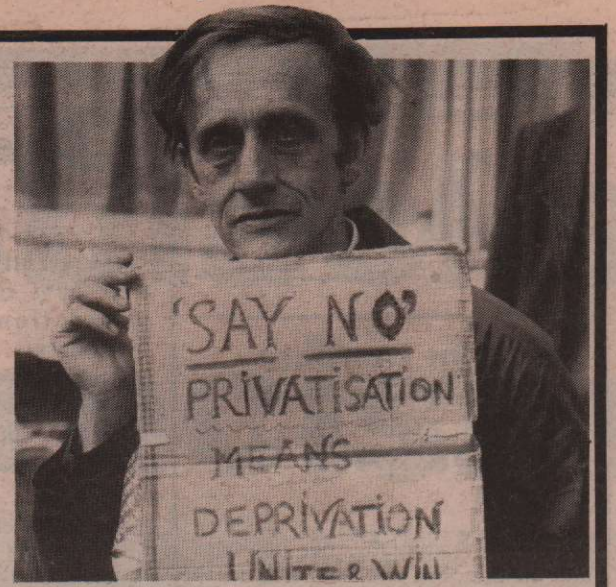


SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Council workers fight back

Special feature pages 4 and 5



MINERS TELL COAL BOSSES TO BACK OFF

Wapping inquiry now!

At a demonstration last January to mark the first anniversary of Rupert Murdoch's move from Fleet Street to scab plant at Wapping:

*Police went berserk and attacked peaceful demonstrators, laying about them at random with truncheons, broken banner poles and pieces of wood.

*Plain clothes police pretended to be trade unionists but acted as provocateurs to stir up trouble and gave the police an excuse to beat up demonstrators.

*Mounted police made cavalry charges at high speed into demonstrating trade unionists, lashing wildly with their long truncheons at the heads of demonstrators.

*Police attacked reporters and photographers in an apparent attempt to frighten off the press from reporting what was happening. People wearing identification as legal observers were also attacked.

These are some of the incidents recorded in a report put out by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. The report contains 120 statements, 200 photographs and 25 reports from legal observers.

The Haldane Society calls for a public inquiry into Mrs Thatcher's police-state tactics at Wapping. The entire labour movement should take up this demand.



Photographer Andrew Moore was attacked by the police outside Wapping. Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

THE MINERS' leaders have given the Coal Board an ultimatum: start serious talks now about drastic changes in your new 'code of discipline', or face an indefinite national overtime ban from 21 September.

The ultimatum follows the three-to-one vote by members of the National Union of Mineworkers in favour of industrial action to get rid of the vindictive code of discipline the Coal Board is trying to force on them.

Arthur Scargill has called on the Board to suspend the new code and talk seriously about a mutually acceptable code. The NUM wants to Board to meet with the NUM Executive.

Discussions are going on under the umbrella of ACAS, the government conciliation board.

Unless the coal bosses make fundamental concessions, the miners will take action from 21 September.

It is impossible to know whether or not they will climb down and agree to a code acceptable to the miners. But one thing is already clear.

As a result of the threat of industrial action, the Coal Board has begun to make noises that sound like offers of compromise. Before the ballot nothing could move them.

Then they were deaf to

Overtime ban from 21 September

pleas, blind to the rights of the miners, and brutally Thatcherite in their attitude to those who failed to win the victory they deserved in the 1984-5 strike. Now the bosses are less sure of themselves.

Now they have to reckon the cost of a new round of industrial struggle with the miners. The miners were hurt during the great strike — but so was the Coal Board, and so was the government. We still don't know how badly they were hurt, or how near we may have been to victory.

The Coal Board and the government can be shifted. The lesson is clear: militancy pays.

The Thatcherites can now strut around in industry as

Turn to back page

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

MIRROR BACK ON FORM

Maybe it's reading rags like the Star and the Sun, but I've been a bit soft on the Mirror for some time now. It produced some good anti-Thatcher stuff during the election campaign and has often carried excellent features on health cuts, privatisation and pensioners.

Last month's outspoken support for Thatcher's intervention in the Gulf War brought me back to my senses.

The TUC looks like driving the message home still further: "This week the TUC must recognise that its duty and its future is to do what its members want and what is good for Britain is generally good for its members", droned Monday's editorial, concluding "and above all it has to fight extremism — never promote it."

Just in case anyone was foolish enough to think that the reference to "extremism" was aimed at Eric Hammond, the next day the Mirror attacked the TUC's failure to give full support to 'no-strike' deals as a "Blackpool fudge".

And this is Britain's only Labour daily!

TRUTH AT THE MAIL!

If I was Mr Alan Qualtrough, I'd be very worried about my job prospects. This man is a journalist on the Daily Mail and he wrote what appears to be a fair, balanced and factual article about the Dewsbury schools row, even suggesting that "malicious rumours" may have been deliberately spread to "discredit" the school.

As one of the main conduits for such malicious rumours (English a second language, Chapatis baked on Shrove Tuesday, etc., etc.) has been the Daily Mail itself, Qualtrough is either a very brave man or a reckless fool.

DAILY SMUT

Pornographer David Sullivan last week achieved his ambition: he gained control of a national daily paper. For someone who only entered the newspaper business one year ago, this is no mean achievement.

Sullivan's Sunday Sport now has a circulation of 500,000 and is turning in a healthy profit. His publicly declared aim of bringing out a daily version appears to have panicked Express Newspapers into offering Sullivan a remarkable deal whereby he takes control of their loss-making Star and they take a minority share-holding in Sunday Sport.

The Star and the Sport now become sister publications in the same way that the News of the World is, in effect, the Sunday edition of the Sun.

Sullivan immediately installed his Sunday Sport editor, Michael Gabbert at the helm of the Star. Gabbert in turn announced his intention to increase the "glamour" content and cut down on "heavy news items" (!).

I can't say that I noticed any dramatic change of style other than a noticeably more frequent use of the word "bonking" and a slightly more obsessive interest in women's breasts as a subject for news items.

Gabbert is also rumoured to have sacked agony aunt Alix Palmer for refusing to make up 'raunchy' letters for her column.

She also happened to be leader of the movement to phase out topless Star Birds.

It's all a bit depressing, isn't it. But still there may be some consolation for the print unions in all of this as Sullivan apparently intends to have a real go at Rupert Murdoch who he dislikes intensely for being an Australian. That, as I remember, was one of the main charges that SOGAT and NGA leaders made against the Digger during the Wapping dispute.

Prison house of nations

Until recently, Russians made up over 50% of the USSR's total population. The Kremlin bureaucrats have attempted to base their rule on this one nationality, ensuring, whenever possible, that the best jobs, facilities, etc., were received by Russians.

In recent years they have extended their network to co-opt elites from other nationalities who are willing to

By Tony Jain

protect and promote Moscow's interests in the region.

The Kremlin has also made a conscious drive for 'Russification' of the country's non-Russian nationalities.

In education this has meant pushing the take-up and use of the Russian language among minorities by making no provision beyond secondary level for teaching in a

region's national language. Anyone from a national minority wishing to progress into higher education will almost certainly have to learn Russian.

Despite enormous pressures, nationalities like the Ukrainians and Lithuanians have resisted such pressure to take up and use the Russian language. The last Soviet census showed only 47% of minorities considered Russian to be their second language. And this figure is almost certainly an exaggerated one.

Other institutions are also used by the Kremlin bureaucracy in the pursuit of its objectives. Of these perhaps the most important are the mass media and the armed forces.

nationalities like the Ukrainians through the division of the country into autonomous republics and regions with a federal structure of sorts. However, such structures are shams. The regions have little real political power and all important political decision-making is strictly controlled by the centre in Moscow.

Repression

Despite all the repression, nationalities in the USSR have still managed to keep their own culture and sense of history alive. Others have even forced the Soviet authorities to recognise their rights to leave the country if they so wish.

The most successful of emigration movements up until the clampdown on all dissent from 1980 onwards was that of the Volga Germans, Armenians and Jews.

Between 1971 and 1981 these groups succeeded in securing the release of 104,000, 270,000 and 10,000 people respectively to the outside world.

Underground movements in places like Lithuania, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, still continue their opposition to the Kremlin bureaucracy through the production and distribution of 'Samizdat', which provides an alternative source of news to that produced by the Soviet authorities. They also continue to organise small-scale protests.

Conference

In the build up to the 7 November conference on Workers in the Eastern Bloc, we should not forget the multi-ethnic character of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR in particular. If any serious workers' movement is to challenge the bureaucracy's tyrannical rule, then an important part of its political programme will be the right to self-determination for oppressed nations.

AUSTRALIA

Miners strike

Tony Brown in Sydney spoke to Socialist Organiser about the Australian miners' fight for jobs.

Australian coal miners have voted for a 24-hour national strike against job cuts, at a date yet to be fixed.

Since the end of a moratorium negotiated by the federal government, coal owners have sacked 1,000 miners, and there have

been several local strikes, especially in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales.

The miners' union also plans a mass demonstration in Canberra on 22 September to lobby the federal Labor government. Prime Minister Bob Hawke has dismissed the union's call for a national coal marketing board — to prevent different coal owners undercutting each other in competition for the Japanese market — as unrealistic.

ISRAEL

Free Vanunu!

Mordechai Vanunu goes on trial this week in Jerusalem. He could be jailed for life for telling the truth about Israel's nuclear weapons.

Israel admits to having a nuclear weapons research centre, but not to having nuclear weapons. Vanunu worked at that research centre. He told the Sunday Times in London that Israel has become the world's sixth largest nuclear power, with some 200 warheads.

So he was lured out of Britain to Italy by the Israeli secret service, seized, and taken to an Israeli jail. Or so says Mordechai's brother Meir Vanunu: the Israeli government claims that Mordechai returned to Israel voluntarily, and has issued a warrant for Meir's arrest.

Mordechai has been kept in solitary confinement for 10 months since his arrest.

In Lebanon and elsewhere, Israeli governments have shown themselves utterly ruthless about military action against their enemies. By sounding

the alarm over Israel's arsenal, Vanunu has done a service to everyone who wants to fight the threat from the nuclear-armed warmongers.

Free Mordechai Vanunu!



Vanunu

Law

Under the laws of the USSR, all Soviet males are required to serve in the armed forces for a minimum of 18 months.

During the course of such service, all recruits are subjected to lengthy political education courses which deal only in officially recognised versions of Soviet history and political development.

Media

As for the media — in the months leading up to the 48th anniversary of the Nazi-Soviet pact Tass, Pravda and other official Soviet organs have been filled with propaganda which claims that the Baltic states voluntarily incorporated themselves into the USSR because of the Nazi threat. Since then they have made remarkable economic, political and social progress as part of the USSR which would not have been possible if they had remained independent of the union.

The intensity of the recent protests amply indicates the falsity of such ludicrous claims.

Within the political system the bureaucracy have attempted to create a facade of national self-rule by na-

SOUTH KOREA

Workers jailed

South Korea's government has hardened its line against striking workers.

Until late last week, the government had responded with unusual restraint to the big strike wave. Usually in South Korea the police move against strikes brutally and without hesitation. This time the government decided to ride the wave.

But on Friday 4th 3,000 riot police invaded the Daewoo car plant and

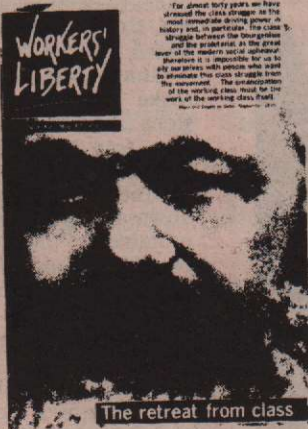
seized 135 strikers who were occupying the factory. The same day, riot police also raided the worker-occupied Hyundai shipyard and arrested 90 workers.

Now the government has decided to prosecute 166 of those arrested. Some 1600 student leftists are already in jail or on the run.

As well as the 15,000 Hyundai shipyard workers and the 10,000 Daewoo carworkers, 12,000 Seoul cab drivers are on strike.

For more about socialist ideas, read these pamphlets

Available from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



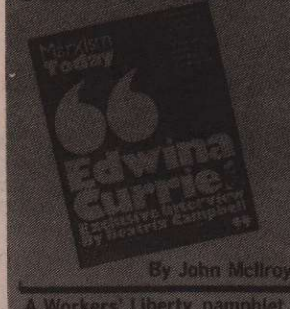
Price 90p

The 1987 general election and the Marxist left

By John O'Mahony, Jack Cleary, and Martin Thomas

A Workers' Liberty pamphlet 50p

Hobsbawm and SDP Communism



By John McIlroy. Price 50p

Woman in a "man's job"

EXPERIENCES OF A WOMAN BUILDING WORKER

The fight against sexism in the workplace, by Jean Lane. 50p.

IS THE SWP AN ALTERNATIVE?

Articles on the Labour Party, S. Africa and the miners strike. A Workers' Liberty pamphlet

Price 50p

Not too many blacks, too much racism!

TUC: back to basics

"THEY have had their day. They have lost — and we have lost members as a result". According to Bill Jordan, president of the AEU, class-struggle trade unionism is a thing of the past.

Bill Jordan basically agrees with Eric Hammond of the EETPU: the future for trade unions lies in sweetheart deals, no-strike agreements, and flashy fringe benefits. Most TUC leaders would be less bold about it, but militancy does not figure on their agenda.

The truth about the EETPU's business unionism has been revealed by Stephen Seaman, who was once a leading organiser of scab labour at Rupert Murdoch's Wapping printworks. He helped EETPU officials to recruit the workers to replace Fleet Street trade unionists. Now he has quit in disgust.

According to the Guardian, "Mr Seaman claims that the Company's treatment of the workforce has deteriorated since the pickets were called off by the print unions in February. "They don't listen at all. It is a take it or leave it attitude. At the time I would have been the first to advance the idea of single union, no-strike agreements with pendulum arbitration and flexibility. Where it falls down is that it relies very heavily on management having as much integrity."

As for the EETPU: "They're much more interested in making themselves attractive to employers than to employees".

Last week we also had a lesson in the sort of democracy that the Tories want to bring into trade union affairs.

A four to one majority against us, so we win! Such is democracy as understood by the bosses of London's new Docklands Light Railway. They balloted workers on whether they wanted a union. 43 voted for a union, and 11 against. But the bosses ruled that this meant no union, because the vote for a union was less than a clear majority of the 101 workers entitled to vote.

The Conservative government was voted in by less than 30 per cent of those entitled to vote.

The Tories, the Docklands Railway bosses, and Rupert Murdoch, are not like Bill Jordan. They do not think that the class struggle is out of date.



Inside the controversial school: educational apartheid is good for no-one.

EDITORIAL

They are waging the class struggle as hard as they can.

They prefer unions constrained by Tory law to unions with freedom of action; they prefer unions with no-strike deals to unions with even a limited freedom to strike; and best of all they would like no unions at all. They will go as far as we let them go.

Class-struggle trade unionism is the only answer to these class-struggle

employers and this class struggle government. That does not mean striking every day or on every issue. It does mean keeping the option of strike action open for the right time, and campaigning every day.

Last year the TUC voted for a national minimum wage fixed by law. What about campaigning for that?

Many trade unions have called for equal rights and equal pay rates for the growing number of part-time workers. What's needed is a grass roots campaign to organise those workers and mobilise them to win that equality.

The TUC has condemned the governments new 'work-for-your-dole' Job Training Scheme. It wants

better wages, conditions and prospects for trainees on the Youth Training Scheme. A mass campaign on these issues, demanding real jobs and real training, could make the trade unions relevant to hundreds and thousands of bitter and disillusioned youth.

The trade union leaders have been kicked out of the 'corridors of power' where they spent so much time on committees and boards and quangos that they almost thought they were part of the ruling class. Now they should get back to the basics of trade unionism — organising workers to win better wages and conditions by means of class struggle.

The German tragedy

Eric Honecker has ruled Stalinist East Germany for 15 years. He is both the chief local dictator and the main agent exercising Russian control over that part of Germany which Stalin's army conquered from Hitler's in 1944-5.

Honecker is now in Bonn on the first official visit of an East German head of state to that part of Germany which came under US and British control at the end of the Second World War.

Honecker should be a figure of loathing for the labour movement. Now an old man in his 70s, he is also someone who personifies the manifold tragedies of the German working class this century.

Honecker's parents were socialists and founder members of Rosa Luxemburg's German Communist Party in 1919. Eric Honecker was a revolutionary socialist activist from his late childhood.

In his youth — the '20s and '30s — the bestial fascist movement was being built up to destroy the immensely powerful German labour movement. Militants of the majority working class party (the Social Democrats) and of the minority

(the Communists) clashed with the fascist thugs in the streets of German cities.

The German working class could have beaten the fascists and crushed Hitler before he came to power. But the German labour movement was divided.

The socialists were timid reformists. The Communists — the sincerely revolutionary section of the German working class, hundreds of thousands strong, receiving four million votes — were led by the treacherous Russian nationalist Stalin, and his German agents.

Hitler

Together they let Hitler come to power peacefully and then paid for it by having their organisations destroyed and broken up, their members imprisoned in Hitler's first concentration camps.

The German working class was split, betrayed, pulverised by the Nazis; and Germany was defeated and divided. It is a sobering thought that the workers in East Germany have not had the right to organise independently — not even the right to organise trade unions — for more than a very brief period at the end of the war — since

Hitler came to power in 1933 — 54 years ago!

Eric Honecker spent over ten years, almost the entire period of Hitler's rule, in Nazi jails and camps.

Together with others in East Germany he was put in control by Stalin's conquering army.

They have ruled the East German working class and the rest of the people with a rod of iron ever since.

In 1953 they shot down German workers who came on to the streets to oppose them. Those workers were the real heirs of the Party the young Eric Honecker joined in the '20s to fight for socialism.

Honecker set out to fight for the liberation of the working class and now ends his life as the head of a system — modelled on the Stalinist regime in the USSR — which oppresses the East German workers mercilessly. That is what Stalinism has meant for his generation of revolutionaries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The future of German socialism lies not with the Honeckers who have betrayed it. It lies with the independent action of the German working class. It lies with the East German workers now groaning under the dictatorship headed by Honecker.

A large group of white parents in Dewsbury, Yorkshire are desperately trying to move their children from a school where 85% of pupils are of Asian parentage to a nearby school where the majority is white. They want to move their children from the black ghetto school to their own 'natural' white ghetto school.

The main idea the press has gathered and pushed from these events is the idea that too many blacks are a 'problem'. It is one of the core ideas of British racism. The idea is false and should be rejected and opposed.

Of course it *might* well be true that a school which had to deal with children most of whom came from homes where English is not spoken might have difficulties. It might lead to comparative neglect of those whose home tongue is English. It might lead to lower educational levels.

In fact statistics for schools in Southall where pupils are mainly from Asian homes show that the pupils achieve a higher educational level and the mainly Asian school in Dewsbury is reported to have good standards. Most of the children there are third-generation British, a lot of them speak English at home. According to the headteacher "their standard of English is very good," and none of the teachers speak any Asian language.

We don't know how many of the parents in Dewsbury are motivated by racism and how much by other less obnoxious — though possibly linked — ideas that their children should have a normal, English education, or by fears that their children will inevitably be neglected, concern for their own religion, etc.

Whatever their motives, the focus on a concentration of blacks as the big problem does convey a racist message.

But there is more to the issue. Here you seem to have two schools within easy travelling distance of each other, within the same catchment area. One has become a mainly black school and the other a mainly white school. A sort of spontaneous educational apartheid has developed.

Why has this been allowed to happen?

If there are whites, "Christians" campaigning to move into 'their own' ghetto school, there are also black Muslims keen and eager to second them from the other side. They actively want religious segregation — the separating off of their own Muslim children. (In fact, the mainly-Asian Dewsbury school is Anglican).

There are, of course, private Muslim schools as there are also schools of other religious denominations (Jews, etc). Under the 1902 Education Act the Catholic Church runs its own schools with government financial support.

The determination of the Catholic Church to maintain its own schools has been and is one of the most indestructible pillars of Catholic-Protestant sectarianism in Northern Ireland, perhaps even more important than anti-Catholic discrimination in employment in separating the communities. It divides them from early childhood.

Educational ghettos like the two schools in Dewsbury are an unqualified evil. The labour movement must try to integrate black and white, immigrant and native, and that means fighting against educational segregation whether nurtured by white insularity or racism on one side or by Muslim religious bigotry on the other.

"Too many black children" is not the problem. The problem here lies in the criminal neglect that has allowed educational apartheid to develop in Dewsbury.

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GRAFFITI



£2,500 a day for watching your money grow. Photo: John Harris

The average millionaire speculating on the London Stock Exchange would have made £470,000 gain in the first seven months of this year, according to the 'Economist' magazine. Dividends and share price rises added up to a 47% return on money invested.

Jails cost more than Eton

It costs more to keep someone in jail than to send them to Eton, according to the latest report of the Howard League, a prison reform group.

51,000 prisoners are being held in jails designed to hold 42,000, but the cost of keeping prisoners in this squalor is £250 a week.

In Western Europe, only Austria and West Germany lock people up as much as Britain. The Netherlands have only one-third as many people in jail as Britain, in proportion to population — and their crime rate is rising no faster than Britain's.



£250 a week for squalor

State schools go short

State Schools are able to spend less and less on books and equipment, while private schools spend more.

According to the Educational Publishers' Council,

state schools spent £45.97 per pupil on books and equipment in 1985-86, £1.12 less than in 1984-85. Private dayschools increased their spending to £56.10 per pupil.

From Kuwait to Argentina

Kuwait can spend 22% more than they produce, due to the vast inflow of interest, profits and dividends from Kuwait's \$95 billion foreign investments.

At the other extreme, the people of Argentina have to produce 10% more than they can spend, because so much goes out in payments on the country's foreign debt.

A table published recently in the Economist magazine shows, however, that some surprising countries rank near Kuwait.

Jordan, North Yemen, and Pakistan are up there, spending from 8% to 18% more than they produce — mainly because of the

money that comes in from their citizens working abroad. Switzerland ranks only just behind Pakistan, but the US and Britain are low down in the league: their net income from abroad is only about one per cent of total income.

Tory wages

A teashop called Thatcher's, run by Tories in Liverpool, pays its waitresses £6 for an 8½-hour day. Profits from the teashop go mainly to local Tory Party funds.

Local Tory MP Anthony Steen commented: "If the girls think it is too low a wage, they don't have to work there".

Socialist Organiser feature on the fig

Devastating the inner cities

Nik Barstow reports on the Tories' plans

THIS week Margaret Thatcher goes to visit the inner cities. She is touring Glasgow.

But the Tories have already made their plans about the inner cities. They announced them in the Queen's Speech to Parliament in July.

The plans aren't for inner city areas. They are to attack the Labour councils, the workers, the tenants, and the rest of the people of our inner cities.

- Tenants who spent years on waiting lists to get out of crumbling, decaying privately-rented flats will be 'allowed' to hand their estates over to private landlords. Come back Rachman, all is forgiven!

- The government will stop councils having money for any improvements to estates unless they promise to hand over or sell blocks to private managers. If you really want to live in a council flat it'll have to be a slum.

- Councils will have to get money from private firms, not the government, for improving estates. Those financiers will want their money's worth — and that means 'getting a piece of the action' in running estates — setting rent levels, service charges, and the rest so they'll get a good profit.

- In some places the Tories will set up 'Housing Trusts' to buy and run estates. Though tenants will get some token representation on the trusts, the majority on them will be financiers and local worthies.

- The Tories will set up more unelected 'Urban Development Corporations' like the one in Docklands. These corporations will sell off estates and land, and will 'decant' tenants from estates to sell them off as yuppie homes or to pull them down to build offices. Again, the only people to win will be the speculators and the new Rachmans.

- The Tories will force big increases in council rents. They plan to 'ring-fence the Housing Revenue Account' and to limit councils so that they can borrow money for improvements only against the income from particular estates and properties.

This means that rents in most of London will go up by an average of £17 a week. They'll double. That is due to happen in April 1989, when the Tories make subsidising rents out of the rates illegal.

It also means that improvement programmes will be slashed. It's only if tenants can satisfy the City financiers that they can pay the full cost of repairs and improvements that they'll happen. On the worst estates that will be impossible without huge rent increases.

- These changes will mean job cuts. Basically the Tories want to stop councils running any housing. That means forcing Building Works departments out of business, and cutting jobs in Housing and other departments.

- Privatisation is to be forced on local councils. The Tories will introduce 'compulsory competitive tendering' for six types of council services — cleaning buildings, street sweeping, grounds maintenance (parks and estates), catering, refuse collection, and vehicle maintenance.

It means councils will be told, and forced by law, to ask for quotes for contracts for the services they provide — and then to accept the cheapest.

Where the government has tried this before — with Building Works departments — councils were able to keep services and jobs by insisting



Homelessness is rising. Photo: Dave Parrish

that contractors fill certain conditions.

Now the Tories have got wise to that and will outlaw 'non-commercial' conditions — health and safety, wage rates, union recognition, and whether firms discriminate against women and black people.

The Tories want council workers to 'compete' for their own jobs against private contractors.

- Domestic rates are to be scrapped and replaced by a 'community charge' or poll tax.

This will be levied on all adults and will consist of a fixed amount charg-

ed to everyone equally. Even those on benefit will be expected to pay at least 20%.

A few single-adult households will pay very slightly less. Most will pay dramatically more.

Business rates will be fixed nationally, paid to the government, and then redistributed by them to local authorities. Ironically, in some inner London boroughs this will mean local businesses paying more but the council getting less.

The inner cities, with their concentrations of business rate payers, will be subsidising the stockbroker belt

Fightback conference

OVER 300 London local authority trade unionists are expected to attend the conference called by the 'London Bridge' shop stewards' committee on 10 September.

It will be followed up by a wider conference — for Labour Party members and community groups as well as trade unionists — called by Camden NALGO on 20 September.

The aim is to help build local labour movement campaigns against cuts, of the sort that have started activity already in many boroughs.

The statement for the 10 September conference calls for:

- Coordination of the fight against

attacks on local government;

- National trade unions to campaign against cuts in jobs and services;

- A campaign for national industrial action to defeat privatisation;

- A demonstration outside the TUC General Council meeting on Wednesday 28 October to demand that national action is launched;

- Trade unionists to work with service users, tenants and communities to reshape local services to meet demands in a way that doesn't cut jobs;

- No cuts in jobs and services; rent rises and no rate rises above inflation.

Back against local government cuts



Housing Aid workers' picket at Manchester Town Hall. Photo: Paul Herrmann.

Union leaders block resistance

By Tony Dale and Sarah Cotterill

Immediately after the General Election council workers in Manchester were hit by horror headlines like "12,000 jobs axe fears at Town Hall" in the Manchester Evening News.

Initial claims from the council and trade union leaderships of massive redundancies were soon to prove inaccurate. They were using the well-worn tactic of predicting gloom and doom to soften up the workforce for a lower level of job losses and cuts in

services.

Like other local authorities Manchester City Council has had its budget cut every year since the Tories came to office. The current "left" administration was elected in 1983 on a programme of no cuts, no job losses, no rent rises and no rate rises above the level of inflation.

Over the past few years the council has used various creative accountancy measures to muddle through. They were depending on the election of a Labour government to bail them out and failed to organise any grass roots campaign against the Tories.

In April this year the council agreed to raise rents for the first time,

and put the rates up by 19%. Not surprisingly the Labour Party lost nine seats in the local elections, although it maintained a majority. Since then two seats have been lost in August by-elections.

Following the re-election of the Tories in June, Graham Stringer, leader of the council, announced that the council expected to have £100 million less to spend in 1988/9 than it needed to maintain services at the present level. That left the Manchester labour movement with two options: campaign to get more cash from the government, or accept redundancies and cuts in service.

On 29 July the City Council voted

to start making cuts. The cuts package includes 4,000 jobs lost through not filling vacancies, £2 per week rent rise and £40 million cuts in services. The cuts package was supported by the City Labour Party and most of the council unions. Officials from GMBATU, NUPE and NALGO lobbied the City Labour Party meeting to demand that the council make cuts.

But despite this apparent unity there was opposition both in the unions and in the Labour Party. The Direct Works Joint Shop Stewards Committee only abandoned its no cuts policy after heavy pressure from the union full-timers. A third of the delegates to the City Labour Party voted for a resolution opposing all cuts.

A month later the cuts are starting to bite. There is a total freeze on the filling of job vacancies. Despite the £2 per week rent rise house repairs have been cut. In each department management are drawing up plans on how the cuts will be implemented. There have been threats to flexitime, trade union facility time, sick leave, etc.

But these threats disguise the main proposal which is for "job flexibility". In order that vacant posts are covered unions are being asked to agree that workers rip up their job descriptions and give management the right to redeploy workers at their whim.

An increasing number of council unions have adopted a policy of no cover for vacant posts. Union leaders are outraged that they have not been allowed to participate in decisions on where the cuts will fall. Their main demand is that the planned building of 20 Neighbourhood Offices does not go ahead.

The idea of Neighbourhood Offices, providing a more localised, less bureaucratic service is a good one, and would alleviate some of the overcrowded conditions faced by council workers. It is likely that Neighbourhood Offices will lead to confrontation between the council and the workforce over workers' security and job flexibility. But these are battles to be faced in the future, not reasons to oppose the building of new offices. Unfortunately, the union leaders are spending all their time campaigning against the new offices instead of organising their members to defend jobs and working conditions.

this are cobbled together.

There is a many-pronged attack against local government — poll tax, rate-capping, selling of council estates to private developers: these are all issues we could group around to fight back, together with communities, Labour Parties and Labour Councils.

The national union policy of

holding the line as best we can until the next general election is little more than an attempt to sell illusions to the members — many of whom know better.

Rank and file activists must argue for the rejection of the deal, and make sure it is the start of a real campaign to save jobs and services and defend local democracy.

Apartheid advisers

LEFT-wing Labour councils have given up on fighting the Tories.

In recent years these councils have kept going by heavy borrowing, organised through a variety of financial devices. They hoped that a Labour government would bail them out.

Now the Tories are back and the debt charges have to be paid. Camden council, in north London, froze all job vacancies soon after the general election. Other councils are planning cuts. They say that they will make less hurtful cuts than the Tories would.

Islington council has called in consultants Coopers & Lybrand to look at 'priority-based budgeting' in four areas — street-sweeping, refuse collection, office cleaning, and vehicle maintenance.

These are areas which the Tories have singled out for privatisation. Islington council leaders think they are

being clever. They apparently hope to get Coopers & Lybrand to report that big savings can be made without privatisation.

But Coopers & Lybrand have 12 offices in South Africa and one in Namibia. They have conducted many major privatisation studies, including studies for the Ministry of Defence that were boycotted by the civil service unions because of the firm's links with apartheid.

Islington NALGO has decided not to cooperate with Coopers and Lybrand, and the council's Joint Trade Union Committee has said: "Why pay £43,000 to a firm of professional job-cutters to work out what sort of services we need in Islington?"

Our trade unions are working with Islington people, local campaigns and local organisations, to work out the sort of service our people need and deserve".

Who decides what's taught in schools?

Ian McCalman discusses the issues raised by the Tory government's plans to create a centralised curriculum for schools.

The Tory Government is determined to create a prescribed, centralised curriculum with a core of subjects heavily emphasising the vocational aspects of education, in the sense of preparing young people for their allotted places in the Labour market.

The Tory intention is that any teaching of Modern Studies or Politics shall be of the most anodyne nature and that History shall be bent in a truly "patriotic" direction, with emphasis upon the triumphal march of British Capitalism and the benefits of the empire.

In order to ensure that teachers are teaching and pupils learning what is right and proper, there will be nationally devised tests administered at the ages of 7, 11 and 14. At present, all of this is intended for England and Wales, Scotland having a separate educational system. It may not be too long, however, before it is implemented in Scotland too.

These Tory moves have been rightly condemned by many educationalists and by Labour and trade union activists. They have been castigated as business orientated, hostile to the socially critical and imaginative faculties, and a dramatic movement away from the child-centred curriculum which has been gaining ground in recent decades. For these, and many other reasons, they should be repudiated and resisted.

Alternative

But what is our alternative? We cannot simply defend the present system with its in-built social class bias and authoritarian, elitist ethos.

As socialists we should be in favour of a future Labour government proposing a national curriculum framework. There is a danger that such a framework would be rigidly prescribed, but there is a need for guidelines devised by the labour movement to ensure that education is organised on a national basis so that working class youth at present disadvantaged by the prevailing system are given a better deal.

The present system is far from free and easy. The exam boards dictate much of the curriculum, and ensure that the interests of a minority, mainly middle class pupils plus some from the working class, are protected. The education of the majority who won't pass many exams is left to the vagaries of the system and the whims of local authorities and headteachers.

Much more thought needs to go into devising a coherent socialist response to Tory ideology, whether through the Socialist Educational Association or through the groups of socialist activists in the unions, such as the Socialist Teachers' Alliance in England and Wales and CFFU in Scotland.

Knee jerk responses to Tory offensives may leave us as simply guardians of the dull, complacent educational policies of Labourism.



'Democracy wall', Beijing, 1979: but now torture is increasing.

Torture in China

Despite China's claims to be socialist, it is still a society of medieval brutality in many ways. China has by far the world's greatest number of death penalties, and, as this report from Amnesty International shows, torture is widespread.

The use of torture by police, Communist Party officials and security units persists in China. So far, government efforts to end torture have been thwarted, according to a report by Amnesty International.

Amnesty, the world-wide human rights organisation, believes that the government's concern about torture is evident from the "unprecedented publicity" given to the subject in state-controlled publications in the past two years. But these reports have also shown torture to be more widespread than previously suspected.

Suspects have been beaten, whipped, hung up by the arms and brutally assaulted with electric batons in police stations and detention centres in order to extract confessions.

In an April 1986 case, police seeking confessions after two thefts in Baoshan city (Yunnan province), tortured more than 100 of 201 suspects detained illegally. One of the victims died and two committed suicide.

Prisoners and detainees are cruelly treated to punish, humiliate or intimidate them. A detainee held in Shanghai's Huangpu detention centre in 1986 reported: "Among the most severe punishments was the 'hanging aeroplane', which meant being suspended with both hands tied behind the back. The worst were the beatings..."

An inmate held there earlier told Amnesty International that truncheon-wielding guards regularly forced more than a dozen inmates into a three-square-metres cell until

they were packed head to head on the floor "like frozen yellowfish".

Other torture included the tightening of handcuffs so that they cut into the flesh "until the bone showed". Complaints about the use of handcuffs in police stations and detention centres have been widely reported.

Prisoners have also been held in solitary confinement for years with no contact with their families or fellow inmates. Some have lost their minds as a result.

Xu Wenli, a prisoner of conscience, is said to have been confined for several months in 1986 in a windowless cell opening through a trapdoor in the ceiling.

Amnesty thinks that the open debate in the Chinese press on the use of torture appears to have been aimed initially at restoring public confidence in the police. In 1985 a legal commentator described torture as a "stubborn disease, giving the masses the erroneous impression that if one enters a (police station) one will inevitably be beaten." Senior officials have been publicly accused of "turning a blind eye" to police use of torture.

Illegally

Other torture victims have been held illegally by Party officials or members of the many informal security units in China. One township Party Secretary from Guizhou province was jailed for three years in January 1987 after he and security units had illegally held and tortured confessions out of 16 women in a case involving the poisoning of food.

In September 1986 a member of China's parliament and Party Secretary in Shaanxi province was charged with illegally detaining 72 villagers and ordering 17 of them to be tortured after part of his bicycle bell was stolen.

These types of violations are reported to have increased in 1986.

Amnesty International says that in spite of high-level public condemnation of torture in China, some convicted torturers have received particularly lenient sentences. A police officer alleged to have crippled 26 suspects while extracting confessions was later convicted in 1985 of torturing ten people — and sentenced to six months' imprisonment!

SOUTH AFRICA THE MINERS

At the end of last month some 320,000 black miners returned to work, so ending the largest strike in the history of the South African mining industry.

The miners were defeated, but their defeat was a limited defeat from which the miners' union, the NUM, should be able to recover relatively soon. The NUM is far from crushed.

More ominously, though, the initiative in the South African struggle has passed to the bosses.

Anglo American, the giant mining house which also accounts for 60% of the shares on the Johannesburg stock exchange, can point to the way they dealt with the NUM — using violence and mass sackings but avoiding any attempt to destroy the NUM — and claim a success.

Anglo

Anglo wants to chip away at and weaken the NUM so that they can control it.

In the wake of the miners' defeat new labour laws could soon be in force to place further legal obstacles in the way of the unions taking strike action or "secondary" (solidarity) action.

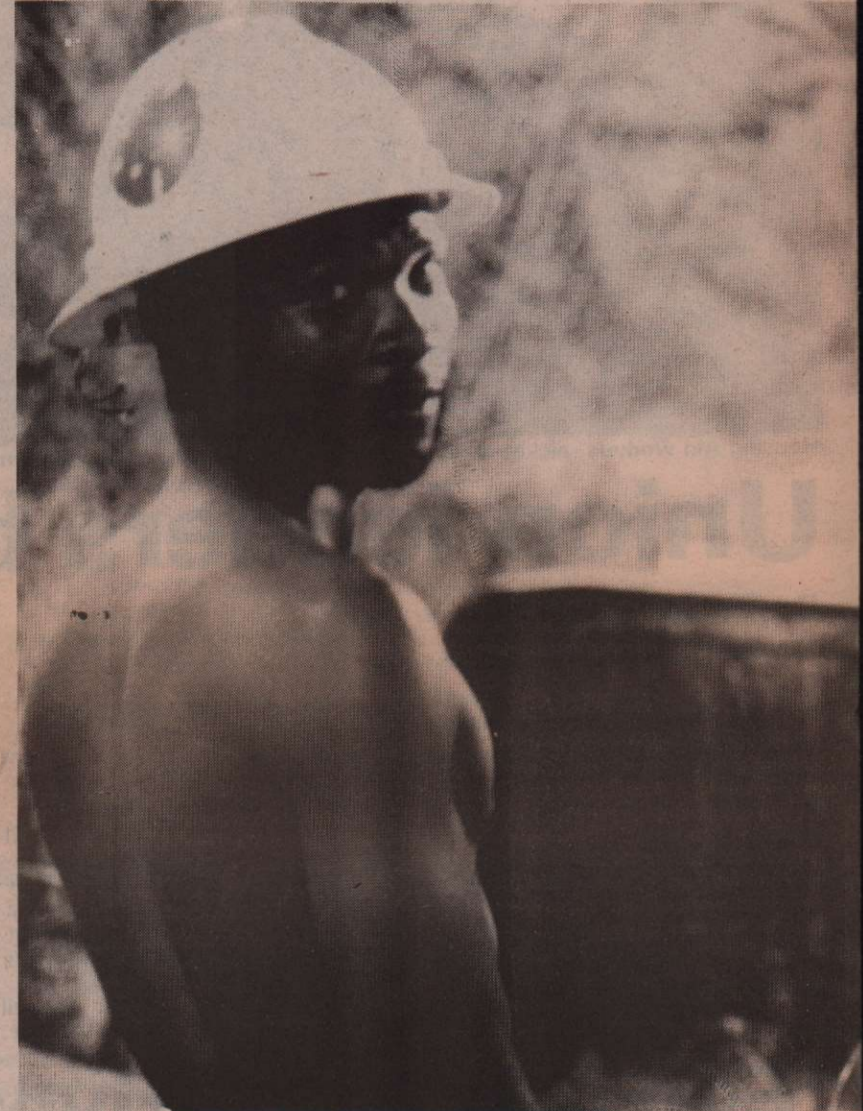
The bosses don't seem to want to completely reverse the limited rights that have been won by the independent black unions since the late '70s. Rather, the bosses want to limit and

curtail those rights — to weaken rather than crush the unions.

One thing is clear from the outcome of the miners' strike. 'Liberal', 'anti-apartheid' bosses like Anglo American are not serious

potential allies for the workers' movement.

In 1985, Gavin Relly, head of Anglo, was prepared to meet with the ANC to discuss the future of South Africa. But that was when the township



The workers who produce the mine-owners' wealth are fighting back

Inside a strike

For the past three weeks the 7,000 mineworkers at the Gencor-owned Grootvlei Mines near Springs on the East Rand have been on strike. But their routines have not been dramatically altered by this development.

Every morning at three o'clock they are woken by the ear-splitting shrill sound of the siren.

"After the siren has gone it is really difficult to fall asleep again. Anyway I have grown accustomed to waking up at that hour," a frail and sickly Thutho Molefe said this week.

The siren is not the only discomfort for the workers. The concrete-slab bunk they call their beds — and the thin coil-filled "mattress" — do not offer much comfort either.

So rather than stay in bed the workers in Room 261 amble down from the bunks and gather around the big coal stove in the centre of the room.

A few of the workers step on to the steel stepladder to reach their tiny lockers perched near the rafters.

Molefe is too old to climb up the ladder, so he asks one of the young men to pass him his wash cloth and bar of soap.

The young man has to negotiate

the 10 steps of the ladder very carefully because a bicycle and other odd items are dangling from the rafters.

Molefe is lucky he has a locker at all. Some of his roommates have to pack away their personal belongings in every available nook. In fact the room is so overcrowded there is hardly room to stuff away anything bigger than a matchbox.

A quick trip to the shower and the workers are ready to go to the kitchen to get their daily rations of coarse bread and tea served in iron mugs.

Back in the room the men huddle around the only available radio set to listen to the latest news on the strike.

The bulletin deals with the Anglo American Corporation's press conference the previous day. There is no mention of Grootvlei.

The workers are not allowed to hold public meetings unless these are sanctioned by management, so the shaft steward committee members and the organiser move from room to room, filling in the workers on the latest on the strike.

"Why was there no mention about Grootvlei over the radio? Is it that our strike is illegal?" "Are the mine security going to force us down the shafts at gun-point?" are some of the questions raised.

SEFAKO NYAKA is a journalist in a South African paper 'The Mirror'. His account of one day's life in a compound of black miners. It provides courage and determination to the workers and the debate on the way to win their struggle for African history.

The organiser, "Comrade Lebogang", assures the workers the strike is legal.

But the workers are still worried at rumours that at some mines, security personnel have forced workers to go down the shaft at gun-point.

"I think we will be safer if we pack our belongings and go home," one of the workers suggests.

The organiser tells them mine management has indicated it is not prepared to organise and pay for transport to take the mineworkers to their respective homes.

"We do not need their buses. The union will organise buses for us".

One of the workers points out that if the workers go home it will make it easier for management to hire replacements, or "scabs".

CA AFTER ' STRIKE

revolt was at its height and Anglo wanted to keep its options open.

Now, as the township revolt has declined, the 'liberal' bosses have got less and less liberal.

Relly recently gave a

guarded backing to the continuation of the State of Emergency as a necessary evil.

Anglo and the other 'liberal' bosses may be in favour of reform 'from above' of various aspects of

apartheid and migrant labour, but they are the bloody and murderous enemies of the black workers.

This much at least should be clear from the outcome of the miners' strike.



Photo: Report/IDAF

ers' hostel

Journalist on the radical 'Weekly Mail'. This is spent behind the police and amongst striking an insight into the of these militant they conducted about ke, the greatest in South

The organiser points out this has already been done and there has been a positive response from the Mozambican government.

An announcement by the Chamber of Mines — that it was confident the strike would end "because workers are fed up with the strike" — is greeted with much anger.

"We have stayed out too long to go back now. The only time we will resume work is when the Chamber has addressed the wage issue," one of the workers points out. He is loudly cheered.

It is lunchtime and the workers file out to the kitchen to get their ration of maize-meal porridge and a thick mixture of vegetable soup. Back in the rooms the workers engage in board games.

There is an announcement over the loudhailer about a shaft steward committee meeting at the NUM branch offices on the mine premises.

A small group of workers gathers in the passage next to the mine security offices. The crowd soon swells to over 2,000. A black mine security member heads for the union offices.

He comes back accompanied by a union official who announces to the workers that the meeting is a shaft steward committee meeting and that they should stay in their rooms and

wait for a report-back.

There is hardly a murmur of discontent as the workers disperse to their rooms to resume their board games.

A few workers quickly assemble in front of the open square in front of the rooms. Two upturned drums on each side serve as goalposts as the workers engage in an impromptu soccer game.

The shaft stewards emerge from the meeting just after supper. Something is whispered in the ears of the men sitting with me.

All the workers in the room volunteer to join a public demonstration outside the Hollard Street headquarters of the Chamber of Mines.

"We want to go and see this man called Chamber who refuses to give us our money," one announces.

There is excitement all round. The demonstration in Johannesburg must be peaceful.

Drinking and unruly behaviour is strictly prohibited, but this does not stop the odd tippler from literally drinking under the blankets on the concrete bed.

But even then he must make sure that at the next round of report-back he has chewed on a raw onion to "kill the smell of alcohol".

Soviets 1917 YEAR OF REVOLUTION take over, workers arm

From late August local Soviets started taking control in their areas and setting up workers' militias against the attempted right-wing coup by General Kornilov. They did not abandon control and disarm when Kornilov was defeated.

Monday 28 August

General Kornilov places Mogilev under martial law: **the Soviet is dissolved, meetings are banned, and military censorship is introduced.** The Military Section attached to the Bolshevik Central Committee advocates **defeat of Kornilov through: mobilisation of workers, soldiers and peasants; arming of workers; release of imprisoned revolutionaries; abolition of the death penalty; arrest of all counter-revolutionaries in the armed forces.** The Military Section attached to the Central Executive Committee of Soviets issues an appeal for all military units to disobey Kornilov's orders and to give full support instead to the Provisional Government.

An inter-regional meeting of Petrograd soviets resolves to establish workers militias. The Central Council of Petrograd factory committees **sets up workers' militias and calls for the Central Executive Committee of soviets to arm immediately the Petrograd proletariat.**

Tuesday 29 August

The Central Executive Committee of Soviets summons troops from Kronstadt and Vyborg to defend Petrograd from Kornilov. A joint meeting of the Petrograd Soviet of trade unions and the Central Council of Petrograd factory committees demands of the Committee of Popular Struggle that it immediately free all imprisoned revolutionaries and end all repression of the working class and its organisations. The Bolshevik paper "Worker" reports that workers in Petrograd are queuing up to join the militias.

A general meeting of the Archangelsk garrison pledges its readiness to defend the gains of the revolution. A joint meeting of the Moscow soviets of workers' deputies and of soldiers' deputies sets up a special Organ of Revolutionary Action to combat the Kornilov coup. The Bendery **Soviet assumes full powers** in the town and surrounding district. The Vrekhneudinsk Soviet sets up a Committee for the Salvation of the Revolution, which takes over postal, telegraph and rail services and sets up workers' militias. The Vladivostok **Soviet assumes full power** in the town and surrounding area.

Wednesday 30 August

The Far Eastern regional committee of soviets, based in Khabarovsk, **announces that all authority in the region is now in its hands.** The Omsk Soviet arrests the commander of the Omsk military district and dismisses the local commissioner of the Provisional Government from his post. In Orsha and other local towns, revolutionary troops occupy the stations to prevent the transfer by rail of any troops supporting Kornilov.

Thursday 31 August

The Central Executive Committee of Soviets votes down a **Bolshevik resolution declaring that the only way out of the current crisis is the establishment of workers' power.** The Petrograd Soviet adopts the resolution, by 279 votes to 115, with 50 abstentions. **From now on Bolshevik influence in soviets throughout Russia increases rapidly.** The Central Council of factory committees in Petrograd issues **an appeal to workers to establish militias.**

In Yamburgsky district the regimental committee of the 1st Amursky Cossack regiment arrests nine officers and takes over command of the regiment. In Tammerfors (Finland) the revolutionary garrison assumes full powers in the town.

Friday 1 September

The Vyborg regional soviet (Petrograd) bans the sale of bourgeois papers in the region, and also the sale of humorous-satirical magazines of the same political tendencies. The sale of bourgeois papers is likewise banned in the Moscow-Narvsky region (Petrograd). **4,000 workers sign up for the Red Guards** in Kronstadt and begin military training. A joint meeting of the Revel Soviet and the executive committee of the local regional soviet agrees to the arming of workers and the formation of workers' militias.

The Ostrogzhsk Soviet elects a provisional revolutionary committee, which assumes full powers. The Belo Kholunitsky regional soviet assumes full powers and organises a local militia. The Yeniseysky provincial soviet executive committee publishes a statement declaring its assumption of full powers. In the Urals 110,000 workers strike in protest at the conciliationist policies of the Provisional Government; resolutions adopted at mass meetings call for **all power to the soviets.**

The Provisional Government is reorganised in the aftermath of Kerensky's coalition with the Cadets and a Directory set up "for the restoration of the weakened order of the state".

Kerensky puts Kornilov under house arrest and issues a decree demanding an end to political conflict within the armed forces, and **an end to the formation of special detachments** to fight counter-revolution.

Saturday 2 September

An inter-regional conference of Petrograd local soviets calls for new elections for the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, resolves to ignore Kerensky's decree of 1 September, and organises a central command of the Red Guards. Armed workers in the Lesnovsky region (Petrograd) confiscate bourgeois newspapers containing counter-revolutionary articles. The Bolsheviks' "Worker" newspaper is shut down.

The Moscow provincial soviet **resolves to arm workers,** organise militias, disband counter-revolutionary regiments, arrest counter-revolutionary officers, and shut down counter-revolutionary newspapers. The Vyazma Soviet arrests Major-General Kalinovsky for counter-revolutionary activities. By 49 votes to 14, with 3 abstentions, the Tomsk Soviet of Workers' Deputies adopts a resolution calling for all power to the soviets; the Tomsk Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies calls for all power to the soviets. The Perouk Soviet announces that all powers are now in its hands.

Sunday 3 September

The first issue of "Workers' Path" appears, the Bolshevik central organ replacing the "Worker". 3,000 attend a meeting in Petrograd organised by the Bolsheviks' "Women Worker" newspaper. The Central Executive Committee of soviets and the Executive Committee of peasant soviets announce the convening of a "congress of all organised democracy" (the democratic conference). The Kostroma Soviet declares that only transfer of all power to the soviets can lead Russia out of its crisis. The Molochansk Soviet calls for the arming of the proletariat and transference of all power to the soviets. The Simbirsk principal executive revolutionary committee assumes full powers. By 77 votes to 55, with three abstentions, the Syzran Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution calling for government of workers', soldiers' and peasants' representatives.

Turn to page 10



Defend your union!

Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) agrees with MANUS; be there on 8 October and show the Tories that students will fight even though the national leadership don't want to.

SSiN is promoting a new campaign this year — 'Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union'. The campaign tries to tie together many of the campaigns that your student union will want to run. Integrating campaigns makes each individual campaign stronger, makes the union more coherent, more accessible and allows for events like pickets or lobbies to unite activists who specialise in different issues.

'Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union' might run like this: your student union draws up a central charter of demands. This charter would include stated aims like a living grant, women's rights, a South African scholarship student, no cuts, etc.

From there on specialist campaign units can be set up (or worked with where they already exist) to work on one section of the overall charter.

So perhaps your student union

might want to run a specialist campaign on grants, benefits and housing (GBH). A charter of more detailed demands on GBH would be written. This might include demands on discretionary awards, hall fees, supplementary benefit entitlements and so on.

The GBH campaign charter would overlap with, say, the women's groups' charter in some demands — where they overlap the units can work together. There could be a dozen or so campaign units set up — depending on the priorities and strengths of your student union. Co-ordinating the units and running activities around the common central charter would be the responsibility of the union executive. And this co-ordination would be extremely important. If 'Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union' is to be successful, it will strengthen the union through increased involvement.

'Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union' is only a campaign framework — a sensible way or organising your student union. Even as a framework it answers many of the problems faced by activists — like how to run a lot of

campaigns on different issues at the same time, with few activists and even less money. For the 'Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union' campaign to develop into a new departure for NUS depends on what is done with it on the ground — how effectively new students are involved, how well links are made with college and local trade unions and how hard students are prepared to fight to defend themselves and their union over the next year.

SSiN has produced campaign materials for sale. 'Defend Yourself Defend Your Union' A2 blank posters cost about £40 for 500; a set of 12 different stickers including Defend Yourself, No Cuts, Get Organised and Defend Yourself, Fight Racism, Get Organised, cost about £90 for 5,000. A5 or A4 leaflets, saying Defend Yourself or Defend Yourself, Get Organised cost about £1.50 per hundred or £5 for camera-ready artwork.

Ring SSiN on 01-639 7967 for more details.

*SSiN AGM, Sunday 23 October in London. More details from above phone number.



Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

Trees cut dust, smoke

Trees and grass in the city — middle-class sentimentality or sound environmental measure?

The arguments were highlighted by the recent heat-wave in Greece. A week of temperatures of over 40°C (104°F), rising to a maximum of 50°C (122°F), caused 1,300 deaths, over 90% in Athens.

According to John Blunden, Reader in Resource Management at the Open University, these deaths were not due to heat alone. In fact, they pinpointed the problems of a vast unplanned city which suffers from an excess of pollution, poor health-care facilities and bureaucracy. Some victims had medical problems (a group of handicapped children died of dehydration and twelve psychiatric patients were given medicine incompatible with high temperatures) but most died from a combination of air pollution and heat.

This pollution arises from the rapid industrial expansion and explosion of motor traffic in Athens. Apart from damaging people's health, it is also eroding the stones of the Acropolis. The preliminary report on the heat deaths by the Minister of Health talks of an urgent need to create green open spaces in Athens. Readers may be rather puzzled as to how this can help tackle pollution. The following information may help.

One hectare (ha) of deciduous woodland (2½ acres of trees that lose their leaves in Autumn) can extract 4 tonnes of dust per year from the air.

A green area of 250 ha (the size of Hyde Park) reduces concentrations of smoke by 25%.

A green belt of 200 metres can reduce dust levels by 75%.

The types of pine trees growing around the Mediterranean can reduce dust by 20-50%.

In the USSR, areas of park around factories have been found to lower dust by 40%.

In Leningrad, the concentration of the acidic gas sulphur dioxide is 50% lower over parkland than in neighbouring areas without green spaces.

In addition, vegetation is itself effective in reducing surface temperatures so a city with plenty of trees will not heat up so much.

These factors suggest that the problems recently experienced by the people of Athens would have been less serious if there had been more than a mere 3.6% of open spaces. However, long-standing plans to demolish buildings to make green spaces have so far not been acted on.

Better still would be measures to tackle industrial and motor vehicle pollution at source in addition to bringing back the trees.

NOT SO SAFE

The nuclear industry is always boasting that its safety standards are second to none. In particular the limits set on doses of radiation received by workers in the industry are supposed to make illness virtually impossible.

And when a worker does

contract cancer and claims compensation, the industry usually settles out of court with no admission of liability.

What are we to make of such claims, then, when the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) is considering proposals to reduce these "safe" levels of permitted radiation to one-fifth or even one-tenth? Current limits of 50 milliSieverts per year for nuclear workers (and 1mSv for the general public) were set ten years ago and represented a considerable reduction on previous limits. Let's see how these were arrived at and why they are now under attack.

Estimates of the risk of cancer and genetic damage from radiation have been based on the experience of survivors from the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. This is the only really large-scale case of exposure to radiation. Indeed, many people believe the US government dropped the A-bombs as an experiment rather than as a means of quickly ending the war.

One problem with such estimates is that the Japanese A-bomb victims received fairly high doses while nuclear workers typically get quite low doses. There has been considerable debate about whether, say, one-tenth the dose would give more or less than exactly one-tenth of the risk.

Critics of the ICRP further argued that the ICRP's formulae underestimated the likelihood of non-fatal cancers and that factors used in calculating the exposure of the gonads (ovaries and testes) ignored the cancer risk and underestimated genetic damage which can harm future generations.

Now, the data from the Japanese survivors have been reworked with disturbing conclusions. Firstly, it seems that they actually received lower doses than previously thought. This is because buildings seem to have been more effective in shielding people from radiation than first thought. Secondly, many more cancers have been discovered among people whose death certificates made no mention of cancer. These cancers mainly affected the prostate, cervix and urinary tract.

This all adds up to an inescapable conclusion: **lower doses of radiation are capable of causing much more cancer than originally thought.** Even Dr. John Dunster, former director of the British National Radiological Protection Board, faithful servant of the nuclear industry and prophet of reassurance over radiation risks, believes a reduction in the permitted level to one-fifth of the present to be justified.

But the ICRP, a self-appointed body dominated by figures from the nuclear industry, may resist such proposals as they could make nuclear power even less competitive than it is now. Extra protective measures, more maintenance workers and cuts in radioactive emissions all cost money!

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

from The Socialist Conference Office, The Socialist Society, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG. 01-734 8501.

Manchester Socialist Organiser public meetings:
'Iran': Sunday 13 September.
'Permanent Revolution': Sunday 27 September.
Both at 7.30 p.m. in the Town Hall.

The Socialist Conference. Sponsored by the Campaign Group of MPs, the Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists. Chesterfield — Winding Wheel Centre, 24th and 25th October 1987. Themes: The problems of peace, internationalism and development; the ending of discrimination against all oppressed groups; visions and strategies for a socialist economy; extending democracy and curbing state power; now is the time to fight back. Details and booking form

STRATEGIES FOR SOCIALISM. A weekend of speakers and discussion organised by Basingstoke Labour Party. September 12 and 13 at the Moose Centre, Basingstoke. Topics include: South Africa, Youth, Racism, How to fight the Tories, women, What is Thatcherism, Which way forward for Labour? For more information contact Angela Fraser, Basingstoke Labour Party, Sandys Rd., Basingstoke. Tel: (0256) 462933.

OUR JOBS AND SERVICES ARE NOT FOR SALE

Conference called by the London Authorities Joint Trade Unions on Thursday 10 September 1987 10am — 2pm at the Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1. For further information ring 274-7722 x2001.

LONDON FIGHTS BACK! An all-London conference against cuts in council jobs and services called by Camden NALGO and London Bridge.

Sunday 20 September 1987 10am to 5pm, Conway Hall Red Lion Square, London WC1

For further details contact Camden NALGO on 278 4444 x 2431.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

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

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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Not so much Bad as mediocre

Rebecca Penny looks at Michael Jackson's new album 'Bad'

MICHAEL Jackson's first album since 'Thriller' was released last week.

'Bad' will no doubt cement his position as the biggest selling solo artist of all time, knocking 'Thriller' into third place behind Dire Straits' 'Brothers in Arms' as the biggest selling album ever.

The record has been hyped relentlessly over the last few weeks, culminating in a preview on Radio One on Bank Holiday Monday, and an 'exclusive' showing of the video on Channel 4 on the day of release.

Competitions have been organised around it, and we have been served up the more bizarre details of Michael's life — his pet llamas and his penchant for watching other people's plastic surgery operations.

So, after all the hype, what is 'Bad' really like? Jackson has produced an album that is not so much bad as mediocre.

Admittedly 'Thriller' is a hard act to follow, coming as close to perfection as a pop record can. My copy jumps in a dozen places from floor shaking bops and it always gets them out of the kitchen at parties. But 'Bad' doesn't really come close.

The pre-release single extracted from 'Bad' should have been a warning. 'I just can't stop loving you' is the sort of duet usually sung by a couple of old has-beens in a last ditch attempt to save their careers.

It is sentimental and saccharin sweet with the spoken intro: "I just wanna lie next to you for a while..." It's fingers down your throat time.

However, this is undoubtedly the worst track. Some of the others do have a lot going for them. The obvious singles, 'Bad man in the mirror' and 'Just good friends', are superbly danceable, although the heavily intrusive drum beat gets a bit tedious after a while. I would defy anyone to sit them out.

The lyrics throughout are fairly mundane. The man who co-wrote 'We are the world' makes only one lyrical comment on the world. "I'm starting with the man in the mirror... if you want to make the world a better place... take a look at yourself and make a change".

This philosophy of individuals improving themselves is also strongly present in the video of the title track. It features Jackson as a Harlem kid who breaks out and goes to college. When he returns he is pushed around by his friends because he is no longer 'bad'.

Harlem

Jackson then bursts into a song and dance routine which is like a cross between 'West Side Story' and 'The Warriors', and teaches the old chums the difference between right and wrong.

Somehow, this story, directed by Martin 'Taxi Driver' Scorsese, has got turned on its head. The college kid returning to the poverty and degradation of life in Harlem has got far more to learn than the friends he left behind.

Michael Jackson is a product of the record industry, and the record he has made is a product — a designer album without which no self-respecting yuppie collection is complete.

It is featureless, as lacking in character as poor Michael's synthetic face. Which is really a shame, because he still has the voice that sends shivers tingling down the spine.

'I'm All Right, Jack'

Jim Denham reviews 'I'm All Right Jack', shown on BBC-1 last Sunday.

When the Boulting Brothers made 'I'm All Right Jack' in 1959, they had just emerged from a protracted demarcation dispute with the film technicians' unions at British Lion studios.

The film is a conscious piece of anti-union propaganda made by people with a rather considerable axe to grind. It is also brilliantly cast and acted, very funny and — like all the best propaganda — contains some incidental grains of truth.

The BBC's decision to screen this old British classic on the eve of the opening of the TUC Congress was surely not a coincidence.

The late Peter Sellers plays Fred Kite, chairman of the work's committee at Missiles Ltd., and the embodiment of just about everything repellent and ridiculous about 'traditional' British trade unionism: he is a pompous, ignorant, hypocritical, cowardly, bureaucrat.

Into Kite's little world wanders one Stanley Windrush, (Ian Carmichael), a naive, good-hearted, upper class twit, down on his luck and forced to take a job as a fork lift driver at the factory.

The film is a parable about the irrelevance of arcane industrial trade

unionism to fair minded individuals untainted by class prejudice.

There are, also, some interesting secondary themes running through the main plot: an anti-male/trade union cross-class alliance of women (Windrush's aunt, Margaret Rutherford and Kite's wife, Irene Handl) and the thinly veiled racism that lies behind both Kite's half-digested anti-imperialist rhetoric and the bosses' patriotic posturing.

Formally, the film is even handed: management come over as badly as the unions, and the members themselves are, in Windrush's words, "first class chaps". In fact the bosses ought to come over a great deal worse than the unions as it turns out that the strike was provoked by management as part of a massive swindle and any way what Missiles Ltd are up to behind all their 'patriotic' humbug about 'export or die' is selling arms to the highest bidder.

Compared to this, Fred Kite's bureaucratic excesses ought to look pretty small time.

But somehow it doesn't work out like that. What is memorable about the film is not the suave corruption of managing director (Dennis Price) or the shifty manoeuvrings of capitalist/spiv Dickie Attenbrough, it is the pompous bloodmindedness of Peter Sellers' chairman of the works committee.

Partly this is a tribute to the wonderful acting abilities of Peter Sellers, but it is also clearly the main intention of the film — the title itself is a phrase always associated with trade unionism, although

it could be more appropriately applied to the capitalists.

There are, however, just a few moments when — whatever the intentions of the Boulting Brothers — we see another side to trade unionism as represented by Fred Kite.

In one marvellous scene early in the film Kite and the works committee confront the works manager (a seedy ex-army type played, inevitably, by Terry Thomas) to protest about Windrush's presence on the shop floor. Terry Thomas immediately proposes the obvious solution. "We'll sack the bouncer!"

Kite, plainly taken aback by this, asks if he may "withdraw and confer". He returns to solemnly announce that a sacking would "constitute victimisation" and the works committee would have to "consider industrial action". It had dawned on him that he was in business to protect jobs, not to lose them.

A little later, Windrush innocently demonstrates to a time and motion man how the job could be done twice as fast with half the workforce; "but we need the money" protests another worker. That thought hadn't occurred to Windrush.

All sorts of half baked messages run through this film, but central to it is the idea that 'traditional' trade unionism (and 'outdated' notions of class conflict that go with it) is the main obstacle to sensible, harmonious industrial relations where bosses and workers can cooperate with each other on an individual basis rather than collectively. I wonder if Eric Hammond was watching?

1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From centre pages

Monday 4 September.

A mass meeting in Petrograd of 800 delegates representing 20,000 workers calls for transfer of all power to the representatives of revolutionary workers, soldiers and peasants. **The provisional Government orders the dissolution of local organs of struggle against the Kornilov mutiny** on the grounds that they have lost their significance. A joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Moscow soviets of workers' deputies and of soldiers' deputies sets up a central staff as the leading organ of the Red Guards. A meeting of the crew of the "Republican" cruiser in the Black Sea fleet demands the arrest of the leading counter-revolutionaries and the shutting down of counter-revolutionary organisations and papers. In Ekaterinburg leaflets produced by the "Urals Union of Kornilovists", appealing for support for Kornilov are stuck up around the town. In the elections for the Executive Committee of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet, the Bolshevik slate wins a majority of votes. The Tashkent Soviet demands withdrawal of Kerensky decree of 1 September.

Tuesday 5 September.

Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries vote down a Bolshevik resolution at the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet advocating fresh elections for the Executive Committee. An inter-regional conference of Petrograd Soviets resolves to ignore Kerensky's decree of 1 September, and **calls for fresh elections for the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee.** The Vyborg regional soviet (Petrograd) condemns Kerensky's decree of 1 September. The Bolshevik "Workers' Path" newspaper publishes a list of the 17 workers' papers shut down by the Provisional Government between 5 July and 5 September.

Meetings of the Soviets of Revel, Rostov and Kostroma endorse the Bolshevik resolution on state power adopted by the Petrograd Soviet on 31 August. The Taganrog Soviet votes down a similar resolution. The central staff of Moscow Red Guards resolves to campaign for the donation of a day's pay from Moscow workers to finance the Red Guards. In Penza and Saratov **workers' militias are set up.**

Wednesday 6 September.

The Kronstadt Soviet approves the recruitment of women to the local Red Guards and orders special instructors to teach them the use of firearms.

The Moscow committee of struggle with counter-revolution, set up to combat Kornilov, resolves to dissolve itself. The Klin district soviet passes a resolution calling for all power to the Soviets; a mass meeting of 11,000 workers of the Sobinsky factory demands transference of all power to the soviets. The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet condemns the conciliatory policies of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets, and criticises its convening of a "Democratic Conference" rather than a congress of Soviets.

In Egorevsk the Revolutionary Directory set up at the time of the Kornilov coup threatens the use of force against the Lyubomilov factory management unless it re-instates sacked workers.

Thursday 7 September

The Central Council of Petrograd factory committees resolves to participate in the forthcoming democratic conference, but condemns the basis of representation chosen for it as under-representing working class organisations. The Kolomensky regional soviet (Petrograd) calls for the immediate re-election of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. A conference of factory owners of the Vyborg region (Petrograd) condemns the training of factory Red Guards during working hours, and resolves not to pay wages for time spent on military training during working hours.

A meeting of the Moscow regional bureau of Soviets adopts a Bolshevik resolution advocating the formation of Red Guards, closure of counter-revolutionary newspapers, and dissolution of counter-revolutionary organisations. Soldiers and workers demonstrate in Red Square under the slogan "Arm the workers", "Death to Kornilov and co!", and "Peace to the cottages, war on the palaces!". The Sterlitamak Soviet sets up a workers militia.

hope and confidence.

That in turn requires us to conduct ourselves in a way that will help to build solidarity around the popular struggles that take place, and unity around the policies we advocate.

splinter group politics cannot be the basis for advance, even though we must treat with respect the ideas of all socialists, and vigorously oppose ideological expulsions. We aim, therefore, at Chesterfield, to make a

ment, the peace movement, the black community, the greens and others about their methods of working and about their own successes and failures.

It is certainly not our intention to

A broad anti-Trotskyist

By Stan Crooke

No-one who attended the Scottish Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) conference "Labour's Scottish Mandate", held in Edinburgh on 29 August, can have been left in any doubt as to the diversionary nature of the call for a Scottish Assembly now coming from the LCC and the leadership of the labour movement in Scotland.

One thing that definitely was not on the conference agenda was serious discussion about a real fightback against the Tories. The conference discussion paper explained: "Scotland is not in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation, and Labour cannot indulge in the type of gesture politics that imply Scotland is in such a situation."

Translated into plain English, this means: we've got no intention of defying the Tories or of leading working class struggles.

The idea that Labour-controlled local authorities should refuse to comply with the poll tax was rejected out of hand. It would be "both ineffective and illegal". The alternative was to hope that individual rate-payers would refuse en masse to pay the poll tax. This would also be illegal, but at least it allows Labour councillors who aspire to higher office to pass the buck for fighting the poll tax onto their hapless constituents.

Nor could there be any question of Labour-controlled local councils defying the Tories' cuts in local government financing. Such a lack of combativity was hardly surprising: in Edinburgh District and Lothian Region, LCC supporters have recently been to the fore in campaigning for the councils to cut back expenditure

in line with the Tories' demands.

And main platform speaker George Galloway, recent co-signatory to a statement with members of Labour Left Liaison, concluded his speech with a rallying cry to build a "broad anti-Trotskyist democratic left" in the Labour Party. Since Trotskyism is hardly a mass force in the Labour Party in Scotland, this was presumably directed at the "hard left" — such as Labour Left Liaison.

As for the trade unions, Scottish TUC General Secretary Campbell Christie allotted them no other role than that of applauding the STUC document "Scotland — a Land fit for People", a re-hash of post-war Keynesianism and the failed policies of the Wilson government of 1964-70, with "Scottish" stuck in front of every other word in order to provide an appropriately "Scottish dimension".

Instead of offering a way forward

Organising emergency cover

In the recent series of all-out strikes by the civil service unions chaos reigned on what to do about the effects of the strike on people claiming benefit. Inevitably the question of emergency payments came up. Who should pay them? Who should receive them? Penny Newell discusses this important question for trade unionists.

The question of emergency cover comes up in every strike which hits directly at innocent members of the public. But how can you minimise the hardship caused to people who depend on your service without making the strike ineffective?

Socialist Organiser argued that the DHSS offices should open for emergency payments under workers' control. This didn't happen.

The first problem was that the national leadership didn't include

anything like this in the plan of action. So when local councils suddenly realised that closure of the office was going to put pressure on them, NALGO members weren't able to say "we want workers' control in DHSS offices".

Not only was there no clear instruction on that position, there was no fall-back plan either for dealing with the crisis. When Tess Gill (SCPS) came and talked to a group of advice workers in Southwark after the strike, she said the union had no alternative but to strike. They knew that would cause hardship to the unemployed, but their hand had been forced. She didn't seem even to acknowledge that a line needed working out on emergency payments.

So up and down the country a hotch-potch of different ways of paying emergency payments was improvised. Local NALGO branches which contacted CPSA and SCPS for information received different messages both at national and local level.

But, do we really think that such complicated arrangements with other workers who are not on strike are the best way to ensure that the union keeps control of the strike at the same time as ensuring that the interests of the people on benefits are looked after.

To start with it means workers are being asked to do work that is not

part of their job description. They bear the brunt of the frustrations of people without money. They don't have the tools for the job. They don't have sufficient knowledge of benefit entitlements to properly decide who "should" get payments and who should be turned away.

The result is well known to local DHSS or DE staff — it leads to verbal and physical abuse of staff. Last year Lewisham NALGO was on strike for six weeks demanding protection of staff in housing offices.

Confusion

Claimants are thrown into confusion. My own experience of being on strike when I worked at the DHSS was that many claimants are sympathetic to the working conditions of staff. They acknowledge that we took a lot of undeserved abuse because the system is so inadequate.

Nevertheless, you can't live on fresh air and the claimants needed money.

New legislation which came into effect in April this year means that local councils can now make benefit payments, and claim the money back from the DHSS. The rules are complex — what is an emergency? Complicated paperwork is required to check if people really are on benefit, and how much they should get.

Focus

What I think we should be arguing for — if DHSS management refuse to allow emergency payment under workers' control — is for one office per area to open for emergency payments, with DHSS management in control. It would keep the *focus* and *control* of the strike with the unions in struggle.

As there doesn't seem to be a likelihood of all-out strike action in the civil service in the near future this may seem an academic discussion. I don't think it is. There will always be local disputes with offices shut for various lengths of time and there may

also be a big national strike call in the future.

We shouldn't be caught without a strategy for emergency payments, and this must start and end in the control of workers on strike.

More chaos faces people claiming benefits now that DHSS computer staff have virtually been sacked and the changes to benefits are all going to be done manually. These changes are only seven months away. Much of the DHSS work is already coming the councils' way with the new housing benefit system and the social fund payments.

We must make strong working links between the CPSA and claimants, and NALGO and NUPE, if we are to mutually support each other to maximise the effect of future industrial action. We must strive to involve people claiming benefits not just as victims of the system but as people fighting back and making their own demands in parallel to our trade union demands.

CPSA

Setback on casual labour

Because DHSS offices are already badly under-staffed, the Tories have brought in Limited-Period Appointments (LPAs) to do the extra work of implementing the Fowler Reviews. LPAs are long term casuals, who have no right to permanent employment when their contract ends, and with no other basic rights either.

The CPSA DHSS Section Executive Committee (SEC), which is dominated by the Militant Tendency, backed down

from fighting the Fowler Reviews earlier this year.

Militant supporters on the DHSS SEC have now backed down from giving a clear fighting leadership to the struggle against LPAs.

CPSA Section Executive and National Executive Committee member, and Socialist Caucus supporter, Rod Bacon, looks at the issue of LPAs and the implications of the DHSS SEC's decision.

LIMITED Period Appointments were brought in while most CPSA activists were at Annual Conference in May this year. They were brought in to five regions out of seven, mainly in the North East, North West, Midlands and South Wales. London was excluded, probably because the London offices are the best organised and most militant.

The delegates at National Conference almost unanimously agreed to oppose LPAs by industrial action.

The industrial action consisted of two stages. The first, "tit for tat" action in local offices where LPAs were

brought in consisted of guerrilla battles against management, bringing out a number of members on a rolling basis, causing maximum disruption. The second stage was to build up for an all-out strike throughout the local offices.

The LPA campaign ran at the same time as the national pay campaign. Despite this up to 35 offices took action against LPAs.

It was after the national ballot for an all-out strike against low pay was lost that management started to move against the industrial action against LPAs.

Their main target was the "tit for tat" action. They demanded that all members involved in this action should give a verbal pledge that they would work normally. Those who refused would be suspended from duty.

This move, which, basically, attempted to force a no-strike pledge from members, led to a decline in the "tit for tat" action. Those offices on all-out strike began to feel isolated.

The DHSS SEC had to move to stage 2 of the campaign to keep it alive.

The DHSS SEC met on 18 August. Supporters of the Militant Tendency argued that the campaign was unworkable and that the prospect of a successful vote for an all-out strike was non-existent. They wanted to end the campaign by sinking it into a general staffing campaign.

They were also opposed to developing the campaign into one which opposed the Fowler Reviews. Doing this would have united all the regions, including London, into a common struggle. It would have strengthened the fight.

However, Militant supporters argued that CPSA members were not ready for a political fight with the government.

This line was supported by "Broad Left '84" (a coalition of Kinnockites and Stalinists). Socialist Caucus supporters and representatives from the areas at the centre of the dispute, mainly Hull, Liverpool and South Wales, argued to develop the campaign with a time-table to include all-out strike action throughout the local

offices.

Unfortunately this was defeated by Militant supporters and "Broad Left '84". The campaign against LPAs has been buried and the campaign against the Fowler Reviews has been sunk.

Once again Militant supporters in leading positions in the CPSA have wound members up to a fight — and then backed down and left them without a lead.

SCOTLAND

Leaders squash protests

By Stan Crooke

Margaret Thatcher toured Scotland last week to try to revive the Tories' flagging fortunes here. But the labour movement leadership — which talks endlessly of the Tories not having a "Scottish mandate" — did nothing whatever to organise protests against her visit!

On the contrary, they stymied opposition. Workers at the Howden engineering factory in Glasgow had planned to boycott Thatcher's visit. STUC General Secretary Campbell Christie and AEU General Secretary Gavin Laird intervened — and the plans for a boycott were dropped.

Howden's management had declared that protests would damage their company's financial prospects. Christie and Laird promptly intervened to back up management and save Thatcher from any embarrassment. Even so, a hundred of the workforce gave Thatcher's visit a body-swerve.

Thanks to the STUC, Thatcher was given an open field to announce new contracts for the firm and appeal to the workforce's "Scottish identity". "Let's shout Scotland's success from the rooftops...the Channel Tunnel starts in Glasgow," she said to rapturous applause. Clearly, there is nothing intrinsically progressive about the "Scottish identity".

This was doubtless the first of more frequent visits to Scotland by Thatcher, as she attempts to revive Tory fortunes in the area. If the labour movement leadership behaves in future as it did this time, then she may well have some degree of success. Perhaps they should spend less time harping on about a Scottish Assembly and more time organising a fight against the Tories instead.

Violence at work

Caused by cuts

Labour Research Department has published a survey of 210 workplaces where abuse or violence has been experienced.

In 62% of the workplaces surveyed, actual violence had been experienced; in 28% violence with a weapon; and in 85% staff had been threatened with violence and in over 50% of the latter cases, staff had been threatened with a weapon. Yet despite the high overall level of violence and abuse, in only just over a third (35%) of workplaces were violent incidents monitored, and less than one in four (24%) of them had any procedure for assessing the causes of violence to staff.

Workers in more than two-thirds (67%) felt that the level of abuse and violence had increased during the past five years. Most attributed it to

the inability of public services to cope with increased demand caused by high unemployment, at a time when public services are being starved of resources.

The most common demand from unions for steps managements should take to reduce the risks to their workers was for training in dealing with violent incidents (37%), followed by improved management support (30%). Other steps seen as a priority were increasing staff levels (22%) and improving security (14%).

Other findings of the survey are:

*More than one in ten (11%) of the workplaces surveyed had taken industrial action over the issue of violence;

*79% of workplaces reported some measures had been implemented to reduce the risks to staff;

MINERS

Solidarity in Notts

WHETTON'S WEEK



WE HAD a fantastic turnout for the Notts miners' gala last Saturday [5 September].

The lads from Notts were overwhelmed with the response from all the other Areas and other trade unions. Although the weather wasn't that kind to us, it was still a fantastic day.

It was absolutely marvellous to see miners from other Areas and trade unionists from all spheres joining in and marching through Mansfield.

Overtime ban

I'm quite pleased to see that the NEC decided to move on the overtime ban, and not fudge and mess about. It will cause us problems in Notts, no-one's denying that, but we are members of the National Union of Mineworkers, and if called upon we will participate, whatever the cost.

If it means us losing members, so be it. We will participate to the full.

No-one needs to tell Notts miners what's at the back of it. It may well be that this action will stop the attack on Notts activists, branch officials and rank-and-file miners.

In my opinion we should have been taking this sort of action 12 months ago. I'm quite pleased to see that at last the NEC are moving on it.

The TUC

I find it very, very strange when I hear of so-called leaders of the TUC advocating no-strike deals.

For years the employers have been trying to take away our right to strike. It's a fundamental right of every worker. We've resisted the employers for years — and now the trade union leaders are offering to do the job for them.

I would strongly point out to the TUC that that right to strike is *mine*, and nobody, but nobody, has the right to take it away from me, whether it be employers or so-called TUC leaders.

Nobody has got the right to sell it. We've seen GCHQ, and it seems to me that certain trade union leaders are treading on very dangerous ground when they advocate no-strike deals for sale for a certain sum of money. What's the next stage? Is it

that for a little more money they'll sell the right to belong to a trade union?

Tribunal

I go to my Industrial Tribunal on the 9th. We shall be trying to get the Tribunal to rule that I should be reinstated at my own colliery.

I think we've got a good case. Having said that, nobody can foretell what's going to come out of tribunals. But win, lose, or draw, I will continue the fight. I will not accept that I can be got rid of out of the area, and I certainly will not accept that they have got the right to compensate me.

No amount of compensation can buy my job. I want my job back. That's all I want. I don't want the Coal Board paying out large sums of public money. The Coal Board lost the case, and all I want in return is my job back.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts. He was sacked for putting up NUM notices at work. An Industrial Tribunal has ruled that he was unfairly dismissed, but so far British Coal have only offered to give him a new job at a Yorkshire pit.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Nice guys on stage, cut-throats behind the scenes

By Mick Ackersley

Everybody knows that professional wrestling is a fake.

Some bouts are even rehearsed 'blow' by 'blow' and fall by fall. Who will win and who lose is often agreed in advance. The whole business has more to do with gymnastics — and occasionally ballet — than with combative sport.

Wrestlers are also character actors — the roles of good guy and bad guy are allotted in advance. Show business, not sport!

And yet sometimes people die in the wrestling ring. Recently "King Kong Kirk" — whose role in the ring was that of 'bad guy' — died when another grossly overweight man, a 'good guy' called 'Big Daddy', threw his 20-odd stone down on top of him.

So it was also with the Alliance — everything about the outfit put together by the Liberal Party and Labour's SDP renegades was fake, bluff, hype — show business, not politics.

They had the good guys and the nice guys and Shirley was the good woman of Limehouse.

Owen was the Alliance's pocket-sized "Man of Destiny", a Napoleon in all but talent and achievement.

This was before David Steel did to him what Big Daddy did to King Kong Kirk — except that Steel did it deliberately.

The niceness and disinterestedness of the Alliance was as false as the fake ferocity of the wrestlers.

Three months ago, these scum helped give Thatcher her victory over Labour — and now look at them.

Reshape

Yesterday they were going to reshape British politics in their own image — moderate, nice, rational, classless. Now they are torn by violent hatreds and animosities, squabbling over the corpse of the SDP. The two Davids are groping for the "things that divide us" in the vain attempt to dress up a personal power struggle in "political principle".

It turns out that David Owen hates the Liberal Party scarcely less than he hates the Labour Party. Of all the lies told in the General Election, the biggest lie of all was the Alliance.

The lesson for the Labour Party must surely be this: political bluff and bluster, false image — the opportunistic chase after electoral advantages irrespective of principle — all this may seem to work for a while. But they don't work for long.

The sudden collapse of the SDP Mark 1 into a stinking melee of squabbling politicians should warn off those in the Labour leadership who think it would be a smart wheeze to turn the Labour Party into the SDP Mark 2. Serious working class politics is about working out socialist policies and campaigning to win the working class to fight for those policies.

Our movement should not allow itself to cross over into the world of Big Daddy and Little David Owen.

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Being homeless is bad for you

By Frank Dobson MP

Being homeless is bad for you. If it wasn't, the rich would be dossing under the arches. If you are a family officially recognised as homeless and living for months, or even years, in bed and breakfast, it's better than sleeping rough but it still isn't healthy. Why not?

The answers are obvious. It's usually overcrowded, unhygienic and full of physical hazards. It is also cramped and stressful. Families are literally cabined, cribbed and confined.

The result is high levels of gastroenteritis; skin and chest infections. Cross infection is rapid and common. Any disease that's going, the bed and breakfast families get.

There are a lot of accidents, falls and scalds. The stress puts children much more at risk of non-accidental injury.

The unending pressure and squalor make depression commonplace, most noticeably amongst the mothers. Poor or non-existent cooking facilities make families dependent on unhealthy, expensive foods from cafes and takeaways. Being homeless

is bad for you.

Bringing up children in this world of ours is hard enough even if you have a nice home of your own. No doubt it's difficult even for some of the people who feature in the Observer Colour Supplement's 'A room of my own' series. Less grandly, Pauline in EastEnders yearns for the privacy of a room of her own in the family home. But for many bed and breakfast families a room of one's own can mean just that one room for parents and children to live, eat, cook and sleep in — for months on end.

The total number of families becoming officially homeless is over 100,000 a year and rising. The total number of families in bed and breakfast is over 10,000 and rising. These people are my fellow citizens. They are your fellow citizens. They are Mrs Thatcher's fellow citizens.

In 1980, Mrs Thatcher startled viewers of Weekend World with her assertion: 'No one would have remembered the good samaritan if he'd only had good intentions. He had money as well.' The homeless are still waiting for their good samaritan.

Mrs Thatcher certainly has the money. She gave you and me 2p off the standard rate of income tax as a pre-election sweetener. So it must be that unlike the good samaritan she hasn't got good intentions. She is one of those who passes by on the other side. No wonder she doesn't visit the inner cities.

If we can't appeal to her good intentions, perhaps we can appeal to



The Tories' message: back to slum landlordism. Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL.

her obsession with cost. It costs around twice as much to keep a family in bed and breakfast as to provide them with a home of their own. So if Mrs Thatcher would allow councils to build homes for the homeless she could become a Super Samaritan,

displaying good intentions and saving money at the same time.

Frank Dobson MP was speaking at the 94th Environmental Health Congress, at the Dome Theatre in Brighton.

Tory council plans huge sell-off

By Neil Stonelake

Despite fast-growing homelessness in London, Westminster City Council proposes to go ahead with plans to privatise nearly half of its council homes.

Claiming that it intends to increase home ownership, it has broadened the category of people allowed to buy council houses. From now on, anyone who has so much as the offer of a job in the borough will be eligible to buy a council house. A council-sponsored plan means that staff will be paid on a commission basis, according to how many of the borough's houses they can hive off.

At the same time as the Tories plan to sell off the best of the borough's housing stock, they also seem intent on shipping 10,000 homeless into bed and breakfast accommodation outside the area.

Houses which could be used to provide shelter for the borough's many homeless are boarded up — awaiting sale to those who can afford to buy them. At a time when many families are without homes, 250 houses lie empty.

Not content with this resettlement policy the Tories now plan to set up a site of some 45 mobile houses on a piece of waste ground in the East End of London.

On 4 September angry tenants disrupted for the second time a council meeting held to adopt the plans.

New sponsors for 7 November

Listed below are a few of the comrades and organisations who have added their support to the November 7 conference, organised in solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc.

If you would like more details, leaflets or speakers for your organisation, contact Mark Osborn, 54A Peckham Rye, London SE15.

Sponsor this conference! Labour Parties, trade union branches — £10; Labour Party wards, women's sections, black sections, student Labour Clubs — £5; LPYS branches — £1. Cheques to 'Solidarity Conference'.

(All in a personal capacity). Pat Younge, NUS national executive; Plasnewydd Ward LP; Salford LPYS; Brent East LPYS; Bob Clay MP; Rod Bacon, CPSA NEC; Margot Hill, CPSA NEC; Islington NALGO; Simon Pottinger, NUS national executive; Liz Millward, NUS national executive; Michele Carlisle, NUS national executive; Shrewsbury LPYS; Basingstoke CLP; Ron Brown MP; Eddie Newman MEP;

Brian Harrison, Manchester City Councillor; John Clegg, Manchester City Councillor; John Cunningham, author of a book on the jailed Soviet miner Klebanov; Dr. Mary McAuley, Dept. of Soviet Studies, St. Hilda's College, Oxford; George Schopflin, Dept. of Soviet Studies, LSE and School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies; Gus Fagan, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe; Sue Carlyle, Tower Hamlets Labour Councillor.

Solidarity with workers in the Eastern bloc

A conference
7 November
11-5
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1