

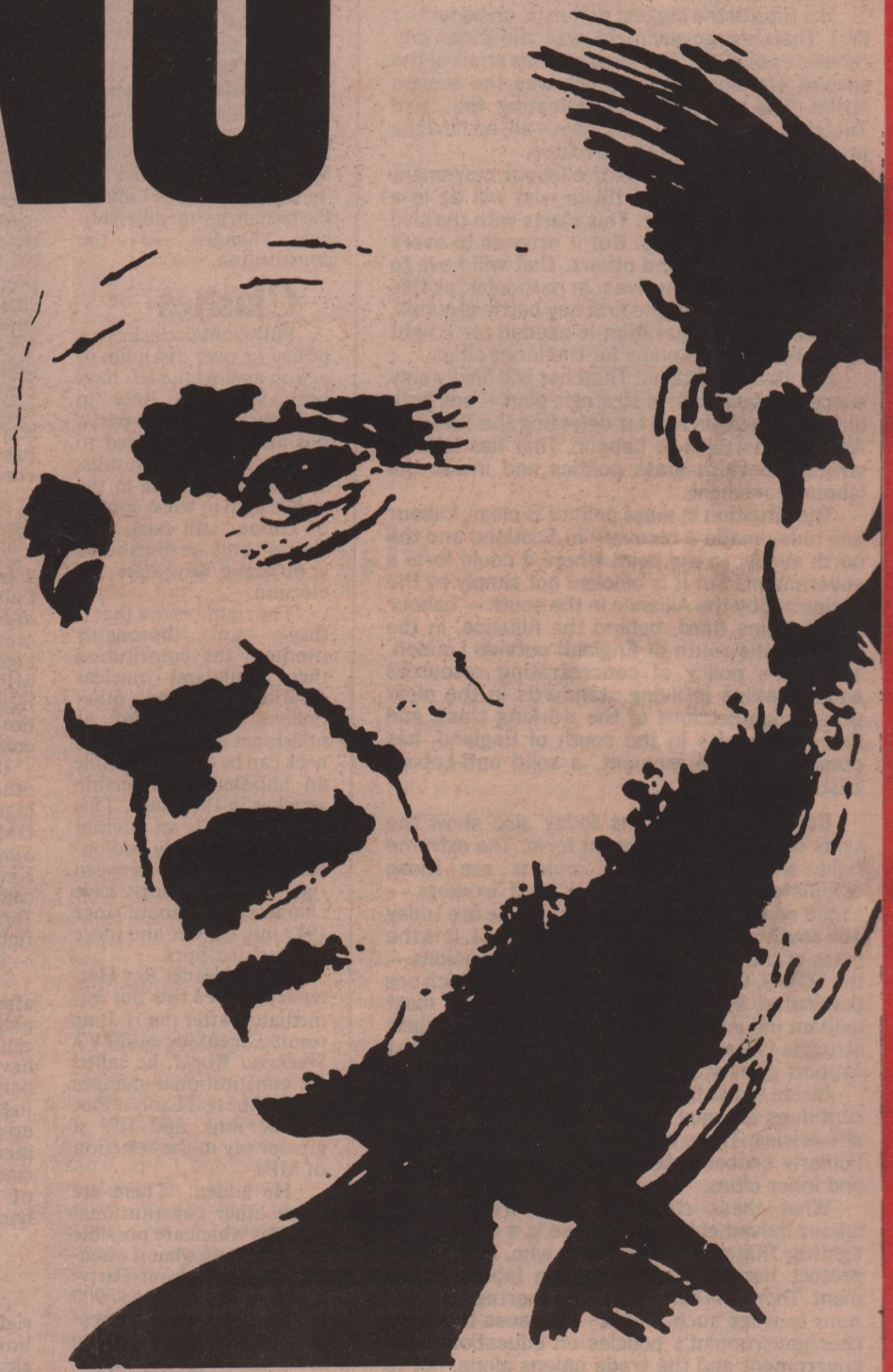
# A SOCIALIST ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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# LESSONS OF A DEFEAT



FOR FOUR years before the election campaign the Labour leadership spent its time attacking its supporters, its left wing, and those engaged in a struggle against the Thatcher government. First the miners were repudiated, then Liverpool council was repudiated, then the councillors defying rate capping were repudiated, then the Wapping strikers failed to get the support they deserved.

The Labour front bench acted as though the main enemy confronting society was not the Thatcher government, or mass unemployment, but

*Militant*, Sharon Atkin, or the Labour Party Black Section.

After four years of this nonsense suddenly a high powered election machine was turned on which announced that all this was wrong. That the main tasks confronting the country were to rebuild the health service, reduce unemployment, secure decent pensions, defend local government, and rebuild the inner cities.

Can anyone wonder after this why Labour failed to seriously raise its vote last week? The idea Labour can set one agenda for four years, and then set another for four weeks, is absurd. If we have a repeat of that performance in

the next four years we are going to have not only tremendous defeats under the third Thatcher government but Labour is going to lose the next election as well.

The announcements coming from the right wing in the press that the task is now to push through 'one member, one vote' in the Labour Party, move to abolish the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and change the system of election of the Labour Party leader are, literally, insane.

Not only are these attacks on Labour Party democracy, but they are of no interest whatsoever to the mass of the working class in Britain. If the Labour right is now going to plunge Labour into a new internal crisis this is

one of the most criminal acts which even it has carried out.

The lesson which should be drawn from the election is clear. Labour must be turned *outwards*. The Labour Party leadership should be discussing not how it is going to turn inwards for yet another purge but how it is going to support the civil servants and teachers in the battles with the government. Second how it is going to aid Labour councils and local government unions to resist the attacks on the inner cities that are going to be launched by the Thatcher government. Third how it is going to support every group of workers that is going to be forced to defend itself.

Then it should be turning to how it is going to win back the millions of trade unionists and members of the working class whose support it has lost in the last eight years — and the millions of women and young people whose support it never won, and the black community whose loyal support it never deserved.

Turning the labour movement outwards to defend those who built it, who will be fighting Thatcher and whose interests Labour is supposed to serve, not turning inwards in the service of a right wing clique that sabotaged every struggle against Thatcher and then lost the election. That is the task of Labour today.



# Socialist ACTION

## Four years hard Thatcher

AFTER THATCHER's victory on 11 June it is natural that the first week's response in the labour movement is to analyse why Labour didn't win. But the crucial task is now to organise the fight back against the third Thatcher government.

The first necessity for understanding how to fight against this government is to understand what it is vulnerable to. It is obviously not vulnerable to a challenge in parliament — or to purely electoral challenges. What it is vulnerable to is mass struggle.

The time of the biggest domestic crisis for the first Thatcher government was the inner city rebellions of 1981. The most serious crisis of the second Thatcher government was the miners strike. The prospects for defeating the third Thatcher government rest, above all, on how the mass struggle against it develops.

The first task of the entire labour movement is therefore to support those who will be in a struggle with Thatcher. This starts with the civil servants and teachers. But it extends to every group of workers, and others, that will have to fight to defend themselves. In particular, as this is going to be one of the first key battle grounds, an immediate preparation is needed for a fight against the Tories plans for the inner cities.

But struggle against Thatcher will finally only succeed if guided by a strategic plan — one both for mass struggle and for defeating the Tory and Alliance obstacles to Labour. That has to be a strategy both in mass politics and inside the labour movement.

The situation in mass politics is clear. Labour has today made a recovery in Scotland and the north almost to the point where it could form a government. But it is blocked not simply by the Tories but by the Alliance in the south — Labour still remains third, behind the Alliance, in the whole of the south of England outside London. Thatcher's policy of concentrating resources and increases in living standards in the most prosperous sections of the working class, and that means also in the south of England, has created, for the moment, a solid anti-Labour bastion there.

But the trade unions today also show the same divisions in a different form. The extreme right wing 'new realist' unions are those dominated by skilled, higher paid workers — above all the EETPU and AEU. These are today 'the south' of the trade union movement. It is the mass of the general and public sector unions — the TGWU, GMBATU, NUPE, NUR etc which are dominated by the Kinnockites. Only the most militant industrial union, the NUM is led by class struggle forces — although there are forces that support class struggle policies in other unions.

Inside the Labour Party the Campaign Group continues to enjoy majority support in the constituencies. There are class struggle forces particularly concentrated in the black community and inner cities.

What these class struggle forces in the labour movement have to have is a strategy for fighting Thatcher — and those who, in practice, protect her position inside the labour movement. There will certainly be no shortage of occasions to wage such a fight — because the Thatcher government's policies on education, local government and the trade unions alone, not to mention international questions, ensure that there will be a whole series of mass struggles in the next four years.

The class struggle forces which exist have to be organised, above all their political perspectives have to be clarified and they have to take united front initiatives towards the Kinnockites and in the 'new realist' unions.

This, therefore, is the task of the left now. It has to lead the struggles against the Thatcher government in every field — trade union and political. Through this it has to develop its own organisation and political clarity. It has to lead where Kinnock failed — in the struggle against the most reactionary government in Britain this century.

# Labour right's new attack on democracy

AFTER THE general election, the right wing's new strategy for taking control of the party is already emerging: they are turning their attention to Labour's constitution. Getting rid of MPs accountability to their local parties by introducing a system of one member one vote (OMOV) is the right's foundation stone for a series of constitutional changes designed to totally transform the relationship between the Labour leadership and its rank and file. The right's objective remains the same as always: turning Labour into a 'centre left' party that the bourgeoisie considers safe to govern. But the method of achieving it has been modified by the experience of the past few years, and particularly of the election campaign itself. CAROL TURNER reports.

PREDICTABLY left policies are being blamed for the party's failure to unseat the Thatcher government. Unilateralism and the so-called London effect have been singled out by the right wing as the prime vote losers for Labour.

But the right wing have also announced they won't simply be tackling these head-on. Instead they aim to confront them by 're-designing' the Labour Party and its membership via changes to the constitution.

## Clashes

Full-frontal clashes on policy or over disciplinary action against the left have been seen not only to publicly damage the party, but also to have failed to achieve the desired results. The same elements in the right's plan to wrest control of Labour still exist, they simply combine together in a different way after the election.

The right believe that if they can thoroughly overhaul the constitution then unilateral nuclear disarmament and other policies they regard as millstones around Labour's neck can be cast aside while an impotent membership watches in the wings. This new strategy is an attempt to turn the bloody and unsuccessful battles between right and left which have characterised Labour since 1983 into quieter and more successful affairs.

Deputy leader Roy Hattersley spelled this out immediately after the 11 June results. Speaking on ITV's *Weekend World*, he called for constitutional changes to give 'the real Labour Party, the rank and file' a greater say in the selection of MPs.

He added: 'There are some other constitutional reforms which are possible too, which do what is essential for the Labour Party: make sure that the 900 members of my constituency party and the 900 or so in every other constituency are really influencing policy rather than a small group who aren't as representative of the public as a whole.'

## Lost votes

Hattersley also explained that Labour's non-nuclear defence policy had undoubtedly lost the party votes. But: 'The defence policy is held with such passion amongst members of the party that the damage it would do to change it would be almost irrevocable.'

On Saturday 13 June, the *Independent* carried a front-page lead that 'Labour plans to crush power of the hard left'. It reported: 'Plans for a

radical restructuring of the Labour Party hierarchy to undercut the influence of the left and concentrate more power in the hands of Neil Kinnock have been secretly prepared by senior party officials.

'The document agreed between the Labour leader and leading loyalist left wingers in the Tribune group of MPs proposes a two-tier governing body for the party with more involvement for regional party officials and representatives of Labour councils. A precondition for the new structure, which will infuriate the hard left, would be acceptance of the one person one vote principle for which Mr Kinnock has been lobbying recently and which he expects to see passed by the annual party conference.'

## Plans

Such a plan amounts to a proposal to abolish the Labour NEC. As the *Independent* explained: 'A central aim is to reduce the high profile involvement of MPs like Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, voted on to the executive each year by constituency parties.'

Since 11 June, most other newspapers have run high-profile stories on OMOV. According to the *Sun* of Friday 12 June: 'Mr Kinnock fought an election campaign which jolted the Tories but now he faces a fight with the real enemies — inside his own party.'

Its 'special report on the aftermath of the poll' explained: 'Only one thing can save Mr Kinnock from having to fight a constant battle for survival. He has just four months to build up enough support for one member one vote democracy — and wrestle control of the party out of the hands of the extremists.'

## Strategy

The first hint of the right's new strategy however, came during the election campaign itself, in the 5 June issue of *New Statesman*. Under the heading 'Half way to Jerusalem', Peter Kellner offered a succinct and coherent rationale.

'Defence apart,' he wrote, 'Mr Kinnock's campaign has been masterly. I should say "Labour's campaign", but in truth the national contest has seen a promotion of the man far more than the party.' Kellner explained: 'Mr Kinnock's campaign ... is Presidential, deliberately and with a capital "P".'

Kellner went on frankly: 'There are bound to be some traditional Labour activists who regard all this as at best distasteful and at



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### Labour plans to crush power of the hard left

By David Fallon and Andrew Marr

Labour activists in the south-east have been highlighted by the proposals. The new proposals are seen as an attempt to neuter the so-called "London effect". One northern left-wing MP described the London party as a "scab" which had stolen the party's vote. The proposals are seen as an attempt to neuter the so-called "London effect". One northern left-wing MP described the London party as a "scab" which had stolen the party's vote.

Plans for a radical restructuring of the Labour Party hierarchy to undercut the influence of the left and concentrate more power in the hands of Neil Kinnock, have been secretly prepared by senior party officials.

A document agreed between the Labour leader and leading loyalist left wingers in the Tribune group of MPs proposes a two-tier governing body for the party with more involvement for regional party officials and representatives of Labour councils.

A precondition for the new structure, which will infuriate the hard left, would be acceptance of the one person one vote principle for which Mr Kinnock has been lobbying recently and which he expects to see passed by the annual party conference.

worse treacherous. Elections should be about parties not leaders, policies not images.

'According to this view, Labour's manifesto has jet-tisoned much that has been argued over and voted for at successive party conferences. Where is the commitment to abolish private schools, nationalise the defence, aerospace and construction industries, and restore the closed shop?'

'In the waste bin, that's where. And the decision has been Mr Kinnock's.'

Having analysed the election campaign, Kellner looked to the future. 'That is how things are, but is that how things should be?' he asked.

'If Labour's policy has become something to be handed down from the top rather than pumped up from below, does that not undermine the notion of a democratic Labour Party in which the leaders is the servant of his members? The blunt answer is, yes it does.'

But Kellner concluded: 'After next week's election, whatever its results, Labour will have to change. Its old "democracy" did not work; its new authoritarianism must not last. A new, internal, democratic settlement is needed in which decisions are reached, and seen to be reached, openly and fairly and on their merits.'

## Strength

'By the force of his personality and the strength of his will, Mr Kinnock has brought Labour half way back to Jerusalem. The rest of the journey will be even more bumpy, and it starts next Friday.'

The 'democratic settlement' to which Kellner refers is far from democratic. In the words of *The Times* of Tuesday 16 June: 'The aim is to give the

shadow cabinet and Parliamentary Labour Party more power and the national executive and party conference rather less.'

'The transfer of power into the hands of the parliamentary party starts with OMOV.'

The right have never accepted that CLPs should exercise control over the policies put forward by their MPs. They resisted it throughout the 1970s when CLPD and the party activists fought for such a policy, and they have continued to oppose it ever since automatic reselection was won at the 1979 annual party conference.

## Change

Only seven weeks after the 1986 conference carried composite resolution 39, clearly calling on the NEC not to bring up proposals for changing the selection procedure before the general election, the national executive circulated a 'consultative paper' to CLPs and affiliates outlining 10 new options for choosing a Labour parliamentary candidate.

Of course, OMOV figures centrally in these consultations. Nine out of the 11 options involve one member one vote choices. Eight provide either for a postal ballot or for 'direct voting' by every party member.

OMOV is the crucial first step in bringing the policies of the party directly under the control of the parliamentary leadership without even the present level of minimal 'interference' from annual conference and from CLPs.

'Widening the franchise' — which is what the right wing claim OMOV is designed to do — will in fact ensure that only the PLP has the franchise over

party policy. In practice it will take power out of the hands of the party's activist rank and file and place it firmly in the grip of the shadow cabinet.

This same process has been carried through by 'new realist' unions such as the EETPU. Postal ballots and other systems of 'direct voting' are designed to isolate individual trade unionists, aggregate power to the union's national leadership and leave the maximum space for the bourgeois media to intervene in elections. Likewise, introducing OMOV within the Labour Party would significantly reduce democracy.

Under OMOV the bourgeois media would be massively mobilised to campaign in favour of any right wing MP or candidate under threat. Equally they would be mobilised to attempt to remove any left wing MP or candidate. Labour reselection contests would be organised not by general committees but by the *Sun*.

## Election

Coupled with this is the attempt to abolish the NEC — or to be more precise its constituency section. Kinnock already has a clear majority on the NEC but it is unacceptable to him that the CLPs should continue to elect left wing figures such as Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner. The aim, therefore, is to sandwich the CLP activists between the trade union leaderships on one side and a new, expanded and apathetic, membership on the other. By these means the aim is to break the power of the CLP members.

The final touchstone must inevitably be an attempt to change the system of electing the party leader. With the present composition of the PLP and the CLPs it is literally not possible, under the 30:30:40 electoral college, to elect a straight-forwardly right wing party leader — a John Smith or a Roy Hattersley.

The present electoral college ensures that, at a minimum, a 'soft left' candidate will be elected leader and it leaves open an outside chance that in the future a hard left leader could get in.

## Goals

The role of the soft left, as always, is to work themselves out of a job and prepare the way for the return of the right. One of the goals of the coming constitutional changes, already mooted openly, is to abolish the electoral college. This would clear the way for the election of an openly right wing leader.

What is now taking place is a thorough-going drive to reorganise Labour on the model of the 'Eurosocialist' parties of continental Europe — with an all-powerful 'charismatic' leader and the removal of all democratic control by the rank and file. When that is achieved then the right will step in to remove any remaining progressive policies like unilateralism.

The introduction of OMOV is the first step to achieving this.



# An historic break-through

THE ELECTION of four black Labour MPs on Thursday 11 June 1987 was an historic breakthrough — not just for black people in Britain, but for the whole of the working class. It is a breakthrough owed to the Labour Party Black Section and the fight of black members for self-organisation and self-representation at all levels. If some in the Labour Party want to downplay the significance of these four elections, the black press certainly don't — as the headlines on papers like the *Gleaner*, the *Voice*, and the *Asian* and *Caribbean Times* graphically show. For the rest of the labour movement it is an historic moment when the white monopoly on working class representatives has been broken.

The election of Diane Abbott for Hackney North, Paul Boateng for Brent South, Bernie Grant for Tottenham, and Keith Vaz for Leicester East, has challenged the racist belief in some Labour Party circles that the party cannot stand black candidates because they lose seats for Labour. But it is only one step in the long fight against racism. DIANE ABBOTT will be the first black woman MP to take her seat in Westminster. She told *Socialist Action* the significance of these elections for black people, for the Labour Party, and for the left.



and the mythology grew up that you couldn't run black candidates in safe seats.

Now we've killed that myth. Keith Vaz actually increased Labour's vote. He polled 46.2 per cent of votes cast in Leicester East — a 2.8 per cent swing from Conservatives to Labour.

That clears the way for change. Our election will make it a lot easier for black candidates to be selected and win seats next time round.

DESPITE LABOUR'S overall defeat in the general election, black people feel that having four black MPs elected is a momentous step forward for them.

The first responsibility of black MPs is to our constituencies, to provide a service and to represent the needs of all our constituents whatever their colour. But over and above that, inevitably, we will have a responsibility to black people nationally. Whether we like it or not we will be a focus for black people.

The opposition ran a racist campaign against us. It is unusual to feature your opponents in your literature, to publicise them. But in Hackney North the SDP even put out a leaflet with a picture of me on it.

The Tories used the theme that I was a dangerous extremist. Their election address carried a simple message: we are the party that can keep Diane Abbott out of parliament.

They made no bones about it. On one level the Tories were talking about my extremism but on another level it was about race.

I was supposed to hate whites, to be anti-Semitic, to be anti-Royalist and pro-terrorist. The opposition blatantly used the race card against Labour's black candidates. If I had a nasty campaign, Bernie Grant had an even worse one. Despite the propaganda, Bernie Grant, Diane Abbott, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz were elected for Labour.

The last black candidate who ran with a serious chance of winning was David Pitt for Clapham. He lost the seat,

Overall, Labour fought a good, professional campaign. But it started much too late.

Too much time was spent before the election attacking the left in the party. That did us no good. And we failed to convince people that we had economic policies, distinct from those of the SDP, that could actually deliver the things we promised.

There is no doubt that Mrs Thatcher has won a victory on the level of ideas. She had been able to promote individual competitiveness and the market over the collective values that Labour stands for.

The criticism of the London effect, made by the press and by right wingers in the Labour Party alike, is quite wrong. The differences aren't geographical. The fact is that in the Labour Party the differences on this are political, between right and left.

I hope that the black MPs will work closely with their local Black Sections — we all have them — and with Black Section nationally and black campaigns nationally, always remembering of course that our obligations to our constituents have to come first.

I hope that the black MPs will be able to work closely with the left of the party. But there are some unresolved questions on the left as to the exact relationship between race and class.

Hopefully the black MPs will be able to help the left resolve them. Having black MPs taking part in the left at the parliamentary level, as at other levels, can only strengthen the left.

**Caribbean TIMES**  
 ISSUE No 325 Friday 19th June 1987  
**OUR TIME HAS COME**  
 THE DUST has settled, the clamour has subsided, and Britain's election gives Mrs Thatcher's Tory Party an overwhelming mandate for five years. But for the black community, there was consolation in the fact that four black Labour MPs have taken seats in the House of Commons for the first time, which we may all take pride in no matter what our political affiliation at last.  
**Bernie Grant**  
**Keith Vaz**  
**Diane Abbott**

Black press welcomes the results

ISSUE No. 246, June 16, 1987  
**VOICE**  
 Britain's Best Black Newspaper! 35p weekly  
**A NEW ERA**  
**Will there be a black caucus at Westminster?**  
 by Mark Harrison  
 Britain's new black MPs have hailed their historic wins as a new era in black political power.

## Labour's Scottish triumph

LAST THURSDAY, 11 June, saw the Tories decisively thrown out of Scotland. Labour won 50 of the 72 seats, leaving only 10 Conservative MPs — not even enough to staff the Scottish office and the necessary government committees. There is even talk of bringing in Teddy Taylor from Southend to serve for the Tory government in Scotland.

Labour achieved 42.39 per cent of the votes cast — an increase from 34 per cent in 1983. In some seats, the swing to Labour was as high as 13 per cent. The average swing was 7.32 per cent.

The Conservatives won only 19 per cent of all Scottish votes cast. Despite the return of Thatcher nationally, some pleasure was felt as Tory heads rolled in Scotland.

Michael Ancram lost his seat in Edinburgh South with a swing to Labour's Alistair Darling showing a clear rejection of Ancram's introduction of the poll tax plan in Scotland. John Corrie, Alex Fletcher, Anna McCurley, John Mackay, all went. A total of 11 Tories lost their seats.

The Conservative Party in Scotland now have the lowest number of Scottish MPs ever. Even among those who held on, there were some close shaves. Defence secretary George Younger had his 8000 majority in Ayr slashed to 182.

Labour was clearly seen as the only party which could advance a national solution to the attacks that have been taking place against Scottish people over the last eight years. The SNP, which had conducted its campaign on the basis of a Tory victory and by putting itself forward as the party of Scottish government, did not significantly alter its position.

Dundee East produced a disastrous result for the

SNP. Labour's John McAllion ousted the SNP chairperson, Gordon Wilson, by 5000 votes. Three SNP members have been returned to Westminster from the more rural constituencies.

The SDP-Liberal Alliance completely failed to achieve the victories it anticipated. David Steel saw his own majority reduced by over 2000, and in other central city seats opposition votes ensured Labour's return.

By Ann Henderson

The Alliance did better in some of the rural constituencies. Its only successful woman candidate in Scotland, Rae Michie, took Argyll and Bute from the Conservatives. The Alliance achieved 15 per cent of Scottish votes cast, with an average swing away from them of 6 per cent.

The best results for Labour were in the cities and industrial areas. In Strathclyde, the largest local authority in Britain since the abolition of the GLC, Labour won the highest number of votes cast across Britain: 53.3 per cent.

For the first time in history, Glasgow's 10 MPs are all Labour, with George Galloway taking Hillhead from Roy Jenkins, and Sam Galbraith taking Strathkelvin and Bearsden from Tory Micheal Hirst. A quarter of a million votes were cast for Labour in Glasgow alone, in a turnout

of 74.3 per cent, which was 3 per cent up on 1983.

Pressure has mounted rapidly since 11 June for a clear Labour response to the results. Many of the Labour MPs immediately called on Thatcher to recognise she had no mandate in Scotland. Helen Liddell, chair of the Scottish Labour Party, speaking as the results came in, said: 'we will provide effective opposition — that's been shown by this massive vote of confidence'.

### Campaign

At the Scottish miners gala in Edinburgh on Saturday 13 June, Campbell Christie called for a coordinated anti-Conservative campaign in Scotland. Speaker after speaker, including Neil Kinnock, pledged to continue the fight against further job losses and privatisation in Scotland. This campaign must be led by Labour though — the weakness of an all-party alliance was shown clearly in the retreat on Caterpillar earlier this year.

The Scottish Labour Party executive and the Scottish Labour MPs met on Sunday 14 June. Donald Dewar issued a statement immediately after it, demanding a meeting with Rifkind prior to the Queen's speech. Proposals included a Scottish Assembly, the immediate scrapping of the poll tax, and a commitment to no further privatisation in Scotland.

This was followed by a statement from the SNP leadership, promising cooperation with any opposition organised by the Labour Party, but indicating that if Labour does

nothing, the SNP will take the lead.

Labour undoubtedly has the responsibility and the mandate to take the initiative now. The whole question of a Scottish Assembly is centrally back on the agenda in Scotland. So is the need for organised resistance by the trade unions and the whole labour movement, to any further job losses.

The few remaining jobs in the Scottish coalfields will be under fairly immediate threat, as will the steel industry at Ravenscraig. Opposition to the poll tax at every level is also likely. But the labour movement must take responsibility for this, with the Labour Party leading it.

All-party campaigns will not strengthen Labour's hand — indeed they have been rejected by the Scottish working people in the votes cast last week. The Labour Party can lead this opposition — at a Scottish level, and at a local level.

### Lead

Labour's campaign was well fought in Scotland. All those activists can be organised to continue the resistance to Tory rule.

But whilst Labour's vote increased in Scotland, it is interesting to note that, at 43 per cent, it did not reach the 55 per cent level recorded at points during the miners strike. The maximum possible Labour support was not achieved. There is no room for complacency.

One critical weakness in Labour's campaign in Scotland was agreed to be the under-representation of women. Only three women out of 72 candidates were

contesting seats for Labour: Kate Phillips (Dumfries), Morag Morrel (Gordon), and Maria Fyfe (Glasgow Maryhill). Only Maria Fyfe was likely to win, which she did, increasing the majority to 19,364 by a swing of 11.4 per cent to Labour.

Every other party in Scotland had better women representation. Scottish Liberals stood 8 women among 36 candidates; the SDP 9 out of 36, and the Tories fielded 11.

The Labour Party undoubtedly failed to make real its policies on women and the Ministry for Women in its campaign in Scotland. In fact only 11 women were even short-listed for Scottish seats. This in no way reflects the level of activity of women in the Scottish labour movement. Nor does it develop the potential support amongst women in Scotland for Labour.

This election has seen the complete decline of the Communist Party in Scotland. It was only able to resource the standing of 10 candidates, and every one lost their deposit. The highest number of votes polled for a CP candidate was in Dundee with 308.

The Green Party has issued a press statement, saying that it now considers itself to be the fifth political force in Scotland. Certainly it achieved a better percentage vote than the Communist Party this time.

After the election, the situation in Scotland is clear.

Only Labour, and the labour movement, can lead an effective opposition to the Tories victory nationally — and the opposition in Scotland has to be started immediately.



## In Brief

### Say no to OMOV

**BEFORE** the election, the Labour NEC circulated a 'consultation paper' to all CLPs and affiliates on procedures for selecting parliamentary candidates.

Despite the intervention of the general election, local parties are still expected to respond by the end of July. That means that Labour Party organisations must consider the matter during their current round of meetings.

The NEC's 'consultation' is a fake — and must be rejected. The exercise is designed to continue the right wing's campaign to overturn automatic reselection and stop MPs being accountable to

their local parties even on the limited level that exists today.

The vast majority of the 11 options offer some sort of direct ballot of party members. They would take power out of the hands of the body to which an MP regularly reports and aggregate it in the hands of the parliamentary leadership.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has produced a special broadsheet on the consultation exercise. It gives the options before CLPs and a model response to the consultation, together with the arguments of the case.

If you haven't got one already, copies are still available, price 10p, from: CLPD, Vladimir Derer, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH.

### Don't forget conference deadlines

**NOW** the election is over, party activists are turning their minds to conference deadlines.

Walworth Road has put the deadline back for receipt of conference resolutions and NEC nominations to Friday 24 July. That means local parties must conduct this business at forthcoming wards and general committees.

However, the deadline for amendments to

conference resolutions and appointment of delegates remains the same: Friday 14 August.

This is tight. It will give local parties less than two weeks to read the preliminary agenda and put forward resolutions.

In the vast majority of cases this means special meetings will need to be organised to conduct this business. Make sure that your ward, section, affiliated organisation and GC gets its act together in time.

### Campaign Against Strip Searches

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27-28 June  
AYLESHAM VILLAGE  
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or by train to Aylesham stn  
RALLY - Midday SATURDAY

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from THE REDSKINS  
"TEST" DEPARTMENT  
band of holy joy... HAPPY END...  
PLUS MANY OTHERS! Sarah Jane Morris (ex-Communards)

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JUSTICE FOR THE SACKED MINERS



## West Midlands Failure to challenge racism brings low vote for Labour

**SELF-STYLED MODERATES** in the West Midlands are going to have a hard time convincing anyone that they know the secret of the party's election defeat if their own results are anything to go by. According to Press Association figures, Labour picked up 2.1 per cent in the region compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent. Of the 36 Tory held West Midlands seats Labour took one — The Wrekin — at the same time losing one of its own in Wolverhampton North East. The question facing the Labour Party in the West Midlands, a region which has seen a sharp decline in jobs and living standards under Thatcher, is why has the Tory vote held up so well?

One explanation is racism. The West Midlands has the biggest concentration of black people outside of London, the vast majority of them living in Birmingham, Coventry and the Black Country. But the campaign for black self-organisation and black self-representation within the Labour Party has so far failed to make the same gains as its London counterpart.

Labour has two black candidates in the West Midlands, both running in safe Tory seats, and in Coventry there is not one black member of the council's ruling Labour group. Moreover, attempts by black party members to

change this situation have produced a violent backlash from local right wing MPs and councillors, fearful of its impact on Labour's electoral chances and the security of their own parliamentary seats.

The expulsions of Kevin Scally and Amir Khan and the infamous letter from five Birmingham MPs to Bernie Grant and Linda Bellos were examples of this. So too was the call by West Bromwich East MP Peter Snape for the expulsion of those involved in the Birmingham Black Section rally in April.

As an unidentified 'senior member of the shadow cabinet' told the *Sunday Times* after that

rally: 'I want these characters out and I don't even mind if we lose a few seats to the SDP in the process.'

'It is an insidious disease which has been allowed to spread. It is political AIDS.'

Having orchestrated a national row over what would otherwise have been a run-of-the-mill meeting, right wing spokesperson Roy Hattersley then took a half page in the Birmingham *Evening Mail* of 15 April to justify his action. Rather than addressing any of the real issues affecting working people in the run-up to the local elections, Hattersley ranted on about unrepresentative minorities, reassuring his readership that the situation in the party was in hand.

Six days before the district council elections Norman Tebbit replied. He demanded to know why, if the left was so weak, the council was spending money on 'crazy race relations policies' which 'stir up tension'.

In the event, Labour lost five council seats and the first meeting of the new labour group closed

down the race relations and equal opportunities committee and the women's committee in response. This was done on the very day that Labour launched its general election campaign with its pledge to establish a women's ministry!

Its immediate effect was to thoroughly demoralise women and black activists in key marginals like Birmingham-Selly Oak. Labour's failure to challenge racism in the West Midlands is shown up in the general election results.

The loss of Wolverhampton North East has been largely attributed to the financial support given by Wolverhampton to the family of Clinton McCurbin choked to death by the West Midlands police. But the 'McCurbin factor' was on fertile ground. In 1983 Labour only won the seat from the Tories by a 214 majority in a poll where the National Front candidate received 585 votes.

In Birmingham the Alliance's share of the 1987 general election vote actually increased in four

constituencies: Yardley and Hall Green, which were two of their target seats, and Sparkbrook and Perry Barr, where the Tories stood black candidates in the hope of winning a share of Labour's vote.

The danger now, of course, is that despite their own lack-lustre performance Labour's right wing will seize on the Wolverhampton North East result to argue that race and similar 'minority issues' should be placed on the back burner. Sophisticated (sic) arguments for this are already in place.

Roy Hattersley explains in his book *Choose Freedom* how the 'particular passions' of certain Labour Party members have 'blurred the sharp image of socialism and increased the difficulty of portraying and popularising a coherent and consistent strand of policy'.

Anti-racism and other issues may be the short-term casualties of this approach but, as Labour's results in the West Midlands show, it will be the Labour Party that suffers the long-term effects.

## After the Durham demo: build the strip search protest

**OVER 2000** people joined the demonstration through Durham on Saturday 13 June demanding an end to the degrading practice of strip searching women prisoners, carried out in Durham and other jails in Britain and the north of Ireland. Organised by a coordinating body including the Stop the Strip Searches Campaign and the Women and Ireland network the demonstration, mainly of women, drew together a wide range of groups including the Irish in Britain Representation Group, the Southall Black Sisters and the Labour Committee on Ireland.

Despite attempts by police to disrupt the protest — at the last moment plans to rally outside the prison were cut from 30 minutes to 5 — the demonstration was an inspiring step towards building a strong and vocal opposition to this legalised and systematic sexual assault.

It took place in Durham to highlight the brutal use of strip search-

ing against two Irish women, Ella O Dwyer and Martina Anderson, held in Durham's 'H' wing. The H wing itself was closed in 1971 after much protest at its claustrophobic and harsh conditions.

By Anne Kane

While in remand in Brixton between June 1985 and May 1986 these two

women suffered around 400 intimate body searches each. Since arriving in Durham, although never out of the prison confines, they are stripped at least four times each a month, a practice which they challenged in a letter read to Saturday's rally.

'How long will this psychological torture continue? We've been sentenced to life imprisonment. Does that mean a life of sexual torture?' they asked.

This challenge to the flimsy excuse that strip searching is a 'security' measure was followed up by speakers at the rally. In particular, Martina's sister, Isobel Anderson, explained the means by which strip searching was introduced in Armagh prison in 1982, alongside

the 'supergrass' system in the north of Ireland.

Both were aimed at dividing and demoralising the nationalist community, she said. She called for every opening possible to be seized 'to build a strong and active campaign to end the strip searching of all prisoners'.

### Event

Such a goal is entirely realisable. Since its introduction as a systematic practice in Armagh in November 1982, and now Maghaberry, over 2000 strip searches of women prisoners have taken place.

In this period strip searching has been condemned by many groups and individuals. In Britain these include NOLS and

the NUS, the national women's organisation, and some trade unions. Even the Labour Party is committed to 'replacing' it.

Despite such broad opposition strip searching not only continues but has increased. Opposition in policy has not been translated into the necessary campaigning action to put the spotlight on strip searching and end its use.

The opposition by organisations in the labour movement is to be welcomed. But opposition which remains at the level of resolutions is not enough. Strip searching is one issue which as the widespread opposition shows, stands some hope of being successfully fought now.



# Sinn Fein victory in Belfast

IN THE general election in the six counties of Ireland which remain a British colony the government failed in its chief objective to substantially reduce the vote of Sinn Fein and, defeat Gerry Adams in West Belfast. In fact Adams increased his vote. Overall Sinn Fein took 11.4 per cent of the vote in the six counties — which represents roughly 35 per cent of the nationalist vote. Since it first contested Westminster elections, during the hunger strike in 1981, Sinn Fein has succeeded in building up core support which has never fallen below 10 per cent of the overall vote in the six counties — 35 per cent of the nationalist vote. In this election, despite the Anglo-Irish agreement, Sinn Fein's vote was only two per cent down on 1983.

This was a major achievement given the main goal of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is to undermine support for Sinn Fein. In addition, Sinn Fein was the only party fighting the election which had to face constant military harassment. Adams' election agent, Alex Maskey, was shot and seriously wounded at the start of the campaign. Two further election workers were shot. Canvassers, leafleters and election officials for Sinn Fein were shot at, arrested, beaten up and generally harassed by the British army, the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

Sinn Fein was the only party standing on a platform calling for British withdrawal and a united Ireland. They also made specific demands to end discrimination against the nationalist minority within the six counties and to uphold civil liberties. For example, Sinn Fein was the only party supporting the widely recognised 'MacBride principles' which aim to eliminate religious discrimination in employment in northern Ireland.

In their campaign Sinn Fein explained that the republican movement's goal of ending the British presence, and the partition of Ireland, was not counterposed to winning immediate gains for the nationalist community. They pointed out that what concessions had been

won from Britain by the nationalist community over the last twenty years had been the result of mass struggles, campaigns and sacrifices like those of the H-block prisoners and the hunger strikers, the recent electoral successes of Sinn Fein, and the armed struggle of the IRA.

By Redmond O'Neill

The axis of the campaign of the so-called nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) was directed first and foremost against Sinn Fein — and aimed above all at defeating Gerry Adams in West Belfast. The SDLP's claim that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had delivered gains for the nationalist community did not look very credible in the aftermath of the Loughgall massacre and continuing huge discrimination against Catholics in such areas as employment. So the SDLP relied on calls to keep out the Unionists in those constituencies where the SDLP were ahead of Sinn Fein, and combined this with a poisonous campaign against Sinn Fein itself. The SDLP however had some difficulty in explaining their opposition to the MacBride principles in areas of massive nationalist unemployment like West Belfast. The SDLP claim that these principles for eliminating discrimination in employment will deter investors!

The SDLP did win South Down, defeating



West Belfast wall mural

the sitting MP Enoch Powell by a little over 700 votes. This gives it three Westminster MPs. The SDLP increased its overall share of the vote by three per cent to 21 per cent of the total or roughly 65 per cent of the nationalist vote. But the SDLP failed in its goal of marginalising Sinn Fein and defeating Gerry Adams.

The second major feature of the outcome of the election in the six counties is that the Unionist parties' campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been significantly weakened. The unionist turnout in the election was down eight per cent on 1983. In spite of an electoral pact not to stand against each other by the Official Unionist Party (OUP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Popular Unionist candidate Jim Kilfedder, Enoch Powell lost his South Down seat to the SDLP. John McCartney, standing on a platform which included ending the unionist boycott of Westminster, cut Jim Kilfedder's majority from 14,000 to 4,000.

## Unionists

The Unionist parties will now abandon their boycott of Westminster and have indicated they are willing to talk to the British government for the first time since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in November 1985. The

Unionist parties, having failed to defeat the Anglo-Irish Agreement, now have no option but to negotiate with Thatcher.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement has thereby been strengthened. It has failed in its declared goal of eliminating Sinn Fein's mass base in the nationalist community. It has delivered no significant concessions to end discrimination and the repression the nationalist community suffers. It has, however, secured cooperation between the British and Dublin governments in policing the six county statelet and in propping up the SDLP. It has revealed the Unionists as paper tigers and is supported by all major British political parties.

## Devolution

The next step envisaged in the Tory Party manifesto was progress towards some kind of devolved government in the six counties — with power sharing between the Unionist parties and the SDLP. This goal is shared by the Dublin government and the SDLP. It is here that the next moves are likely to take place.

A proposal from the loyalist, paramilitary, Ulster Defence Association (UDA) for a devolved six county government with guaranteed power sharing arrangements for the SDLP was floated in the months before the

general election. The quid pro quo which was demanded was 'loyalty' to the crown from the nationalist community — accepting that the six counties remain forever part of the United Kingdom.

This proposal received a favourable reception from the Northern Ireland Office, Dublin and the SDLP — but not from Ian Paisley. A similar move in the same direction was the statement by prominent SDLP strategist, Sean Farren, supporting a proposal from OUP general secretary, Frank Millar, that a new six county administration should have responsibility for security. The SDLP have indicated that power sharing would be the price they would demand for control of security to be returned to a six county administration.

The objective of this proposal is to involve both

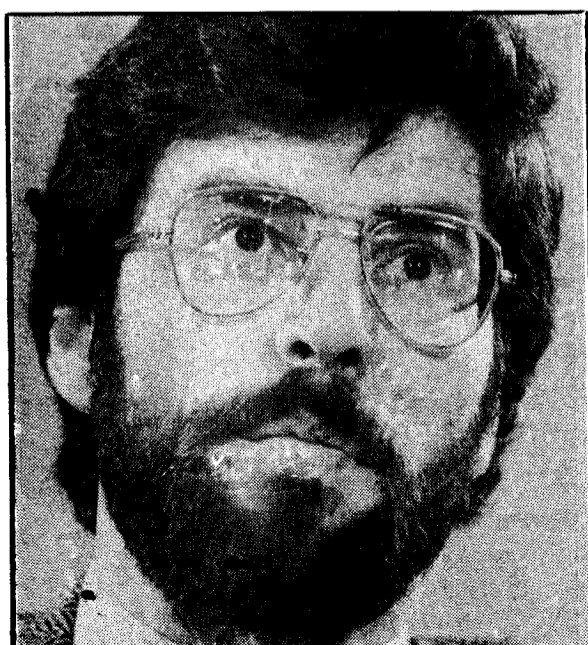
the Dublin government and the SDLP in policing and stabilising the six county state — and to appease the unionist parties by restoring a devolved form of government to the north.

## Partition

None of those proposals is going to work. It is partition and the British presence in Ireland which is the root of the violence in the six counties. The six county statelet institutionalises discrimination in every sphere against the nationalist community. The security forces — the UDR and the RUC are sectarian through and through — something they regularly demonstrate to the nationalist communities.

So, even if a sufficiently large section of the unionists can be persuaded

to accept it, a precondition for the type of 'stabilisation' of the six counties envisaged by Dublin, London and the SDLP is the longterm defeat of the nationalist community, and of Sinn Fein. Otherwise the SDLP would become totally implicated in running the six county state under conditions where support would progressively be lost to Sinn Fein. Furthermore it is only a matter of time before Sinn Fein support in the north begins to translate itself into political gains in the south. Sinn Fein's success in the North, above all Gerry Adams retaining his seat, is therefore a serious blow against the British plan for the SDLP, and British collaborators in Dublin. The 1987 general election has done nothing to stabilise British rule in Ireland.



West Belfast

	1987		1983
Adams, Gerry (SF)	16,842	Sinn Fein	16,379
Hendron, Joe (SDLP)	14,641	SDLP	10,934
McMahon, Mary (WP)	1,819	Gerry Fitt	10,326
Millar, Frank (OUP)	7,646	OUP	2,435
		WP	1,893

## The parties share of the vote in the six counties

Table showing the percentage of the total vote gained by each party in the last seven elections in the six counties

	1979	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1987
	General Election	Council Election	Assembly Election	General Election	European Election	Council Election	General Election
Official Un.	36.6	16.5	29.7	34	21.4	29.8	37.9
DUP	10.2	26.6	23	20	33.6	26.2	11.7
SDLP	18.2	17.5	18.8	17.9	22.1	16.4	21.1
Sinn Fein	-	-	10.1	13.4	13.3	10.6	11.4
Alliance	11.9	8.9	9.3	8	4.9	6.9	9.9
WP	1.7	1.8	2.7	1.9	1.2	1.6	2.6

NOTE: The 1987 result for the OUP and DUP is distorted by the agreement not to run Unionist candidate against sitting Unionist MPs.





# 'We have to set the agenda for four years, not just four weeks'

ONE OF the most important features of the election was the continuing weakness of the Labour Party in the south of England. While Labour was sweeping to huge gains in Scotland, Wales and the North, it suffered serious setbacks in the South. These stopped Labour winning the election. Until Labour increases its support in the South it cannot hope to form a government.

Yet one experience of Labour in the south of England in the last 10 years stands out — the popularity of the GLC. It was a lesson the Labour leadership was careful not to draw on in the election campaign. The words 'GLC' were not even mentioned in an election broadcast and no serious

campaign was made on Labour's formal pledge to recreate it. The reason is the Labour leadership wants to dissociate itself from the radical policies of the GLC on Ireland, women, support for the black community and other issues.

It has been reported in the press that the Labour leadership took exceptional measures to ensure that Ken Livingstone did not appear in the election campaign — which didn't prevent the press taking as chief targets in the campaign Livingstone and Bernie Grant. As the first of a series on the way forward after the election Socialist Action asked KEN LIVINGSTONE to give his views on the election and after.

**THE FIRST**, and most important, lesson of the election is that you cannot win it in the four weeks of a campaign if you have wasted much of the four years beforehand. Second, a minor point, the techniques of the election campaign were obviously taken from those pioneered by the GLC. But without the policies which gave the GLC's campaign content they don't have the same effect. Third that one of the biggest strategic lessons Labour, and the left, has to face is how to overcome the divisions between the North and the South.

ded factor that most of those unemployed are black and subject to racist harassment that no white person faces. But we have to win support not only in areas of terrible deprivation but in areas where the working class is still prosperous.

What we cannot do is try to build up our support on the basis of what is acceptable to the *Sun*. It is also stupid because, no matter how much we attack *Militant* or the Black Section, and no matter how much the *Sun* praises us at the time, it will turn round and attack us at an election. We have to build support that is for our policies — and that is not dependent on the whims of the gutter press.

I therefore remain completely committed to the policies that the GLC fought for. I do not believe that there is any future for a socialism in Britain that does not place the concerns of women and black people on the same level as those of white male workers. A party that gives in to the type of disgraceful campaign that was carried on against lesbians and gays, and even worse is complicity in it, is not a party that will ever build socialism.

## Ireland

On Ireland I have explained my position many times. There is no issue in British politics which is more important than ensuring British withdrawal from Ireland. Ireland was Britain's first colony and every serious socialist policy must involve an unequivocal commitment to withdraw from Ireland. I will be looking during this parliament to every step that can be taken to strengthen the current demanding British withdrawal from Ireland.

But if we want to elect a Labour government we have got to understand the real problem and lesson of the last four years. The election campaign was better than could have been imagined. There is a lot that could be improved. For example we have a foreign policy which is in contradiction to our unilateralism — I found tremendous support for Gorbachev's proposals in Brent and I don't believe people think there is a 'Russian menace' at all. We have to have a policy to get out of Ireland, support Nicaragua, and our campaign wasn't geared to women — when we jumped up the national polls in the middle of the campaign that was among men. Our policy on taxation was confused — why couldn't we simply say that a Labour government would ensure that no ordinary person, or family, would suffer from an increase in taxes?

But whatever the drawbacks at least on the health service, on education, on pensions we had a campaign which meant something to people. The whole party felt it as a sigh of relief after the last four years.

The trouble is that this campaign was not a continuation of what we had been doing previously. We had been denouncing 'violence' in the miners strike. We had been saying that *Militant* was the most important question — or that we had to pacify a few racists by attacking Black Sections and Sharon Atkin. We even had an attack on *Militant* in the first television broadcast.

## Success

I believe one of the keys to success is the link between socialist economic and social policies and democracy. Labour did tremendously well in Scotland not only because it was fighting against unemployment and poverty, but because it linked that to extending democracy — the demand for a Scottish Assembly. The GLC expanded the idea of democracy — and then defended it during the fight against abolition.

That is one thing that is astonishing about the record of the last two Labour governments — a legacy that still has to be overcome. These governments not only carried through right wing economic policies that broke our support, but they didn't even take the first step that could be taken to extend democratic rights. They were as secretive as any Tory government. They had to be pressured by women into passing the Equal Pay and Equal Opportunities Acts and they directly organised repression in the North of Ireland. That was how the Liberals first rebuilt support — by challenging Labour over its failure to defend civil rights. Without Labour's hyper centralism Liberal and Alliance support would never have got off the ground in the first place.

Some of the Labour right wing have gone — and are still going. I remember Don Concannon, when we were in opposition, going to see Bobby Sands on his death bed to say Labour would give him no support. I notice that Concannon finished up trying to lose Alan Meale Labour's seat in Mansfield.

The GLC turned all that super centralist tradition round in London. It expanded people's idea of democracy — and the role which Labour played. That is why we built up support in layers well outside Labour's traditional base.

But what was true, and is often forgotten, was that we had to fight for two years to get that support. People

remember the popularity of the GLC at the end. But when we were first elected we faced a campaign in the press of the type we have seen against Haringey, Brent, Lambeth and other councils in the last year. 'The most odious man in Britain' was the *Sun's* famous comment.

We turned the polls around on our policies — Ireland, on women, on support for the black community — by fighting for them. By not allowing the Tories to set the agenda I believe one serious clear speech by the party leadership on Ireland or lesbian and gay rights would begin to turn the tide of hysteria round — and would give a lead to the entire Labour Party.

If we spend four years saying this type of issue is the most important thing confronting the country, accepting the agenda the Tories set, then we can't expect suddenly, in an election campaign, to set another agenda and win an election.

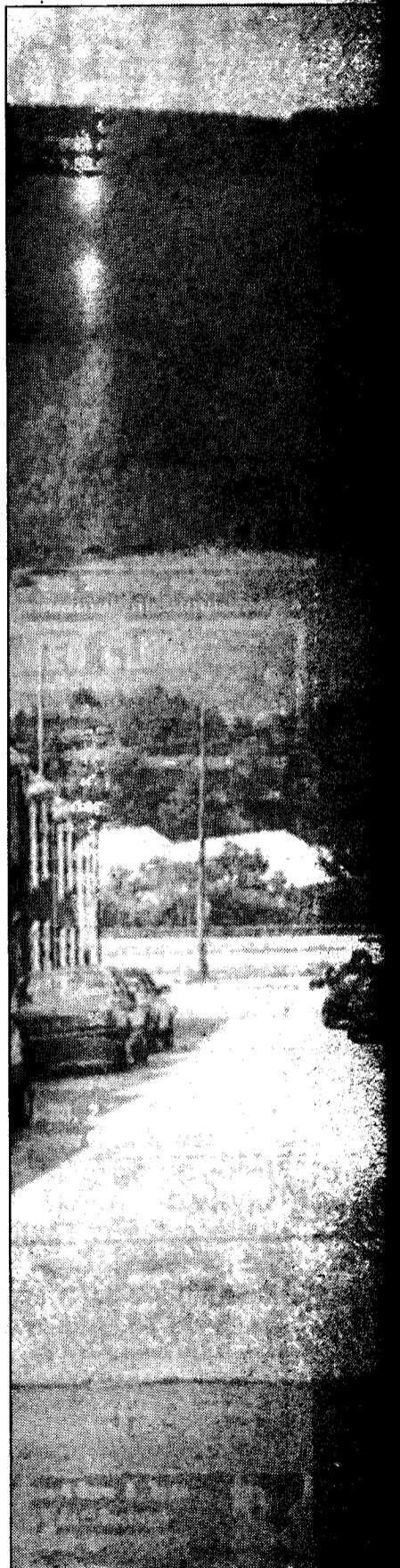
The point about who sets the political agenda is all important. The polls show that the whole increase in Labour's support came before the famous television broadcast. What was decisive was that we stopped attacking Arthur Scargill, or denouncing the left, and turned outwards to deal with issues that count to real people. The problem is that it was done too late. You cannot accept large parts of the Tories' agenda for four years, and then set your own for four weeks, and hope to win an election.

## Lesson

We have to hope that this lesson will be learned and the party will be kept turned outwards, that is what is needed to win. But I can't say the signs are hopeful. The leaks that have been appearing in the press since the election are that the right wing think the most important issues that now confront the country are 'one member, one vote' in the Labour Party and abolishing the National Executive Committee. That is not simply an attack on party democracy, it is a complete waste of time. It is to repeat all the mistakes that were made leading up to the election campaign.

The other reason we have got to set the agenda is because we should be clear who we are trying to win over. There are a small handful of Tory voters who can be won over on a straightforward basis that they don't like the policies of the United States. But that is not where we are going to get the next advance in our votes from.

What we have to do is squeeze the Alliance. I think a whole layer of



Alliance voters are sick to the back teeth with Owen. There are a few fanatics around the SDP who are obsessed by the bomb. The Liberals have played a disgraceful rôle in Merseyside, and Diane Abbott said that the Alliance campaign in Hackney was disgraceful. But we are not interested in deals with the Alliance leaders.

What is important is that all the polls show that Alliance voters have basically the same concerns as Labour voters — unemployment, the health service, education. They are quite different to the Tory voters — who see the most important issues prices

## Strengths

These are strengths we could have drawn on in the general election campaign. But we didn't use them. This was a wasted asset. That support for the GLC was a resource we could have drawn on.

I think there are many lessons that can be drawn on from the GLC for tasks we face now. In the north, where the working class faces tremendous levels of unemployment and poverty, Labour made great gains in the election. But in the south we face a complex problem.

In areas of London, of course, we face unemployment as bad as anywhere. Hackney or Brixton have unemployment on the same level as Newcastle or Liverpool — with the ad-



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...ce, taxes, and law and order. At  
...the south it is cracking that  
...support that we should be aim-  
...n that all the polls, and the  
...from the Liberals themselves,  
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...the right. We will not win them  
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...and figures like that who cut into  
...eral support.  
...is what we should be doing in  
...four years. Not turning in-

wards to contemplate our navels in con-  
stitutional crises imposed by the right  
wing. Nor spending all our time in the  
House of Commons — where the  
Tories are going to win every vote. We  
have to turn the party outwards — in  
the first place to those who will be  
fighting the Tory government. We have  
to fight for Labour to set the agenda. I  
think, particularly in the south, we  
have to use the popularity the GLC  
created — not hide it away.  
But I can't repeat too much that  
everything depends on us setting our  
own political agenda. Not just for four  
weeks but for four years.

## The results

# The reality of the 'North/South divide'

**THE VICTORY** of Thatcher in the general election was a serious setback for the labour movement. It means it has to fight, probably for at least another four years, under a government which utilises the entire power of the state against the labour movement. Furthermore this administration has, in its plans for the inner cities, local government, education, privatisation, the trade unions, and other issues, the most reactionary programme of any government this century.

By John Ross

In reporting Thatcher's victory the press has concentrated massive attention on the 'North/South divide' — the gigantic differences in support for the different parties that now exists in the different parts of the country. In the North, Wales and Scotland Labour has 170 seats to the Tories 81. In the Midlands and South the Tories have 295 seats to Labour's 69. It literally is as though the country had been cut in half.

The outcome of the 1987 general election showed clearly the political consequences of the 'dual society' — and the way Thatcherism is allowing every differential in British society to increase. In the North of England, Scotland, and Wales there were swings to Labour of almost landslide proportions — in Scotland Labour has 13 more MPs today than in its victory of 1945. In most of the big cities, in particular the inner cities, big shifts took place in favour of Labour. Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle, and Bradford have no Tory MPs at all. But in the South, and some areas of London, there were increases in the Tory vote. (See Tables 1 and 2)

What underlies the North/South divide, and that between the inner cities and the rest, is not geography but social division. Constituencies in London where there is the greatest social deprivation — for example Vauxhall, Newham North West, and Islington North — saw increases in the Labour vote as large as those in the north. But in the south outside London the Alliance retained its second place behind the Tories. The basic class divisions in British society are being refracted through a process of social differentiation.

These divisions reflect the way Thatcherism has brought out sharply historical cleavages in British society. Average unemployment is higher, wages lower, social deprivation worse, in the North, Wales, Scotland and the inner cities. The south has the greatest areas of



prosperity — and has seen the greatest increases in living standards under Thatcher. These social differences have always existed. But under Thatcher they are deepening still further.

Underlying the geographical trends are the way the economy itself is being restructured. Vast swathes of northern manufacturing industry have been closed down. Much of the rest of manufacturing is being restructured around a 'core' of permanent, relatively secure, workers and a 'periphery' of part time and temporary workers.

The effects of these shifts on the political structure of Britain is clear. Labour's support now ranges from 47 per cent in the North of England to 17 per cent in the South outside London. There are now three clear political areas in the country. (See Table 3)

- In Scotland, Wales, the North of England, the North West and Yorkshire. Labour is stronger than any other party.
- In the Midlands and London Labour is behind the Tories but ahead of the Alliance.
- In the South outside London — East Anglia, the South East, the South West — Labour is in third place, not simply behind the Tories but behind the Alliance as well.

The correlation of these geographical areas with social divisions is obvious. The

south, the heartland of the Tories and the Alliance, is the most prosperous area of the country. The north, the heartland of Labour, is the area of the greatest unemployment and poverty. The Midlands is the intermediate area between the two.

The trend of development, nevertheless, is clear. The Tory party, slow but progressively, is collapsing back into its south of England bunker. Painfully slowly, but definitely, Labour is consolidating its position in the north. Despite the rhetoric about Thatcher's popularity she, in reality, has the smallest vote of any prime minister with a safe majority in parliament this century. Tory support continues the decline which has been going on for well over 30 years (See Figure 1). But despite the Thatcher government's unpopularity Labour is still blocked by the Alliance's strength in the South from challenging the Tories to form a government.

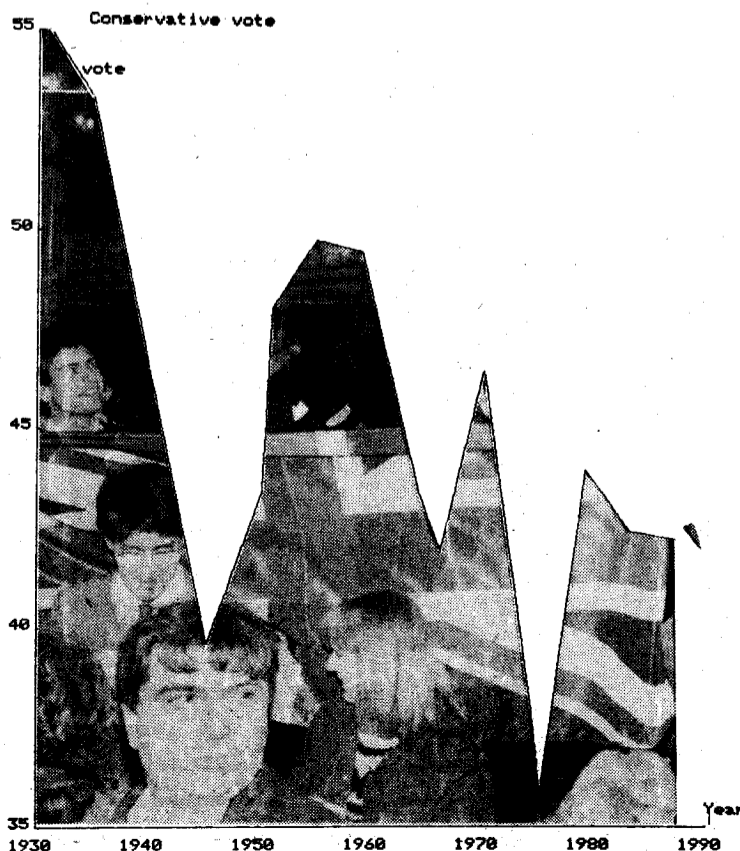
The tactics are therefore clear. Thatcher's position must be ground down by mass struggle. On the electoral level Labour must consolidate its position in the North, Scotland and Wales — mopping up the remaining pockets of non-Tory votes and crushing the SNP and Liberals in Scotland. It must continue to fight it out with the Tories and Alliance in the Midlands and London. Labour must begin to fight with the Alliance to lift itself out of third place in the South.

Smashing through the Alliance vote to get at the Tories, above all weakening the Thatcher government by mass struggles. That is the task which the Labour Party faces in the next years.

Area	Change in Tory Vote 1983-87
London	+2.5
East Midlands	+1.4
South East	+1.1
East Anglia	+1.1
West Midlands	+0.6
South West	-0.8
Yorkshire	-1.2
Wales	-1.5
North West	-2.0
North England	-2.3
Scotland	-4.3
UK	-0.2

Area	Change in Labour Vote 1983-87
South East	+0.9
East Anglia	+1.2
South West	+1.5
London	+1.6
West Midlands	+2.1
East Midlands	+2.1
North West	+5.2
Yorkshire	+5.3
North England	+7.1
Scotland	+7.3
Wales	+7.5
UK	+3.3

Area	Tory vote	Alliance vote	Labour vote
North of England	32	21	47
Wales	30	18	45
Scotland	24	19	45
North West	38	21	41
Yorkshire	38	22	41
West Midlands	46	21	33
London	46	22	31
East Midlands	49	21	30
East Anglia	52	26	22
South East	56	27	17
South West	51	33	16
UK	42	23	31



Despite media propaganda to the contrary Tory support continues to decline



# Class society and the family

**MARXISM ANALYSES** not just economic division into classes but the entire structure of society. The three most powerful structures of society are private property — in today's society the ownership of capital — the state and the family. Any historical policy for women's liberation, and the liberation of the whole of humanity, must progressively, through an entire historical epoch, replace all three. In the first of two articles, based on an educational conference held by Socialist Action, JUDE WOODWARD looks at the origins of women's oppression. In the next issue she looks at the family in capitalist society.

THE reduction of Marxism to a view of society that only recognises the existence of economic classes is unfortunately only too common on the British left. But Marxism does not examine only the economy or economic classes, nor does it claim that the only divisions that exist are those between classes. It analyses the whole of 'civil society' and politics.

Lenin, writing on the national question, for example, pointed out that Marxists must recognise that 'the division of nations into oppressed and oppressor nations as basic, significant and inevitable under imperialism.'

One of the most significant works of Engels was his attempt to understand the relationships between the development of economic classes, the oppression of women as a sex in the family, and the other relationships of political oppression organised by the state. In that book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels explained that the oppression of women as a sex emerged at the beginnings of human civilisation, alongside the first emergence of class society itself. 'The first class antagonism that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.'

The oppression of women was one of the first oppressions to appear in human society, and, alongside the ending of classes themselves, will be among the last to finally disappear.

## Oppression

The oppression of the female sex finds its historical beginnings in the overthrow of 'mother right', the matrilineal society, and its replacement by patriarchal social organisation. Mother right was abolished, and the monogamous, patriarchal family became the basic unit of human society. Engels described this process most graphically: 'The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of



children. This degraded position of women... has gradually been prettified and glossed over, and sometimes clothed in a milder form; but in no sense has it been abolished.'

The overthrow of mother right and the subordination of women in the home were the products of the same historical 'natural' function, ensuring intermarriage between different tribes, and maintaining extended forms of social organisation.

The new element of the monogamous family was its embodiment of the subjugation of one sex by the other. The concept of adultery arose for the first time.

## Process

In one great historical process the social surplus that was produced as a result of the greater productivity of all human labour was appropriated by men rather than women, and differentially between men, creating the first economic classes.

But while a class of men had appropriated the wealth of society, the existence of a matrilineal society meant that it could not be inherited by the man's kin, but instead passed at his death to the kin of his wife. His own children, as part of his tribe rather than their mother's, would not inherit this wealth. It was therefore necessary to overthrow mother right and replace it with a patrilineal organisation of society.

But patriarchy alone was insufficient, for the only way of being sure of the paternity of children was to enforce the fidelity of women. Thus the institution of monogamy followed hard on the heels of patriarchy. Monogamy 'is based upon the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of un-

disputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father's property as his natural heirs.'

This monogamous family was the first form of organisation of human relations to be based, not on natural, but on economic conditions.

## Domestic

Secondly the entire character of domestic work is changed. 'In the ancient communistic household, which comprised many couples and their children, the task entrusted to woman of managing the household was as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the procuring of food... With the patriarchal family, and still more with the single monogamous family, a change came. Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head female servant, excluded from participation in social production.'

This essential form of the family has existed throughout the entire history of class society, since its first development. It has taken different forms, with more or less open subjugation of the woman within the family itself, but throughout 'civilisation', that is class society, it has been the monogamous family which has been the cellular unit of society. And as Engels explained, through the study of the specific form of the family in a particular society, the 'nature of the antagonisms and contradictions fully developed in that society' can be studied and observed.

It is within the monogamous family, and the entire family system of class society, that the oppression of women is

located and finds its fundamental causes and material basis.

The family has changed its precise form, functions and relationship to the other institutions of class society according to the different phases of development of the productive forces and the forms of class rule corresponding to them.

In the feudal system for example, all institutions of civil society had a direct political equivalent. Property was in the form of feudal family estates, and society was organised with these estates as its basic economic, social, political and legal unit, through the seigneurial courts, dues, services and feudal armies. Each institution of civil society had its political equivalent and the family fitted directly into this. The King was the chief land owner, the head of state, his family was the first family of the realm. Family, property, social position, political position all related directly to each other.

## Family

Under capitalism this is no longer the case, the form and function of the family has changed. The attribute of the monogamous family of ensuring the patriarchal inheritance of property, and indeed fixing individuals' relationship to the whole social order as under feudalism, no longer applies at least to the oppressed class — the proletariat. There is no significant property to inherit, therefore the monogamous family as it has existed since the beginning of class society is robbed of its original material foundation.

Moreover, modern largescale industry needs a workforce considerably larger than can be provided by solely male proletarians, and therefore capitalism has the tendency to draw

women out of the home and into the labour market.

But women's re-entry into public production is in contradiction with their functions in the home. Therefore capitalism is also forced to begin to reverse some of the processes which had taken housework out of the realm of public industry into that of a private service. Functions like the education of children, care of the sick, and the aged have once more started to become part of socially necessary public industry, rather than simply private service performed by women unpaid at home.

## Work

In fact we can go so far as to say that capitalism begins the work of undoing the monogamous family, and thereby begins the work of the liberation of women.

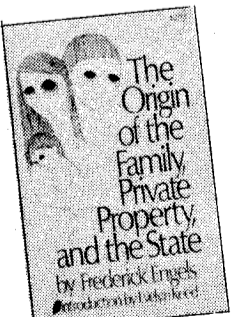
But capitalism does not take more than the first steps in this direction. Because, while the pressure to undermine the monogamous family is built into capitalism a contradictory tendency is even more powerful. Capitalism, adopting the form of the monogamous family inherited from previous social conditions and uses it for its own purposes, for the reproduction of labour power.

This is the specific function of the monogamous family under capitalism through which the individual family labour power is produced and reproduced. In this manner the family maintains a powerful economic function for capitalism and the monogamous family remains a basic economic unit of society. Within the family the worker is brought up to adulthood, fed and clothed, tended when sick, and as an adult his labour power is reproduced constantly through the family.

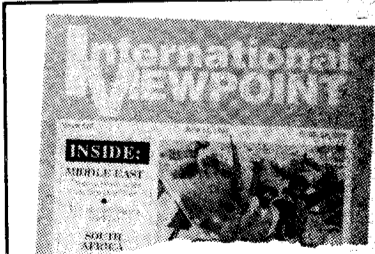
The labour necessary to ensure that a new generation of workers grows up, and the adult worker is in a fit state to start a new day's work each morning, is performed within each individual family by women. This is why Engels explained that, even with all the progress that capitalism makes, 'The modern individual family is founded on the open concealed domestic slavery of women and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules.'

For the capitalist class this is a highly efficient, and moreover, cheap, system to ensure the necessary labour power is always available. Therefore while the historic tendency of capitalism is to undermine the previous material foundation for the existence of the family, it does this to replace it with another — the necessity of the capitalist class to ensure the production and reproduction of labour power.

The monogamous family, despite certain tendencies of capitalism to undermine it, shown in the rising divorce rate, increased numbers of single parent families, and the massive entry of women into paid work, is in its fundamental features, particularly the domestic slavery of women, maintained.



*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* by Frederick Engels, 182 pages, published by Pathfinder Press. Price £3.50. Available from The Other Bookshop, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Include 37p postage and packing.



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# South African railworkers win famous victory



Metal workers have joined forces with car workers to form a powerful new union.

**THOUSANDS** of South African railway workers celebrated a resounding strike victory in Johannesburg's streets on Friday 5 June. After three months on strike, and with many families near to starvation, the workers had refused to give in to the unrelenting attacks by management and the apartheid state.

Six railway workers gave their lives to the struggle. Hundreds were detained, including the union's entire negotiating committee. And every railway worker had faced daily intimidation and harassment by the security forces.

In an unexpected move, which left leaders of the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) 'reeling a bit', the South African Transport Services (SATS) finally backed down on Wednesday 3 June. SATS management contacted the union's solicitors with an offer.

With the union's entire negotiating committee in prison, the solicitors had to go to the jails to consult over the company's approach. They were given the go-ahead to pursue negotiations and clinch the deal.

The company's climb down was precipitated by the approach of the 16 June anniversary of the Soweto youth uprising of 1976. SATS and the apartheid regime — with which the bitter struggle by railworkers would provide a powerful focus for wide-ranging action by the community and the trade union movement.

Indeed, the strike has

already become a focus for many individual struggles and discontent of broad forces. Sparked by the dismissal of a worker for the 'crime' of the late handing in of the £12 that he'd collected as part of his job, the strike rapidly spread throughout the Transvaal region involving some 20,000 workers.

**By Doreen Wepler**

In the final weeks of the strike, the determination of the workers in the Transvaal was inspiring other workers further afield to join in the struggle. They saw that decades of racist treatment at the hands of one of the worst employers in South Africa — where even the limited 1970 labour reforms didn't apply — could be challenged.

The spectre of a national dispute was becoming a serious possibility. A national rail strike was a disastrous prospect for the South African employers given the strategic importance of the rail network to South African industry. Additionally, and unlike any other country, the railway system is also vital for transporting vast numbers of workers forced by the apartheid system to live miles away from their place of work.

The rail workers' strike

was deepening as important advances were being made by other workers and in other sections of the population. COSATU, the 700,000-strong non-racial trade union federation was able to hail the merger of the car workers and metal workers unions. This new union, is a living example of COSATU's industrial unions' policy. The second largest union in the federation, it will be a powerful weapon in the hands of the engineering industry's workers.

The postal workers union, POTWA, had also won a victory at the beginning of May. A range of overt racist practices, including a 200 per cent wage differential between white and black postal workers — had brought 7000 out on strike.

These workers closely identified with the railworkers action, seeing SARHWU as virtually a sister union in the light of the common state ownership and close state control of the two industries. The militant struggle of the postal workers at one point forced the government to release two union leaders from prison before the union would start negotiations.

These workers' actions were taking place despite the state of emergency and in the face of formidable attacks by the state. In April, 60,000 engineering workers staged three stoppages to protest the imprisonment of their general secretary, Moses Mayekiso, one of five people on trial for treason.

The mines have also been the scene of sporadic action as protest strikes have mounted in response to continuing deaths in mining accidents, and as miners' wives and girlfriends moved into seven formally single-sex compounds in defiance of apartheid's inhumane separation of workers from their families.

From workers in the food industry to those in the sugar mills of Natal, and the go slow in seven Coca Cola factories, action was escalating. The launch of the 'living wage' campaign by COSATU helped to reinforce the action.

A second factor that the regime had to take into account was the developments within the community. Community support for SARHWU was overwhelming. Workers in the townships knew of the suffering faced by migrant railworkers whose wages have to support ten other members of their families left to fight for their existence in the barren bantustans.

Additionally, they had direct experience — as commuters — of the repression meted out against the strikers, as armed state forces moved into railway stations and on to the trains, manhandling passengers, carrying out arbitrary searches of the carriages. The community organisations were more and more loudly demanding action from SATS.

Women have been playing a particularly decisive role in the com-

munity organisations and have been providing the leadership of the street committees.

This deepening activity has found its reflection in the relaunching of FedSAW, the Federation of South African Women on 1 June.

FedSAW had played a major role in the 1950s, especially in the campaigns against the pass laws, but had been dispersed by the repression of the 1960s. Its relaunch — with veteran leaders such as Helen Joseph again in the organisation's leadership — is a major advance for the liberation struggle.

The victory of SARHWU will give a powerful impetus to these struggles. It will lead to droves of workers flocking to join the union, which was already experiencing substantial growth during the strike itself. The entire union has been strengthened.

But the victory will not mean an end to attacks by SATS. Although SARHWU has won thousands of workers steered in struggle and united around the principle of 'an injury to one is an injury to all', the union hasn't even got a roof over its head.

All the materials needed to rapidly consolidate the victory was lost in the bombing of COSATU House. Some of the union's leaders remain in prison or detained. Continuing solidarity by the British labour movement, especially by railworkers in this country, will be very important in the coming months.

## The settlement

**Non-selective re-employment.** One of the main demands of the strikers was for their reinstatement. On 22 April, 16,000 had been sacked for taking strike action. SATS had originally offered 're-employment', meaning that the company would decide who to take back, and those who were taken back would be treated as new starters.

The final agreement for 'non-selective re-employment' is reinstatement put into a face-saving formula. All workers will have their original jobs back. The scabs will go, as SARHWU demanded. And the re-employment specifies that continuity of service, and other facilities, will be guaranteed.

**Permanent status for black workers.** This clause of the agreement strikes at the heart of one of the key effects of the apartheid system. One of the ways SATS has kept a super-exploited workforce is by denying any job security whatsoever. At the end of 11 months, migrant workers would be forced to return to a bantustan (or land reservation assigned to them) and apply for a new contract at their local labour office.

The agreement awards black workers with two years service a new degree of job security by ending their contract labour status. This concession by SATS was a direct product of the strikers' demand for an end to racism on the railway.

**The right to elect their own representatives.** SATS had maintained throughout the strike that it would negotiate with representatives elected by workers but not with SARHWU. But in the negotiations that did take place the workers representatives were de facto union representatives. The settlement now means that SARHWU delegates will be recognised by the company and is a major step towards total recognition of the union.



## Now free detained railworkers!

**A CONSISTENT demand of SARHWU was for the release from detention and prison of all railway workers. These include the union's general secretary, Ntai Sello, its president, Justice Langa, its national organiser, Mike Roussos, and the entire 33-strong negotiating committee.**

**Although not part of the final agreement, SARHWU was given reason to anticipate significant advances on this front in the light of the settlement. The subsequent release of many workers shows this judgement to be correct, though the**

**union will be engaged in a continued campaign for the release of all detained and imprisoned members. International solidarity will be very important in supporting these campaigns.**

● **Emergency letters and telegrams demanding the release of detained SARHWU members should be sent to PW Botha, Union Buildings, Pretoria 0001, South Africa, and to the South African ambassador, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, London WC2. Copies should be sent to SACTU, 8 Flowers Mews, off Archway Close, London N19 3TB**



# British support for Fiji coup confirmed

THE Queen dotted the i's and crossed the t's on Britain's support for the coup in Fiji. Last week, deposed prime minister, Timoci Bavadra, who had come to Britain was even refused an audience with her.

Meanwhile, her representative in Fiji, governor-general Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was announcing a two-stage plan to legitimise the government of coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka.

At the end of last month, the governor-general had promoted Rabuka to the rank of colonel and placed him in supreme command of Fiji's armed forces. The plan to legitimise the government is equally blatant.

In the first phase, there will be an 'uncontested election' in which tribal chiefs and other individuals selected by Ganilau himself will 'stand'.

By Jon Silberman

Once 'elected' these 'representatives' of no-one other than the British imperialist-backed coup will draw up a new constitution. The re-written constitution will be designed to ensure that a government like that of Timoci Bavadra could never be elected. On the basis of this new constitution 'contested elections' will be held, probably sometime next year.

This process has been described by the governor-general as 'an early return to democracy'!

It was denounced by Timoci Bavadra. Insisting on the legitimacy of the government elected on 11 April, Bavadra said that the new plan had 'grave implications for the social and economic development of our country'.

Ganilau's proposals have no more in common with 'democracy' than Rabuka's coup itself. In fact, both are designed to fight against the Fijian people's democratic aspirations.

Rabuka spelt this out himself in an interview with the *New Zealand Herald*. 'When a political party loses' he said 'if that political party is the sole and final guarantor of your values, you would be forced to do something about it.'

'We have here in Fiji a system as old as time where we have our chiefs and various categories in our communities: warriors, priests, fishermen.'

'In a democracy roles can be interchanged and our values of high regard for the chiefly system are easily hurt when our chiefs

get abused, which can happen in democratic politics'.

All the actions of the Queen's representative since the coup have been designed to give a cloak of constitutionality to the fight against the Fijian people's striving for democracy.

This has been Britain's role ever since the country's chiefly aristocracy ceded Fiji to Britain in 1874. Britain incorporated the chiefs into its colonial administration, giving each high chief a province to rule over, they used the chiefs' warriors to police the indentured labourers brought from the Indian sub-continent to work on the European-owned sugar plantations.

The British colonial administration viciously repressed any struggles that broke out against the slave-like conditions. In the 1920s Britain enlisted the support of Australian and New Zealand military forces to crush a strike wave.

A major strike of oil workers in 1959, which prompted widespread solidarity actions, especially in the island of Viti Levu was crushed by an alliance of the colonial police and army, and the indigenous Fijian chiefs. Ratu Penaia Ganilau played a major role.

The trend in all such struggles has been the forging of increasing unity between the two major ethnic groups in Fiji, the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians.

The British colonial administration stood foursquare against such unity. The constitution for Fijian independence in 1970, drawn up by the colonial administration, upheld the dominance of the chiefly aristocracy and institutionalised racial division. Elections are racially segregated, Indo-Fijians are not allowed to own land.

The election of the Bavadra government reflected the aspirations of Fijians for non-racialism, for an end to the dominance of the chiefly aristocracy. It was this striving for democracy which the British-backed coup is designed to crush.



Soldiers during the coup

## Fund drive

**AFTER THE general election Socialist Action is resuming our fortnightly schedule of production. But, given the return of the Thatcher government after the polls on Thursday 11 June, the need for a weekly socialist paper is greater than ever.**

That is why we are continuing our fund drive.

Despite a slick, professional campaign, Labour — and with it the working class — suffered a severe defeat on Thursday 11 June. The first and most obvious lesson that is already clear: you can't win elections in four weeks.

Labour's message can't be spread on the TV screen or the pages of the

press. It can only be got across *in action*, when it stands side by side with those in struggle against the Thatcher government.

Like the teachers and the civil servants today. And like the miners, the black communities, the surcharged councillors, the Wapping print workers and others before them.

But the picture after

the election is not all gloomy. The return of Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams was a tremendous boost for the nationalists in the north of Ireland. So too the election of four black Labour MPs is an historic break-through.

In the months to come Socialist Action will continue the task of analysing, organising and agitating, not just in support of the working class struggles in this country, but across the globe. *Your* donations can help ensure that our message is spread.

# Inside the unions

## NCU backs anti-apartheid fight

'WE WERE here when you were on strike. We saw, when you went into battle ... that even in Britain it's not easy these days to go on strike.'

These were the opening words of Zola Zembe, railworker, and co-ordinator of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), when he addressed the National Communications Union conference two weeks ago.

His unscheduled appearance on the platform beside union general secretary, John Golding, was the result of a request signed by over 100 branch delegations to the conference earlier in the week. More than £1100 was collected for the SACTU railworkers appeal as delegates left the hall.



Zola Zembe

By Ian Grant

Zola Zembe's enthusiastic reception by the conference reflected, as he himself put it, a 'shake up' in the trade union movement in this country on the issue of apartheid as a result of the recent upsurge in trade union struggle in South Africa itself.

He explained how the trade union movement in South Africa had won progress, but 'progress at a cost. Thousands — not hundreds, but thousands — of workers have been murdered ...'

## Won

Recently the Black post and telecoms workers association (Postal and Telecommunications Workers Association — POTWA) have won significant concessions from the government through strike action illegal under apartheid law.

Referring to the role played by multinational companies in shoring up the Botha government Zola Zembe emphasised the unity of purpose shared by workers in South Africa and Britain.

'When you walk down the street in Johannesburg, or Durban, or Cape Town,' he said 'it's like walking in Liverpool or London or Glasgow — the same names that you see here, they are in South Africa! Therefore, our struggle is your struggle — what effects us today, eventually will come here.'

In the conference debate on motions committing the union to support for the Anti-Apartheid Movement's boycott of Shell products, and the withdrawal of the company's pension funds from firms with South African connections, even closer parallels were drawn between the struggles of POTWA and the NCU.

POTWA'S recent strike succeeded in securing the reinstatement of workers sacked for their part in action taken three years ago. A campaign to defend NCU members sacked and victimised for

their part in the national strike earlier this year is a major task facing the union following the conference.

The experience of the NCU's first ever national strike, for three weeks in January and February led directly to the ousting of the union's right-wing executive in workplace ballots last month. But while a call for John Golding's resignation was strongly carried by the union's engineering section — the main force in the strike — the joint clerical and engineering conference narrowly defeated it.

The crucial test for this leadership will be the defence of the workers sacked and victimised after the strike. British Telecom have been singled out in their offensive against the union, especially in the City of London, in a bid to wreck the morale of the union's members and undermine their resistance to new working practices and job losses.

Selective victimisations culminating in the sacking of two workers in the City are intended as a clear warning to union members against militant action in the future.

The union's ability to build a campaign to defend itself from this intimidation will be key to mobilising its newly experienced ranks in the confrontations looming ahead.

● A successful conference fringe meeting was held on the theme 'Ireland — the cause of labour?'. Thirty-five delegates, including substantial number from the Six Counties, heard Les Huckfield MEP, sacked miner, Mick Boyle and Jon Silberman from the organising committee of the forthcoming trade union conference on employment discrimination in the north. The meeting was chaired by Horesham NCU delegate, Chris Mullins.

## A PIECE of the ACTION







Votes for political fund, to resist anti-union laws

## NALGO in conference

**DELEGATES TO this year's NALGO conference meeting in Blackpool last week voted overwhelmingly to ballot the membership with a recommendation in favour of establishing a political fund for the union. Although NALGO has political objectives within its constitution, the union has never had a political fund, and a ballot vote four years ago was defeated by a margin of eight to one. But conference was optimistic of success this time and voted for a ballot 'at the best opportunity'.**

What made the difference was a High Court decision on the eve of conference to grant an injunction sought by Conservative trade unionists, Alan Paul and Simon Barron Fraser, to prevent the union proceeding with its 'Make people matter' campaign.

The campaign calls for investment in local government and public services, but the judge ruled that its criticisms of government policy and activity in the election campaign constituted 'political' activity. Under Tory government legislation in 1984, unions must ballot their members every ten years to maintain a political fund for such activity of 'political nature'.

The successful conference resolution submitted by the Yorkshire and Humberside district councils said that NALGO 'can only be fully effective as a trade union when it fights for the rights of its members at a political as well as other levels'.

This theme was reinforced on the Friday of conference — 12 June. The outcome of the general election prompted the moving of an emergency resolution, submitted by all 12 of the union's district councils,

which reaffirmed the political fund ballot decision earlier this week.

**By Eve Turner, conference delegate, personal capacity**

The emergency resolution raised the need for a campaign in opposition to intensified attacks on education, the centralisation of services, attacks on polytechnics and colleges of further education, increased cuts, and government plans to privatise water and electricity industries.

The general election overshadowed the entire conference proceedings and was the theme of a packed eve-of-poll rally, the largest of many conference fringe meetings. This especially effected the conference debate on motion 80 'Defence of local government'. The motion called for 'a united mass campaign involving Labour councils, local authority workers and workers in the private sector' to 'force the government to provide more resources to councils'.

It argued that 'a firm united stance by all Labour councils in defence of jobs and services would inflict a

serious defeat on the Tory government bringing their downfall one step closer'.

But in opposing the motion, NEC member Bill Seawright countered that 'if there really was a general united policy to stop Tory cuts, that would be reflected at the ballot box'.

Although there was a strong feeling within conference to force the national leadership into fronting a real campaign of resistance, the motion and many strengthening amendments were lost.

But in a useful fringe meeting called by Camden and Sheffield NALGO, 'Is there life after creative accounting?' attended by about 60 delegates, it was resolved to fight to reestablish the steering committee of rate-capped councils, originally formed when the rate-capping attacks started.

### Lead

Conference did resolve to fight against the Tory government green paper on the unions. A motion submitted by the NEC was strengthened by amendments from North-western, North Wales, Metropolitan and Yorkshire and Humberside district councils, to mount a campaign of resistance to the green paper becoming law, and a declaration of intent to defy the law should it be enacted. According to the conference resolution — passed by 317,472 to 294,456 on a card vote — NALGO will raise the issue of a joint campaign with the TUC.

In a break with past practice, prime time of conference was given over to discussion of Ireland. A composite moved by the Scottish district council was adopted.

It called for a 'united independent Ireland established by peaceful means', for an end to non-jury Diplock courts, for scrapping the Prevention of Terrorism Act, an end to strip searching, and other democratic issues. The composite said there would be a campaign within the union's branches on this question.

The very holding of the discussion marked a significant advance for the union, and the resolution will allow action on some important issues. Amendments calling for immediate withdrawal of troops were defeated; though even here, a quarter of the delegates voted in favour.

Two fringe meetings were held on the Irish issue.

The conference also pledged to work for the release of all South African detainees and, in particular, to free four imprisoned trade union general secretaries. One of the four, Temba Nxumalo, is the secretary of NALGO's South African counterpart, the Municipal Workers Union of South Africa, and was a NALGO conference guest last year.

● The next issue of Socialist Action will carry a report of the Black workers group at NALGO conference.

## Teachers strike in London

LONDON schools were seriously affected as the NUT's Inner London Teachers Association went out on strike on 16 June.

The strike ballot — in which ILTA members voted by three to one in favour of action — had official backing. It followed the Inner London Education Authority's refusal to enter into meaningful negotiations over their proposal to compulsorily redeploy 13000 London teachers.

A mass meeting of 3000 striking teachers held in Westminster, unanimously endorsed a declaration condemning ILEA's refusal to negotiate.

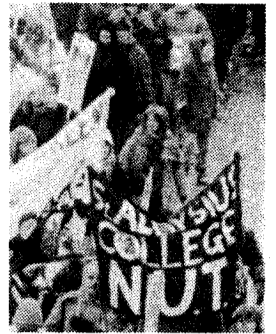
The declaration further called on ILEA to withdraw their threat to deduct pay from teachers who refuse to cover for absent colleagues in line with the NUT's national policy calling on LEAs to refuse to implement the provisions of the Tory government's

legislation governing teachers' pay and conditions. The 'Baker Act' withdrew the right of teachers to collectively bargain through their trade union.

The mass meeting called on the NUT leadership to 'sanction further action... involving strikes by all Associations on a rotating basis'.

The declaration concluded with a call for reinstatement of officers expelled and suspended by the NUT leadership.

The 3000 strikers believed that 'the national executive's decision to expel and suspend the elected officers of ILTA for organising strike action against Baker not only weakens the ability of the union in London to defend the interests of its members in the face of an imposition on pay and conditions, but has also deprived the London membership of elected representation during the ILEA's own imposition of compulsory



redeployment'.

The militant stance of the striking London teachers is particularly significant in the light of recent remarks made by the union's deputy general secretary, Doug McAvoy, that the national union should end its action campaign against the re-elected Tory government.

The NUT suspended its action in lieu of talks with the government, and is awaiting a meeting. But without the approval of the national executive or any body of the union, the deputy general secretary told the press that the union should throw the towel in, causing much anger amongst the striking teachers.

## South Wales miners rally

HUNDREDS of mineworkers from the South Wales are rallied at their gala in Swansea on Saturday. They heard NUM president, Arthur Scargill, deliver a rousing speech.

Scargill attacked the six-day working proposed for the new pit on offer at Margam.

Six-day working is expected to be rejected by the NUM's national

conference in July. The South Wales miners leaders who have been in favour of six-day working have stated that they will abide by the national decision.

The opposition to six-day working explains a recent 'threat' by British Coal to withdraw the Margam 'offer'. The South Wales area director warned on 10 June that the present

spate of stoppages in the area which have allegedly cost the Board £2 million through the loss of 40,000 tonnes of coal put the new pit at risk.

Last week 2,800 miners walked out in a protest over concessionary coal allowances. It was the latest in a series of actions over the last two months in the South Wales area.

## Coal board announces Snowdown closure

ON Friday 12 June, British Coal announced the closure of Snowdown colliery in Kent.

The announcement, at a reconvened review meeting, followed a unanimous decision of the workforce to reject the Board's proposal to move 90 Snowdown mineworkers to the only other Kent pit, Betteshanger, to stop one of the development

headings and to move to a two-shift basis.

But a mass meeting of almost the entire workforce at Snowdown, held following the closure announcement unanimously reaffirmed their original decision and voted to appeal against the closure announcement.

The appeal marks the final phase of the modified review

procedure imposed following the strike. It can be expected to last a further two to three months.

The Snowdown closure issue will be sure to be a major concern of the Kent miners gala rally on 27 June.

● Kent miners gala, 27-28 June, Aylesham village, Kent. Rally midday Saturday.

## Women still against Murdoch

FIVE months after the end of the strike at News International, and the women organised in WAM continue to meet.

The Women Against Murdoch group was set up last October and became a major auxiliary wing of the dispute. They are the living proof that the fight goes on.

In addition to

keeping alive the struggle against Murdoch, WAM has continued on its course of supporting other strikers. Early in its existence, WAM had given backing to the Silentnight and Hangers disputes.

Central to the lasting contacts WAM has made is the Women Against Pit Closures movement. This contact is being renewed as WAM visits

the Kent miners gala on 27 June.

They will be selling their fund-raising badge. Produced in suffragette colours the badge reads 'Wapping 1986-87 — Never forgive, never forget'.

● Badges are available from WAM, c/o 27 Midway House, Manningford Close, London EC1.

## Manchester hospital closure fight

LOCAL residents have been occupying Ancoats casualty hospital in Manchester for five months. They are fighting the Regional Health Authority's decision to close the hospital.

Ancoats casualty was used as the casualty for

City centre residents and visitors. All accidents now in the city centre areas are referred to casualties that are very difficult to reach.

Discussions with the Regional Health Authority reveal that the cost of running Ancoats casualty — about

£300,000 yearly — is their concern, not people's health.

The Ancoats Action Group says that they have learned that it's not just the RHA that they're fighting but the Tory government. They are calling for a stepped up campaign to fight the closure.



# Socialist ACTION



## POLITICS AFTER THE ELECTION

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**The future of Thatcherism**
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speakers include **Linda Bellos, Eric Heffer** (invited), **Ken Livingstone, Ernest Mandel, Ann Pettifor, John Ross, Sinn Fein**

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# Support striking civil servants

THE ENTIRE labour movement must rally to the side of the civil servants, now entering their third month of dispute over pay, hours and conditions. The civil servants, along with the teachers, are in the front line of the fightback against the reelected Tory government. Effective labour movement solidarity will be vital in confronting the new range of attacks planned by the government and the employers on all workers. JON SILBERMAN reports.

ON Thursday and Friday of this week, civil servants throughout Scotland and the north-east will be out on strike. Next week, it will be the turn of CPSA and SCPS members in London and the south; and in the first week of July, Wales, Yorkshire and the Midlands will be out.

These regional actions follow the massively successful national election week strike action on 8 and 9 June. The national stoppage involved 250,000 civil servants and closed benefit and employment offices, brought the work of government departments in Whitehall to a standstill, and created havoc at ferry ports and airport terminals.

Despite warnings that they would be disciplined, 15 workers at GCHQ, Cheltenham, who have maintained their union membership despite the Tory government-imposed ban, joined the national action.

### Success

The success of the national action reflects the deep-felt sentiment by civil servants over their pay and conditions. Some 40,000 CPSA members are so low paid that they are forced to claim state benefits. Over the last eight years, 150,000 jobs have been cut and conditions and services eroded.

The claim being fought for by the Civil and Public Services Association and the Society of Civil and Public Servants is for a wage increase of £20 or 15 per cent; a national minimum wage of £115; the abolition of incremental scales; six weeks' annual leave; and a 35-hour week.

Negotiations held with the Treasury officials on 15

and 16 June — following the government's reelection — failed to produce any improvement to their original 4½ per cent offer.

Despite suggestions by CPSA general secretary, John Ellis, that the recent two-stage settlement of 7½ per cent — worth six per cent — for local government workers showed that the civil servants' dispute could be settled, the Treasury officials knew that the union's members would not be satisfied with a small increase.

### Unions

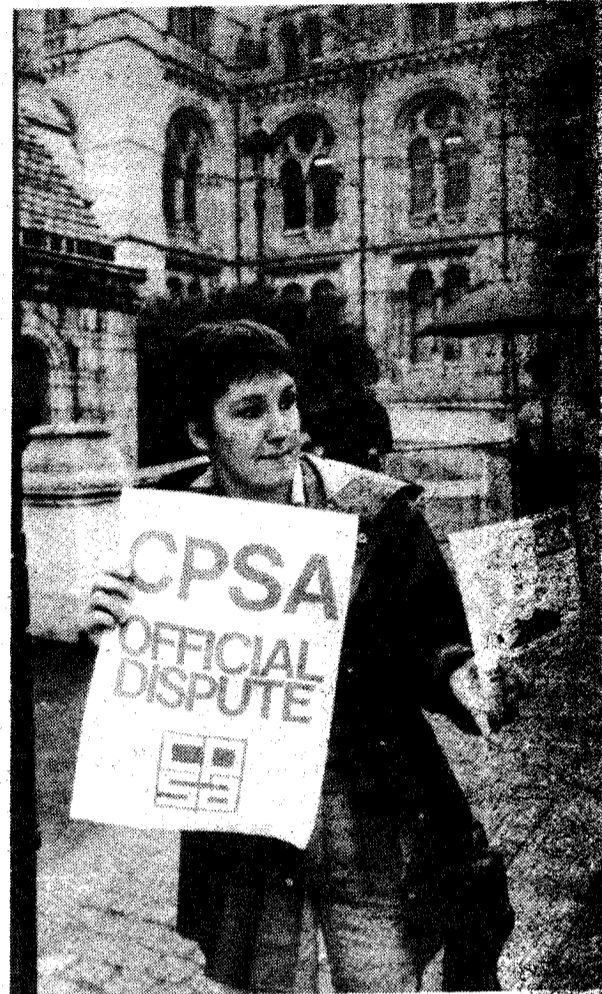
The government is going out to defeat the civil service unions, not conciliate with them.

In addition to the strike action and rallies, union members have also enforced an overtime ban and have withdrawn good will.

The long-running dispute has had profound effects within the civil service unions themselves. At its annual conference earlier this year, the SCPS voted overwhelmingly in favour of a long-intended amalgamation with the Civil Service Union.

SCPS general secretary Leslie Christie echoed the feelings of many conference delegates who had experienced the strength of the united campaign with the CPSA when he predicted that the merger would just be the first step to a broader amalgamation process amongst civil service unions.

But the most spectacular developments have taken place within the largest union, the CPSA. The union's annual conference recognised the political stakes involved in



the dispute when it called on its members to vote Labour in the election and decided to ballot its membership on affiliation to the Labour Party.

Major gains were registered for the union's Broad Left formation in elections to the national executive. Of the 26 places on the NEC, 18 went to the Broad Left.

### Majority

In the election for the union's deputy general secretary, Broad Left candidate John Macreadie gained a majority of almost 6,000 votes over the right-wing candidate, Terry Ainsworth.

Last year, Macreadie had pipped John Ellis to the general secretary's job by 121 votes, but press smears over alleged 'ballot irregularities' and a witch-hunt directed against Macreadie's support for the *Militant* newspaper, forced a re-vote which Ellis won.

A similar campaign has been launched by the union's right-wing in response to Broad Left gains this year. They have found faithful allies in the

press which, in addition to proposing a re-vote, have targeted the union's system of workplace ballots.

In line with proposals in the Tory government's green paper on the trade unions, the press have called for an end to workplace ballots held at union meetings. Despite these ballots being secret and despite their ensuring far greater membership involvement in elections, the Tories and their media friends say that postal ballots are more 'democratic'!

Their 'ballot irregularities' and 'democracy' claims are simply the cloak under which the press is seeking to undermine the strength of the civil servants' action and the impact it is having within the unions.

Supporting the civil servants, fighting against the witch-hunting of John Macreadie, and opposing press interference into the union's internal affairs will be vital if the labour movement is to mount effective resistance to the government's continuing and renewed attacks on all unions.

## Mass strike commemorates Soweto uprising

ONE and a half million workers went on strike in a massive protest to mark the eleventh anniversary of the Soweto uprising, according to the Independent Labour Monitoring Group. Even this huge figure — substantially up on last year — is probably an underestimate.

Eleven years ago Soweto was the scene of a mass mobilisation and violent confrontation in which hundreds of young people lost their lives at the hands of the apartheid state.

On Tuesday parts of the township were deserted and factories and

businesses were paralysed as workers stayed away. Albertina Sisulu, a leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF), described the anniversary as a 'day of mourning and a day of dedication to our children. We are with them. They didn't die in vain. Their sacrifice has become a lesson for the people of today.'

'The younger generation know exactly what to do today because of them' she said.

Commemorative meetings and rallies were held in which speakers from community organisations made militant calls for action against the Pretoria regime.

Rapu Molekane, general secretary of the newly formed South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) called on the community to 'make Soweto a no-go area for the police, for councillors and for informers. We must isolate the enemy' he said.

SAYCO leaflets carrying the organisation's slogan 'Freedom or death — victory is certain' freely circulated within the township.

The mass strike and rallies were part of a fortnight of action called by the UDF. Centred in Soweto itself, it involved community mobilisations and strikes in Durban, Cape Town and other

cities. Full details of the scale of the mobilisations and the actions of the apartheid forces are clouded by the censorship laws operated by the Pretoria regime.

In a stirring anniversary message, ANC leader Oliver Tambo called for all democratic and patriotic South Africans to ensure the month of June witnesses a massive revolt on all fronts.

Speaking from Lusaka, Tambo said that 16 June 'should see a massive demonstration of our resolve to be free, projecting general strikes and heightened mass anti-apartheid actions'.

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