet workers have some advantages that we haven't won here: full employment, and subsidies on basic necessities like food and housing. All the same, the bureaucratic system of "socialism in a single country" is ultimately incapable of meeting the basic needs of society — let alone, as Khrushchev claimed in the 1960s, overtaking the USA in economic development.

Do the reforms then show that those pro-capitalist politicians and theorists are right who claim that the

market is the only and best way of organising the economy, and that fuller steps towards the restoration of capitalism — or at least a "mixed economy" — is inevitable? Should they lead us to despair of communism? After all, the USSR is only following in the path of Yugoslavia, Hungary, China...

The ultimate cause of the economic problems of the USSR is neither the "bankruptcy of socialism" nor the bureaucracy's mismanagement of the economy. It is the legacy of backwardness which the revolution inherited from Tsarism, and its isolation amidst the continued domination of the world by the imperialist powers. The imperialists retain to a large extent a monopoly of the most advanced technology, and they have exerted a continuous military pressure on the USSR, which demands the diversion of large amounts of resources to defence and military production.

Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership, when they led the revolution in October 1917, never imagined that the Russian revolution would be the first step in the short-term development of world revolution.

Within this framework, however, the isolated revolution drove them to desperate expedients. Faced with civil war and intervention, they had to use "war communism" in which the market had no place, production was organised by decree and peasant food surpluses were seized by force. As the civil war came to an end, it was apparent that these methods were causing grave dislocation of the economy and sharp hostility to the Soviet government in the countryside. So the Bolsheviks retreated — and they described it openly as a





Obedient bureaucrats applaud Gorbachev's reforms

retreat — to the "New Economic Policy", a policy in which the market and private industry played, if anything, a greater role than is proposed for them in the Gorbachev reforms or than they play in China today.

But this policy, too, soon ran into problems. Competition between industrial enterprises produced inefficiency — and unemployment among workers. The market could not produce investment in heavy industry, and lack of heavy industry produced shortages in parts for consumer industry, which created shortages of goods to sell to the countryside, which in turn created difficulties in food supply to the cities. As agriculture revived, farm prices fell while industrial prices rose — the "scissors" crisis which brought a dangerously sharp division between the working class and the mass peasantry. The experiment with limited capitalism had produced a capitalist-style crisis in which industrial goods could not be sold or the workers paid.

In this situation the CPSU leadership after the death of Lenin, the bloc of Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, took the view that the market mechanisms should be allowed to sort the crisis out. But this would, in fact, imply a steady movement towards the full restoration of capitalism and the reintegration of the USSR into the world market — as was implied in a proposal made in December 1922, but blocked by Lenin's opposition, to dismantle the state monopoly of foreign trade. If this had been done, the USSR would gradually have fallen into the position of the neo-colonial countries today, with the state-owned national industries destroyed by imperialist competition.

In addition, the NEP as it developed led to increasing inequality in society and the development of privileged classes: the kulaks, or large farmers, in the countryside,

and the NEPmen, or individual capitalists, in the cities. These classes tended to link up with the development of a privileged bureaucratic layer in the state and the party through corruption.

These processes are now all too familiar through the way in which numerous regimes, starting with high "socialist" ideals after decolonisation in Africa and Asia, have developed into corrupt pro-imperialist oligarchies. There was a steady development in this direction through the 1920s until, in 1928, the kulaks

started to refuse to sell grain, seeking further concessions to private enterprise. At this point Stalin suddenly broke with his rightist cothinkers in the CPSU leadership and launched the frantic drive to industrialisation and forced collectivisation, strictly planned by the bureaucratic dictatorship, which shaped the Soviet economy as it has developed to date.

Stalin's policies of forced collectivisation, adventurist attempts to make "Great Leaps Forward" and political totalitarianism on the one hand, and on the other "liberalism"



Left Oppositionists in Siberia, 1928



Stalin

which slides towards the restoration of capitalism, have been the two great poles of the policy of Stalinist bureaucracies that have emerged since the 1920s — not only in the USSR, but also in China, the Eastern European satellites, and even Cuba.

In China there have been a series of convulsive turns from one policy to the other, from the "Hundred Flowers" period of the '50s to the "Great Leap Forward" immediately afterwards, and from the "Cultural Revolution" and its aftermath to the present rightist policy.

But there is an alternative, and it was the alternative put forward in the 1920s in the USSR by Trotsky and the Left Opposition. The two poles of the policy of the bureaucracy are two poles within a single conception, the conception of "socialism in one country". The bureaucracy elevates itself above classes, claiming to build socialism in a single country either "at a snail's pace" (the policy of the right) or by leaps and bounds (the policy of the left).

The policy of the Left Opposition, on the other hand, recognised that it was not possible to build socialism in

a single country. What was possible was to *maintain the power of the working class* in that country as a bastion of the world revolution, and to struggle to carry forward the world revolution, which is, in the end, the only way in which the inherited problems of backwardness and the continuing problems of imperialist pressure will be solved.

Instead of utopian schemes of overnight industrialisation, or the slide of NEP towards the restoration of capitalism, the Left Opposition fought for the planned development of industry on a more limited scale, and steps towards the encouragement of *voluntary* collectivisation of agriculture.

The key to both, however, was the political mobilisation of the workers behind the plan and of the poor peasants behind the struggle against the kulaks. And this demanded a systematic attack on bureaucratism and attempts to solve problems by administrative decree, both in the CPSU and in the state.

Moreover, the underlying problem remained in the 1920s, as it remains now, the problem of the world revolution. Within the USSR the class-

collaborationist policy of the bureaucracy, relying on kulaks and NEPmen at the expense of the working class, produced economic crisis. Internationally, this policy encouraged the Communist Parties in passivity (in Germany) and in relying on blocs with opportunist "left" bureaucrats, such as the TUC "lefts" in the British General strike, and bourgeois nationalists, as in China 1926-7.

These policies led to defeats for the revolutionary mass movement. The policy of "building socialism in a single country" therefore not only produced short-term economic crisis in the USSR, it also perpetuated the isolation of the Russian revolution and the economic pressures on it. Economic policy in a workers' state is inseparable from class politics and from international policy.

It is a profound testimony to the bankruptcy of the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR that the policies of the Left Opposition, first put forward in the 1920s, retain all their relevance today. The obstacle to Gorbachev's reforms is the rock on which the Bolshevik Right of Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky foundered in the 1920s. Pursued systematically, their policy would lead to the restoration of capitalism. It thus threatens both the job security of the bureaucracy — and the class interests of the Soviet working class.

The policy of the "Brezhnevites", on the other hand, amounts to no more than clinging to power by force and manoeuvres — a policy for paralysis. Only the working class can solve the problems of the USSR. And it can only do so by following the road proposed by the Left Opposition: that is, the road of taking the power into its own hands, planning the economy on the basis of workers' control and workers' democracy, and turning the workers' state into a powerful instrument for world revolution.

What could have been done by the methods of reform in the 1920s, today requires the methods of political revolution. The bureaucracy and the technocrats have entrenched themselves in the CPSU, the army and the KGB. For more than fifty years they have survived by a combination of repression and manoeuvres.

The Gorbachev reforms will not solve the crisis of the USSR; but they may lift the lid off it, creating, as in Poland, working class resistance which can be the basis of a working class alternative to the regime.

But even such an alternative can be no more than a rebellion, a protest which ends in defeat, unless it finds the way to the politics of the Left Opposition, the politics of the Fourth International, and *forcibly overthrows* the bureaucracy and takes the power into its own hands.

Syrian strategy backfires in Lebanon

By JACK GOLDBERG

"Any partition of federalism or cantonisation or regions of communal or sectarian influence is completely unacceptable to us — any project on this basis will push us to intervene to crush it because it is a danger to us."

This hard-hitting statement by Syrian vice-president Abd al Halim Khaddam, summed up — about two years ago — the historical Syrian relationship with events in Lebanon.

Since the independence of Lebanon in 1943, Syria has always shown extensive interest in Lebanese affairs. First, the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 (union of Syria and Egypt) exacerbated the contradictions in the sectarian state, and created conditions for the civil war.

After the collapse of the Union in 1961, Syria's interests diminished, only to be rekindled by the rise of the Palestinian movement. From the 1970s onwards, Syria set out to play a major leadership role in the region, and sought actively to establish a greater influence over the PLO.

It intervened with regularity in Lebanon — influencing the election of 1972 and the composition of the cabinet — up to the civil war of 1975.

In the civil war, after playing a spoiling role for a long time, Syria intervened on the eleventh hour to rescue the Maronites from a severe defeat, and turned its fire against the coalition of Lebanese "leftists" and Palestinians, depriving them of a resounding victory. From there on, Syria decided to play it safe and stationed a garrison force of over 40,000 troops on about 50% of Lebanon's territory.

Their presence was aimed at regulating two major contingencies: first, the rise of radical Palestinian/Muslim combination outside of Syrian control, which could bring Syria into war with Israel; and second, the hardening up of Lebanese fragmentation which would inevitably complicate Syria's management of Lebanese affairs and create a dangerous precedent for Syria itself.

To guard themselves against such probabilities, the presence of a whole army has proved to be only a limited success. While it was useful for



keeping an eye on unpredictable developments, it remained a costly operation but with little scope to unlock the political situation.

For this, the Syrians had to change their political stance to suit the

complexities of the swift-shifting conjunctures. At one time it suited them to play the role of spoilers, at others they were guardians of the status-quo.

Today they have become initiators, since they have understood that they will remain vulnerable until some measure of Lebanese stability can be established on Syrian terms; the old constitutional order was something of the past — in fact, it never worked properly, except in exacerbating the contradictions of the state and precipitating its disintegration. The time was ripe for a new constitution accepted by Christian, Muslims and Druze alike and supported by Damascus.

The turning point for the situation arose after the collapse of the US-brokered "May 17 agreement" between Israel and the Gemayel government. Syria claimed this as a major victory, giving it new status on the Arab stage as the only Arab country confronting "Zionism and imperialism".

Whatever were the real factors that created conditions for the abrogation of the agreement, Syria reaped major advances — amongst them the irrefutable role of arbiter of the destinies of Lebanon. Faced with a mosaic of warring factions and a *de facto* cantonisation, Syria needed new conditions to assert its role.

As a prelude to coax all the communal factions into line Syria operated through proxies, exploiting the differences between each competing group, using one element against another to prevent a linkage with other powers and making it impossible for any one single element to become too powerful.

This subtle and complex manipulation has gradually pushed all the leaders towards Damascus. Pilgrimages to President Hafez al Assad have become the order of the day. Each leader had to frequently shuttle to seek advice and check out Syrian links with their rivals. From there on, Syria won its undisputed role of supreme mediator.

It then became possible to press for a new constitutional order which cannot be anything but a compromise solution. Between the Maronites' entrenched historical position and the "leftists" demands for the abolition of all concessional checks

and balances, a reasonable compromise needed to be struck which went no further than parity for all factions involved. This culminated in July 1984 in the formation of a "National Unity Government" incorporating the main factional leaders.

However what seemed the first measure to stabilise the Lebanese arena has proved in practice a paper exercise difficult to implement. The governmental leaders still had to trip to Damascus to resolve virtually every local problem. They were also beleaguered with problems within their own communities and turned increasingly to Syria, which now has a finger on the pulse of every major political formation.

In the Maronite camp, despite the Lausanne agreement with Khaddam on a constitutional compromise, Amin Gemayel found it difficult to stem the tide of resentment within his own ranks. Damascus encouraged him to strengthen his powers over Maronite institutions against a sturdy hard-line Maronite reaction which accused him of being a "Syrian puppet".

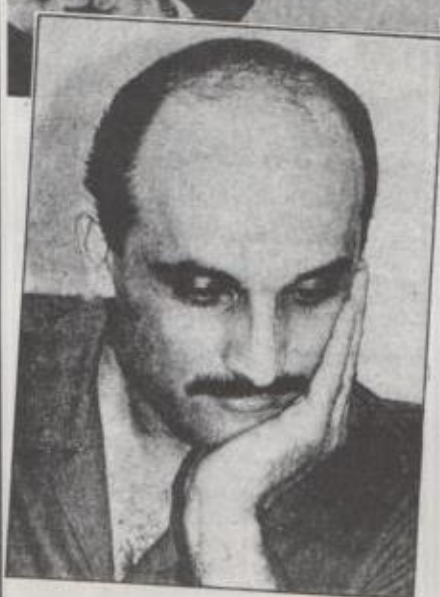
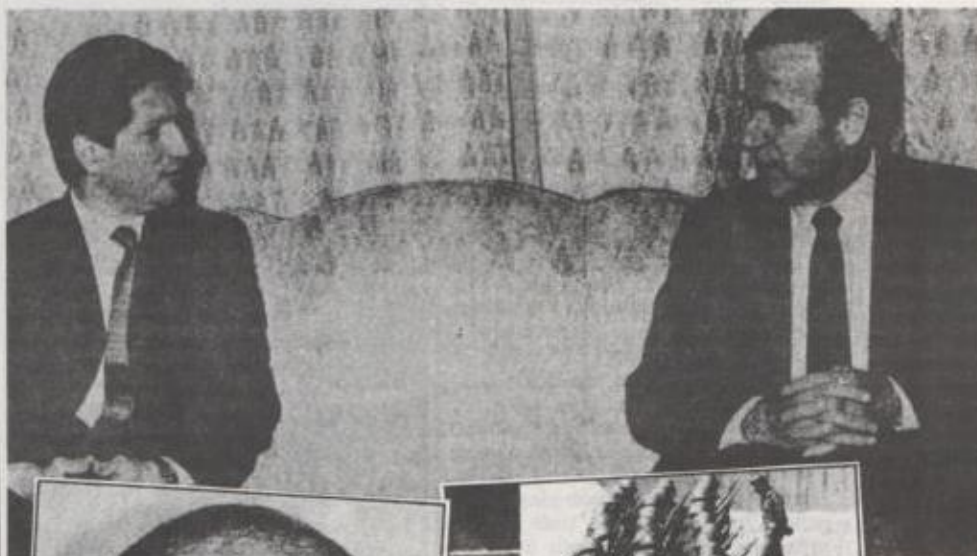
This came to a head when Samir Geagea, commander of the Lebanese forces — the most powerful Maronite militia — led a rebellion, which was rapidly quashed by the Phalange leadership. His replacement, Elie Hobeika, was hand-picked to satisfy Syria's ultimatums. However, despite adapting to Syria's new supremacy, the majority of Maronites have not retreated from their option of a "Federal Solution" for the Lebanese question, and have opted for an ordered retreat, playing for time until conditions have deteriorated for Syria.

On the Muslim front, Syria faced different and more complex problems. On the one hand, it needed to promote the growth of the newly-emerged Shi'ite movement to equal status with the Druze; but at the same time they sought to prevent it from attaining an unacceptable momentum. For this, Syria played one section of the Shi'ites against another. Hence the jockeying between the Amal leadership (the more traditional clerics, represented by vice-chair of the supreme Shi'ite Council Sheik Mohammed Shams ad-Din) on the one hand and the fundamental Hizbollah cells on the other.

Inside the zone occupied by Syrian troops, the political balance was altogether different. In the northern Tripoli region a very shaky truce was maintained between the Sunni fundamentalists of Sheik Shaaban and Syria's allies in the Arab Democratic Party. The other rural areas are controlled by three Christian elements — ex-president Franjijeh's Marada Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) in much of the Khoura and the



(Below) Lebanese leader Gemayel (left) with Syria's Assad.
(Bottom) Samir Geagea and Lebanese armed forces



Lebanese forces in a small enclave in Bcharre. Both Marada Party and SSNP are all traditional allies of



Damascus despite a bitter fight for control for the Khoura in July 1984. The situation in the Bequaa Valley

is equally complex: the local alignment comprises Shi'ite fundamentalist movements as well as Phalange forces in the town of Zahle. Again Syria acted here as a balance between the two, reflecting the new game between East and West Beirut.

While in all those instances Syria has managed successfully to keep in check the most inextricable conundrum, "the war of the camps" has proved its day of reckoning. The siege of the Palestinian camps in May 1985 by the Amal militias, despite its heavy toll of dead and wounded, was a mere dress rehearsal for the real onslaught of the camps last October.

For nearly 3 months, Amal, with Syria's encouragement, laid siege to the camp of Rashidiye in the southern outskirts of Tyre. PLO fighters responded by launching their biggest offensive since 1982, capturing 5 strategic villages east of Sidon and breaking Amal's communication and supply lines. They then used the ground they gained to negotiate Amal's lift of its siege in Rashidiye.

On November 4, fighting broke out in Bourj al Barajneh refugee camp in the southern outskirts of Beirut. Palestinian factions set aside their political differences and united in battle against Amal's siege.

Throughout November, Amal launched attack after attack on the Rashidiye camp, Ain el Hilwe and finally Myeh Myeh camps. Around the end of November, some 1,000 Palestinians pushed out of the Sidon camps and dislodged Amal from the hills around the towns of Maghdousheh. Despite renewed counterattacks by Amal, the Palestinian fighters held firm as Maghdousheh became the symbol of Palestinian resistance and steadfastness. Amal then went hell for leather attacking on all fronts with Bourj al Barajneh and Shatilla in particular receiving the full brunt of their offensive.

The death toll for November alone reached more than 500. Syria lost its grip on the situation despite frequently summoning all the warlords to Damascus to find ways of establishing balanced conditions for a ceasefire. All the different attempts at truce-making crumbled until an authoritative intervention by Iran secured a lasting ceasefire on December 5th.

The political fall-out of those frenetic months is far-reaching: Syria's painful recruiting of Lebanon's destiny was suddenly put into question. New parameters appeared in the Lebanese equation. First, there had been a realignment of all the PLO factions — fighting shoulder to shoulder against Amal. This reconciliation was strengthened by background talks on an imminent reunification of the PLO and the recall of the Palestine National Council.



Syrian tanks move in



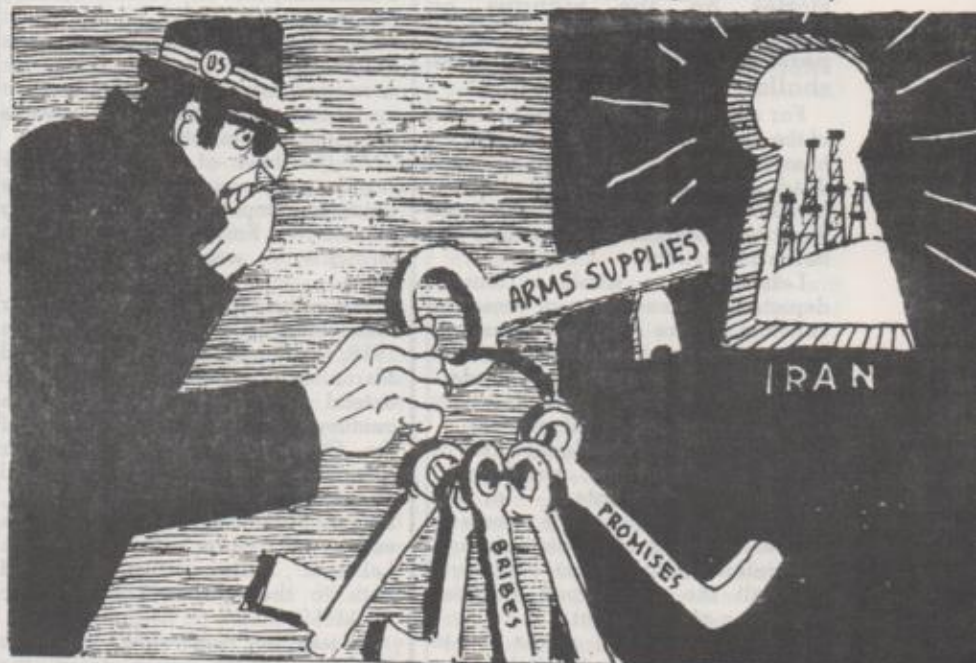
Another unpredictable feature was the unholy alliance of Arafat with the Maronite President Gemayel. On November 11, Arafat appeared on Beirut's Maronite TV charging that "Israel and Syria-backed Amal have conspired to oust the PLO from Lebanon", and thanking Amin Gemayel for granting 70,000 exiled

Palestinians who hold Lebanese nationality the passports which they have been denied since 1982.

This alliance underscored the fact that Syria's manipulation of the Maronites can explode in its face. The return of Arafat to Lebanon would undoubtedly upset the fine balance set by the Syrians in favour of bolstering the Sunni component of the political spectrum.

But the most important development is the rise of the Hizbollah who gained considerably from the isolation of Amal. Their role in the war of the camps opened up the way for Iran to be officially involved in truce making, spreading at a stroke its influence as a recognised power in the Lebanese arena.

The ability of the fundamentalists to play a bigger role in the Lebanon, as well as the increased activities of some of their underground military



organisations such as Islamic Jihad, must be seen within the context of a steady expansion of Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Middle East — an expansion which, if not directly encouraged, has certainly been welcomed by imperialism.

A situation where a fundamentalist Jewish State of Israel, the rise of Muslim Brotherhood in Syria and Jordan, the fundamentalism of Egyptian society, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, and a strong post-Khomeini Iran helped by Israel and the US military technology, would all create an area form which the Soviet Union would be totally barred.

Syria has been the main loser of the war of the camps. Out of miscalculation, they overestimated the powers of Amal, overlooked the strains in the Amal/PSP alliance and underestimated Palestinian cohesion. Unable to act as it would have chosen

by remote control, Syria has now been forced to send in troops in order to intervene and mould the new equation to its advantage. However its involvement is carefully measured for fear of upsetting any of the precarious balances.

There are signs that the new situation has already developed beyond Syria's reach. The turmoil in the Maronite camp, the isolation of Amal, the possible reunification of the PLO and the growth of the fundamentalists are new parameters that grew from the events of the last few months.

Most importantly, a reconstruction of the old secular "National Movement" comprising principally the Druze PSP, the Lebanese CP and the radical Palestinians, could bring about new political cleavages and alliances that would open up a new phase in the Lebanese revolution.



Walid Jumblatt

Lebanon - creation of imperialism

Political anatomy of a sectarian state

SINCE April 1985, the Western Media have given an unprecedented coverage to events in Lebanon. Their accounts and interpretations of the war, laced with gushy stories on the kidnaps of Western diplomats and personalities, have been at best shallow and simplistic.

For most of them, the latest rounds of the flare-up in West Beirut, with its heavy toll of between 2,000 and 3,000 dead, up to 10,000 wounded and over 50,000 new refugees, has been described as a knock-out success for barbarian evildoers.

Lebanon as a whole is loosely depicted as a maelstrom of senseless violence, where civilised ethos and mores have vanished for ever with the latest vestiges of law and order. Today sees the reign of the plug-ugly hoodlums and homicidal maniacs.

The cause? A hodge-podge of malevolent Arab psychology, bloodlust, terror masters — or any explanation that put these events in the realm of the unpredictable and labyrinthic logic that so befittingly suits all the stereotyped Western projection of the Orient.

What the Western media try to avoid at all costs, is to explain the

By JACK GOLDBERG

real historical causes for the break up of the Lebanese state.

This is hardly surprising, considering that any cursory reading of its history quickly reveals that Imperialism has created Lebanon as a nation-state, propped it up as an economic entity, and finally made it an important component of its plans for hegemony in the Middle East.

As the dawn of the 20th century saw the progressive weakening of the Ottoman Empire, other ascending powers — French Imperialism in particular — were awaiting to take over.

When the French established their mandatory rule over Lebanon in 1918, they encouraged and nurtured Maronites' traditional demands to extend what has been for half a century an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire — "Smaller Lebanon" — and add to it the coastal plain with the towns of Triploi, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and the Bekaa valley to form the "Greater Lebanon", a distinct entity "oriented both to the Western and Islamic world."

It was not until 1943 that the "National Pact" consolidated the

state-idea of Lebanon. Signed by the Maronite President Bishara al-Khuri and Sunni Prime Minister Riad al-Solh, the pact set out the patterns of political balance of power that has remained in force until today. The President was to be a Maronite Christian and Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Chamber of Deputies (Parliament) to be elected on the basis of six Christians for every five Muslims.

It was also stipulated that the position of Army Commander and the head of the Secret service would be filled by Maronites. To further crystallise the divide, the pact ensured that Christians should seek Western protection, and Muslims should not try to make Lebanon a part of any larger Arab Islamic state.

It is on this basis that Lebanon was split from "Greater Syria" and began life as an independent state in 1946.

From its early inception, Lebanon was conceived as a sectarian state, whose constitution balanced between what was then the most important communities. Since 1932 no population census has been taken in order to preserve the status quo, despite major population changes which have altered tremendously the religious population of the country.

Today the multiplicity of religious



communities — some 18 different denominations — appears quite confusing. But in effect, they belong to 3 main religions: Christianity, Islam and the Druze faith.

The four most important Christian communities are the Maronites, the Greek Orthodox, the Greek Catholics and the Gregorian (Orthodox) Armenians.

The Muslims are divided into Sunnis and Shi'ites.

A third religious community, independent of Christianity and Islam, consisted of the followers of the post Islamic sect of the Druze.

About two-thirds of the Lebanese Christians are Maronites. Deriving their name from St Maron, a fourth century hermit who lived in North-east Syria, they fought with the Crusaders and united themselves with the Roman Catholic Church, but retained their own liturgy and their own religious leader "the Patriarch of Antioch and of the whole Orient". They live predominantly in the Mount Lebanon region.

The Greek Orthodox have consistently tied themselves to Muslim rulers — their patriarch residing in Damascus. They always saw themselves as Christian Arabs and inheritors of the tradition of the Byzantine Empire. In Lebanon — as in Syria and Palestine — members of this Church have been the intellectual leaders of the Arab left

and the CPs during the last decade. They live mainly in Beirut, in the hinterland of the northern port of Tripoli and in the southern Lebanese region of Marjayoun.

The Greek Catholic community. They live mainly in the southern towns of Sidon and Tyre, the town of Zahla in the Bekaa and the Shouf province.

The Armenians fled permanently and settled in Lebanon only in the 1920s.

As for the Muslims, the Sunnis are concentrated in the coast in Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon. The Shi'ite Muslims are the poorest of all the religious communities. The majority live in the South and the Bekaa valley. Since 1970, the civil war and economic deprivation have pushed Shi'ite families in their thousands to emigrate from the South to the poverty belt of West Beirut.

The Druze constitute a post-Islamic sect which settled finally in the Valleys of southern Lebanon, led by the most predominant clans of their nobility.

Because of the sectarian nature of the constitution, the biggest religious communities have established political parties to represent their interest:

1. The Phalange, or "Kateb" Party, founded by Pierre Gemayel.
2. The Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) was founded in 1949 by the

Druze Kemal Jumblatt. The PPS programme fights against the influence of religious denomination, but its members remain predominantly Druzes and their families, formally constituted Jumblatt's feudal following. In the 1960s, the PSP adopted the pan-Arab programme of President Nasser. During the civil war of 1975-76, Jumblatt became spokesperson of the Lebanese left, a loose coalition called the "Front of National Struggle", later to become "the National Movement".

3. The "Tashnaq", confessional political grouping of the Armenians which won them 5 seats in the 1982 Parliamentary elections in proportion to their estimated number of 3% of the population.

4. The Sunnis are divided into several political and regional groupings.

- The fundamentalist Sunnis under the leadership of Saïd Shaaban are mainly concentrated in the northern port of Tripoli.

- The Najjedeh Party (Party of the Saviours) developed out of a Sunni Youth organisation founded in 1936. During the past decade, the party has lost most of its influence.

- The Independent Nasserite Movement, led by Ibrahim Koleilat, stood for Arab nationalism and was influential particularly in Beirut until a rising Amal checked its strength by



destroying its fighting powers.

• **The Nasserite Organisation**, a rival of the INM, sought to work out an Arab socialism independent of East and West, but remained small and ineffectual.

5. **Amal**, led at first by Imam Musa Sadr, and after his disappearance by Nabih Birry, has become the most significant component of the Lebanese political spectrum. It

started as a populist "movement of the deprived", and developed as a fully-fledged political party based on the Shi'ite Community.

6. **The Hizbollah (Party of God)** begun as a politico-military aggregate of cells among the Shi'ite population of Baalbeck. Under the leadership of Moussavi, and with the support of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, it has played an important

role in the latest Camps War and is making steady inroads into Amal support among the Shi'ites.

The other "political" parties, which played a role in the political life of the country were essentially a collection of individuals around one leader (Zaim) or another.

7. **The Constitution Union Party** founded in 1930 by the Maronite Beshara al-Khouri has little influence today.

8. **"The National Bloc Party"** — an essentially Christian party — founded in 1934 by the Maronite leader Emile Edde was an early rival of the Maronites. Raymond Edde, his son, tried unsuccessfully three times to capture the office of president — in 1976 being the candidate of the Lebanese left.

9. The national **Liberal Party** founded in 1958 by Camille Chamoun.

The third type of parties are those with external affiliations:

10. **The Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party (PPS)** advocates the unification of Lebanon with Syria. Founded in 1934 by Antoon Saade, the SNSP has taken from the start an anti-denominational and anti-religious stand, and has members from all ethnic communities.

11. **The Lebanese Baath Party** is an affiliate of the Syrian and Iraqi Baath Party and is influenced by them.

12. **The Communist Party** which is a pro-Moscow Stalinist party.

13. **The "Union of Lebanese Communists"**, a party friendly towards Syria and led by Nakhle Matran.

14. **The "Kurdish Progressive Party"** known in Beirut as "Raz Kaari" and led by Faisal Fakhru.

As the Lebanese state is based upon sectarian lines, its executive and parliament could only be governed by sectarian considerations. In reality, power did not lie with the state institutions, but with some 50 prominent clans of clerics, semifeudal Lords, political bosses and some bankers, businessmen and professionals.

Confessionalism was the cornerstone on which the whole state was built. Despite a formal status quo, the inbuilt instability made the country since its inception almost ungovernable. Between 1926 and 1964 Lebanon had 46 different governments. Between 1964 and 1979, 22 different cabinets have been appointed.

The epitome of this instability has been the disintegration of the Lebanese Army torn by sectarian strife. Predominantly a Maronite army (62% of the officers were Maronites), the army split during the 1975-76 civil war: the Muslims formed the "Arab Army of Lebanon" under Ahmed Khatib and joined the "National Movement", another group



PLO chief Arafat



Amin Gemayel



Nabih Birry

joined the right wing militias under the Maronite colonels Barakat and Malik. The bulk of the officers remained neutral while a fourth group deserted.

At a maximum of 20,000 soldiers, they were no match for the 100,000-strong militias which dominated Lebanon since the 1970s.

Most of the political parties have powerful territorial strongholds in their respective communities. Almost all of them have recruited their own militias to defend their interests along communal lines.

As well as the Lebanese militias, Palestinian organisations have also been an important influence in the political life of Lebanon since their defeat in Jordan in 1970. All PLO organisations have established bases in the Lebanon and played a prominent role in the radicalisation of some communities and the erosion of the Lebanese state.

The fragmentation of the communities was not only the result of the sectarian divide, which was nurtured and encouraged by Imperialism, but also a direct expression of economic structures. The division into social classes overlapped the religious divide, and economic inequalities had both sectarian and regional expression.

The economy of Lebanon was founded on total free enterprise for all, and almost no government intervention in the economy — strongly service-oriented and dependent on income from abroad. The most important factor in Lebanon's post-war economic development was its emergence as a major centre of finance. It became a medium between Europe and the oil economies of the Middle East, based on favourable interest rates and banking secrecy — the "Switzerland" of the Middle East.

But this free-for-all economy only benefitted a tiny proportion of the

population. Because of the sectarian political divide, the distribution of wealth was uneven across these divides.

If we look at the distribution of Christians and Muslims in different branches of the economy, we find that the majority of medium and

large-sized enterprises are owned by Christians. Shipping, and much of the rail and wholesale trade are in the hands of Sunni Muslims. Many of the shopowners and artisans are Greek orthodox and Catholics. Druze are numerous in the agricultural sector — many as small landowners. Shi'ites

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Our new magazine will have supporters and sellers in many towns in England, Scotland and Wales. If you wish to find out more about our politics and our work in the labour movement in your area, contact us at BCM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX, and we will put you in touch with your nearest contact.

Please send me further details of the new magazine

Name

Address

.....

Trade Union

Labour Party

Telephone

Keep in touch with *Socialist Viewpoint*. For further details of our new magazine, write to BM Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

are usually found among the ranks of unskilled workers.

It is however important to emphasise that Lebanese capitalism is not entirely based on the Maronites — it also includes Sunnis, Armenians, Catholics, Orthodox and even a few Shi'ites. But in essence, the Christians are better off and the Shi'ites are the poorest. The income of Christians is 16% higher than that of the Druze and 58% higher than that of the Shi'ites!

In most instances, economic deprivation has been the most powerful catalyst for the radicalisation of whole oppressed communities who fought for their class interests across the sectarian divide and the religious differences.

The intervention of foreign powers

— Zionism and Imperialism in particular — has also triggered principled alliances that joined together what was normally seen as irreconcilable enemies.

Lebanon has experienced two civil wars, in 1958 and 1975-76. The latest round of fighting since 1985 will degenerate sooner or later into a fully-fledged war. The destruction of the Lebanese state is an unavoidable result of its social political and economic structures and will continue to suck in foreign powers keen to prop up bourgeois order — whose final collapse would be a disaster for their plans in the area, but a prerequisite for any progressive solution to the problems of the masses.



Hafez Al-Assad



PHOTOS: Andrea Caspelli

Hangers

The sacked limbmakers wish to express their gratitude to all our supporters who have demonstrated their solidarity over the last 7 months.

All donations/cheques payable to TASS: Hangers Dispute, Wessex House, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey. 01-646-0260.



BOOKS

If you agree with the politics of this magazine, why not read more background material?

By Leon Trotsky

Whither France?	£2.25
Fascism and How to Fight It	£0.65
Revolution Betrayed	£3.95
Permanent Revolution	£3.00
History of the Russian Revolution	£7.95

By James P. Cannon

Notebook of an Agitator	£4.50
First 10 Years of American Communism	£3.00

All are available (add 50p post and packing) from Socialist Viewpoint.



New!

CUBA

Radical face of Stalinism



If you thought the only choices on Cuba were to support Castro or support Ronald Reagan, then you should read *Cuba: Radical Face of Stalinism*.

Dissecting the politics and evolution of the Cuban leadership, this book reasserts the need for a Trotskyist party and programme in Cuba, and presents the events firmly in their global context.

Copies available now (£5.00 including postage) from Left View books, Box 3956, London WC1N 3XX.

**SOCIALIST
VIEWPOINT**
