

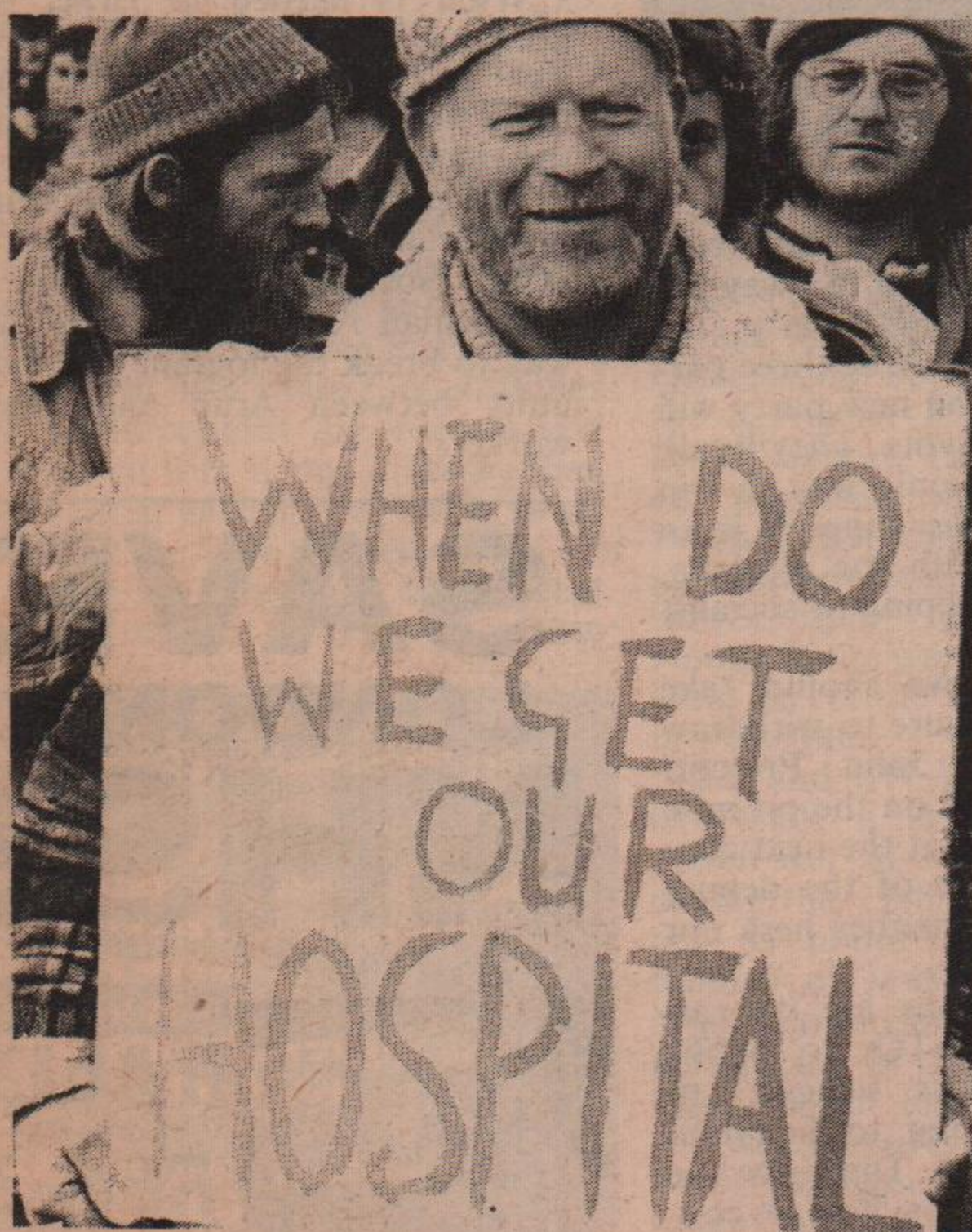
# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

# THE NHS SCANDAL

Pages 5-8

# Thatcher's cuts kill 15 every day



**5,000 people in Britain die unnecessarily every year and 20,000 people suffer prolonged disability because of inadequate facilities. That's 15 people dying every day, according to a consultant heart surgeon in Oxford. Thatcher's cuts kill!**

The National Health Service is in a state of near collapse. Huge waiting lists for beds, for operations, inadequate ambulance services, horrendously overworked staff: whatever the statistics the Tories manipulate, everyone knows the reality.

The only way to save the NHS is to fight for it. This government doesn't care about the sick. They

don't really believe in the NHS. For the Tories, you only deserve health care if you can pay for it.

The nurses do care about the sick — and about the NHS.

Nothing could be more disgusting than the Tories' propaganda against the health workers — that it is strikes that will damage the NHS. It is this government that is destroying the NHS — putting profit before need, money-grabbing before people.

The health workers' fight is a fight to save the NHS. Every working class person has a reason to support them. Strikes — far from threatening the NHS — are the only way to get more money to improve the health service.

The labour movement must be prepared to throw its weight behind the health workers. *Solidarity* strike action should be called.

The London day of action on 3 February must be a huge success.



**Nurses say: time to call a halt**



## PRESS GANG

### Roseballs to the rescue

By Jim Denham

It was a bad week for Health Secretary John Moore. Not one, but two, humiliating climbdowns — over the blood transfusion skill allowance, and then over the nurses' unsocial hours payments.

Mrs Thatcher had all but deserted him, and Nigel Lawson would not give him any more money to play with. Even the Tory press had turned on him. And, of course, those hole-in-the-heart babies keep on dying — very costly in terms of votes.

Then, in his darkest hour, following a Commons performance universally described in such terms as 'lacklustre', a knight in shining blue Tory armour came over the horizon to rescue poor John — or, at least, to offer him a way out of the mire.

Thursday's *Daily Mail* carried an article entitled 'Don't let them put the clock back', blaming more or less all the problems of the National Health Service on NUPE, 'the ruthless union that's winning the propaganda war'.

It accused NUPE of 'cynically exploiting' the 'mythology of crisis' in the Health Service. It reminded readers of the Winter of Discontent, when 'dead bodies were left on wards in full view of other patients, and the sick and handicapped were used as pawns in a cruel war'. It informed its readers that 'Rodney Bickerstaffe issued a New Year plea in the Communist Morning Star newspaper for his members to "get" John Moore, and "turn the tide of Thatcherism".'

The author closed by advising John Moore to 'remind people over and over again about who was responsible for the Winter of Discontent. 1988 must not become Mrs Thatcher's Winter of Discontent'.

It was, no doubt, inevitable that the Tory press would sooner or later come up with the good old 'blame the unions' line on the NHS crisis. But the author of this particular article was first in the field this time round.

And who was this champion of the Tories, this hammer of the unions? Why, none other than our old friend Roger Rosewell.

Younger readers may not remember Mr Rosewell, but — take it from me — he knows what he's talking about when he goes on about ruthless militants cynically exploiting situations for their own sinister ends. Back in the early '70s, he was industrial organiser of the International Socialists (now SWP).

He was a nasty piece of work in those days. Since then, he has been hanging round with the likes of Frank Chapple (Roseballs wrote the 'official' history of the EETPU) and working for witch-hunting outfits like the Economic League and the Freedom Association. He was, for a while, an SDP councillor in Oxford. No prizes for guessing which party he supports these days.

Remember the name: he'll go far.

### Blackmail

The *Sun* prides itself with taking a tough line with 'blackmailers', whether they be NGA printers or international terrorists. Only last week the paper called for the Government to bomb Iran sooner than make any concessions to the captors of Terry Waite.

How strange, then, that the *Sun* itself should be a willing accomplice to another, more conventional, form of blackmail.

A few weeks ago a gay man received a blackmail threat: unless he agreed to go to bed with the blackmailer, his relationship with his regular lover would be exposed in the press. He immediately informed his lover, Martin Bowley (a Crown Court Recorder), who wisely advised him to go to the police.

As a result, letters and photographs stolen from Mr Bowley fell into the hands of the *Sun*, who immediately threatened the gay couple with publication.

On Monday 18th Mr Bowley resigned as a Recorder, and on Wednesday the *Sun* published the material on its front page under the headline 'Spanking Judge Quits'. Whether any money changed hands in the course of the *Sun*'s dealings with the blackmailer is not known.

# Israel: drift to the right

By Clive Bradley

Israeli defence minister Yitzhak Rabin's advice to his soldiers that they use "might, power and beatings" against Palestinian demonstrators was to be taken seriously. Official Israeli policy was clearly expressed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir: "We do not deter enough. That's why these riots continue".

And in the name of deterrence, Israeli forces in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza

Strip — increased to record levels — have used ferocious measures against the population there. Typical of Israeli style was the attack on two Jerusalem mosques — al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, deeply holy places for Muslims — on a Friday, the Muslim sabbath.

The policy is known as the 'iron fist'. Rabin's advocacy of "beatings" is intended as an alternative to "shootings". But some estimates put Palestinian deaths so

far above 50; official figures put it nearer 40.

More recently, the Israeli military has adopted a lower profile. Last Friday (22 January), Israeli security forces stood and watched a huge demonstration of Palestinian Arabs that filled the streets of Jerusalem.

The repercussions in internal Israeli politics have been contradictory. The forthcoming election — scheduled for November — will be fought over the issue of the occupied territories. Peres' Labour component of the present coalition government wants an international conference to discuss the issue;

Shamir's Likud wants none of that. Rabin's tough-guy stand is in part an electoral ploy designed to show Labour isn't soft on the Arabs.

But divisions in the cabinet are growing. Peres' and Shamir's positions are clearly irreconcilable, and the divisions are likely to grow.

Israeli public opinion is moving Shamir's way. An opinion poll conducted by the American magazine *Newsweek* produced alarming results. 40% thought the rioting had been handled *too leniently* as against 7% who felt repression was too harsh. 81% agreed with the deportation of Palestinians suspected of responsibility for the riots. 29% were in favour of considering the mass 'transfer' of Arabs from the occupied territories if rioting continued.

Asked whether a possible future Arab majority in Israel (through natural birth rate) should have second class citizenship, 48% agreed. 20% would be in favour of full rights.

On the other hand, 64% felt it was 'very important' to get a settlement of the Palestinian problem, and 24% were 'more willing' to give up some occupied territory in exchange for a settlement (as against 16% 'less willing' and 56% 'no change').

Why this overall drift to the right? In part, for certain, Israeli Jews do feel threatened by hostile neighbours, and fear the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Perhaps the poll questions would give different results if linked to an overall peace settlement.

Government propaganda echoes and feeds these fears. Shamir says he won't negotiate with an organisation — the PLO — pledged to Israel's destruction. But from the government this is a spurious argument: neither the PLO nor indeed any Arab regime is in a position to fight a war with Israel; Israel is by far the most powerful state in the area. Shamir's Likud and other right-wing parties consider the West Bank (which they call 'Judea and Samaria') to be part of 'Biblical' Israel; the Kach's leader Meir Kahane claims plausibly only to be articulating the unspoken feelings of others in his calls for 'transfer' of Arabs. Other Knesset members have echoed him.

Groups who oppose the occupation have also been growing, so the basic trend is towards sharp polarisation. For the Palestinians to win their right to a state, still greater polarisation will be necessary. Recent surveys show that the far right Kach Party, which advocates 'mass transfer' of the Arabs, has most support among the most deprived Israeli Jews.

What is needed in Israel is a political alternative both to the right and to Labour, which can win these working-class Jews away from the right.

The traditional 'left' parties have little relation to these sections of Israeli society and even less to Palestinian Arabs. In fact the only way to break the logjam is to build unity between Arab and Jewish workers.



Photo: Andrew Wiard, Report.

## Boost AIDS research!

By Matthew Davies

Last Sunday, 24 January, 5,000 people marched in protest at the inadequate response of world governments to the spread of AIDS.

The protestors, marching in candlelit silence, were demanding greater action to tackle AIDS and protection for the human rights of those with the virus.

Over the past 12 months numerous governments have refused entry visas to people carrying the AIDS virus, and AIDS sufferers have been discriminated against at work and in other areas of life.

The British government in particular is accused of failing to tackle the anti-gay and often racist backlash that a consciously misinformed media has sought to stir up.

Some Tories are using the fear and prejudice created around AIDS to sweep through the anti-gay clause 28 of the new Local Government Bill.

The aim of the clause, in preventing local councils from 'promoting homosexuality' in schools could hamper attempts to adequately teach young people about AIDS prevention and 'safer sex'.

The organisers of Sunday's march drew up a charter of 23 points which calls upon world governments to "exercise compas-

sion and constructive action — including a massive effort to fight AIDS in poorer countries — rather than condemnation and repression."

Meanwhile the campaign against Clause 28 is gaining pace. Following the 12,000 strong march earlier this month, the focus has now switched to lobbying the House of Lords. Amendments have been tabled which will significantly weaken the effect of the clause, if not defeat it entirely.

A national demonstration is planned for 20 February in Manchester. It could be the largest gay rights march in British history.

If the clause does become law, then local councils should be persuaded not to implement it and trade union activists must argue support for such action amongst

their own workmates.

If it gets to that stage, most lesbians and gay men who have become involved in the campaign will feel strong enough and angry enough to break any vindictive law.

As Robin Tyler, US comedienne and lesbian mother of two lesbian twins said: "If you want to get us all, you'll have to arrest millions and millions of us, including Members of Parliament and members of the Royal Family." Who can she be thinking of?

If you want to get involved in the campaign against Clause 28 there are meetings every Wednesday in London and every week in Manchester. For details phone 01-580 9551 x227 (London) or 061-228 3554 (Manchester). Contact numbers for other areas can be obtained from the London office.

### Labour Party

## Contest the leadership!

By Eric Heffer MP

If there is a feeling at grass roots level that there should be a contest, it should be a contest for the leadership as well as the deputy leadership. It's a question of the direction of the party and the policies that it is likely to pursue.

The whole idea of the present leadership's "listening campaign", in my opinion, is trying to get people like the Chamber of Commerce and the Police involved. It's a waste of time.

The party should be listening to rank and file trade unionists and our supporters all the time. In my opinion, some people are using the exercise as an excuse to get away from basic principles.

Policy-making has been taken over by the leadership. More and more, there are going to be changes in the way conferences are organised. They are going to be more like rallies than policy-making bodies.

If we want to recapture the votes we've lost, the way to do it is by fighting on our basic principles. If

we compromise or retreat from them, we just open up the way for the merged Liberal-SDP party.

There probably will be three parties in the end. The new party will go for the Labour vote. They'll talk like radicals. The only way to win back working class support is to keep our roots with the workers, and that means keeping to socialist principles.

I don't think we should take notice of any pressure to withdraw from a contest. John Prescott agreed not to stand on the promise of some discussion at the next conference on the role of the deputy leader. But that's neither here nor there.

The real questions are our attitude towards NATO, to public ownership, to class struggle, to education, to housing, to the NHS, to the trade unions. These are the important questions — how we conduct struggles.

Whether we win or lose, there are times when we have to make a stand. We must make that stand now, or in a few years time Labour will be a totally different party — no longer socialist.

### Palestine: two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15.

# SAVE LONDON'S NHS!

HEAR HOW WE CAN WIN!  
LONDON-WIDE  
**RALLY**  
Wednesday  
**FEB 3**  
7.30pm  
The **CAMDEN CENTRE**  
Bidborough St WC1  
(Kings-X Tube)

Sponsored by London bodies of  
ASTMS, COHSE, NALGO and  
branches of NUPE

London  
HEALTH  
EMERGENCY



# The left and Zionism

**What should the socialist attitude be towards Zionism? For much of the left the answer to that question is simple: relentless hostility.**

'Anti-Zionism' is a central principle for many socialists, equal (and equivalent) to 'anti-racism'. Zionists have been banned in some college student unions. In one college, students had to pledge commitment to 'anti-Zionism' to be entitled to union membership. That Zionism is a form of racism is the official policy of the United Nations.

Many people see Israel as not only racist, but also a major bulwark — for some, *the* bulwark — of imperialism in the Third World. Zionism is an extension of, or the sharp end of, imperialism. Israel is like South Africa or even Nazi Germany. 'Zionism = Nazism' read one placard last Saturday.

## Racist

Anyone, like Socialist Organiser, who disputes this interpretation of things is denounced as a Zionist, and therefore a racist...And so it goes on.

Recent issues of both Socialist Worker and Socialist Action have carried articles on the history of Zionism in much this vein. For Socialist Action reporters Rashid Ashraf and Pam Coles, "Zionism represented a historic accommodation to anti-semitism...Its offspring, the Zionist state, today concretises the reactionary origins of Zionism in its racist laws (etc)..." Mike Simons in Socialist Worker writes: "Rather than fight anti-semitism, the Zionists accepted it as inevitable".

Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, is quoted (by SW): "In Paris I achieved a freer attitude towards anti-semitism which I began to understand and pardon"; and condemned (by SA): "Herzl approached anti-semites from Count Von Plehve, organiser of the pogroms in Russia to the Ottoman Sultan offering to rid their lands of the Jews in return for support for the Zionist project."

It is easy to read history backwards, and even easier to get carried away by your own propaganda. Marxism is an attempt to analyse the world without the distorting lens of propaganda; to understand things in all their complexity and in their totality. Such an approach leads to conclusions different from the one-sidedness of SW and SA.

The story, as told by SW and SA, can be summarised thus. There was anti-semitism in Europe. Some Jews capitulated to it and resolved to build a Jewish state in Palestine. These evil men shared the attitudes of the imperialist anti-semites and conspired with them. Likewise they were racist against the Arabs. Israel today is the fruit of their work.

There are some facts which seem to back up this story. Most of the

leaders of the Zionist movement were cynical wheeler-dealer bourgeois politicians, no better than any others of their sort. Especially in the early years of their movement, they shared the racism common in Europe towards Third World peoples. The Arabs in Palestine scarcely merited any consideration; if they were considered, most Zionists assumed that the Arabs could only gain from Jewish colonisation.

And Israel today is brutal towards the Palestinian Arabs.

There is one thing drastically wrong with the SA/SW story. It presents the whole history of the working-out of a bad idea, as a conspiracy by evil people.

But Marxists understand history differently. We ask: why did the 'bad' idea of Zionism gain mass support among Jews? What material factors brought this about? Why did 'evil' people like Herzl succeed in their 'conspiracies'? Who are the Israeli Jews today? They are not just extrapolations of the 'bad' ideas of their forefathers.

And we look at the *whole* reality of Zionism. Some Zionist leaders were evil people. One (minority) strand of Zionism was even fascist-inspired. But similar elements of chauvinism and racism can be found in all nationalist movements. If Zionism stood out among nationalist movements, it was in fact for the larger-than-usual minority within it that *opposed* the chauvinist and racist excesses.

SA and SW just take particular incidents and elements from Zionist history to fit their own story.

A good example is Herzl's visit to the Tsarist Minister of the Interior, Von Plehve. It *did* happen, and it was the first of many disreputable Zionist negotiations with anti-semites. But the readers of SA and SW would never know that Herzl's talks provoked outrage amongst Russian Zionists and that the Zionist movement nearly split over it!

Again, SW and SA tell us about the plight of the Arab peasants driven off their land and made destitute as, up to 1948, the Zionists bought up 6% of Palestine's land. They do not mention the plight of the peasants made destitute by the profit-grabbing efforts of Arab landlords on the other 94%. They tell us about the atrocity at Deir Yassin, where Zionists murdered some 250 peaceful Arab villagers, but not about the pogroms just a couple of years before in Poland where many Jews had been killed.

## Plight

They tell us about the terrible sufferings of the Palestinian Arab refugees, but not about the plight of the European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Those survivors faced pogroms in countries like Poland, but the British and US government told them to stay in those, their 'home' countries. No one in the world would welcome them except the Zionist community in Palestine.

SA and SW tell us about how over half a million Arabs were driven out of what became Israel during the 1948 war. They do not tell us about the almost equal number of Jews driven out of the Arab countries by anti-semitic persecution in the following years. They do not tell us that the 1948 war was started by the Arab League — with British-officered armies and intentions that had little to do with helping the Palestinian peasants.

They tell us about the alleged collaboration of Zionists with the Nazis during World War 2, but not about the actual collaboration of Palestinian Arab leaders with the Nazis.



Evil Zionists arrive in Haifa

None of the facts omitted by SA and SW justify the crimes of the Israeli state. But those facts do tell us that the history of Zionism is one of oppressed people trying to hold their own corner in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism and imperialism, not one of a demon let loose on an otherwise tranquil universe.

## EDITORIAL

The socialist movement has historically opposed Zionism — and similar nationalisms. Marxists argued against the Zionist project of an independent Jewish state as the solution to anti-semitism; they argued for working-class unity and the fight for socialism instead. Against the notion that anti-semitism — or any other prejudice — is unchangeable or natural, Marxists have argued that it is possible to build workers' unity to fight all oppression and discrimination.

Socialists also pointed out that Zionism was forced by the logic of its own enterprise into an alliance with the British colonial authorities who ran Palestine, and into conflict with the indigenous Arabs.

Many Zionists did argue that Gentile anti-semitism was more or less impossible to change — in the same way that radical feminists consider male sexism to be permanent.

Socialists rejected this view. But in the propaganda of SW and SA, this traditional critique of Zionist nationalism is given an extra twist. The 'acceptance' of anti-semitism is treated as an *explanation* for Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, and for its alliance with imperialism. This is a 'conspiracy' or 'evil men' view of history — like the school textbook versions which describe the past as an affair of 'good kings' and 'bad kings'.

SA comments on the 1930s: "Zionism, by counterposing the fight against Nazism to the colonisation of Palestine, sabotaged the united front that was needed to defeat Nazism". But where, exactly, was this united front? What sense does it make to blame the bourgeois Zionist leaders for not

forming a workers' united front against Hitler? It was Stalinism on the one hand and Social Democracy on the other, that sabotaged that united front. Wasn't it? Or will SA give us their critique of Trotsky's writings on the rise of fascism? No doubt they think that rather than denounce the Stalinist Communist Party, Trotsky should have denounced the Zionists instead.

Zionism's responsibility for the rise of Nazism was utterly marginal; and Zionism's growth can only be understood in terms of the *failure of the labour movement*. In the late 1920s Zionism looked like a fiasco, a hopeless fantasy. As the '30s marched on, the claims of Zionism appeared more and more to be vindicated; by 1945 they seemed, in the wake of the Holocaust, to be entirely vindicated from the point of view of many of Nazism's victims.

## Deutscher

Isaac Deutscher was later to comment that if he had spent less time opposing Zionism and more time trying to get Jews out of Europe, more lives would have been saved. It isn't necessary to accept his argument to see the force of it, or to see why so many others have shared it.

Yet the likes of SW and SA are not prepared to *understand* Zionism. Still less are they prepared to recognise the diversity of the Zionist movement. Herzl, a bourgeois Zionist, was convinced of the necessity of negotiations with whichever 'great power' might aid the Zionist cause. Ber Borochov, who called himself a 'Marxist Zionist', supported the Russian revolution (and indeed died in Russia in 1918). Some Zionists in Palestine were utterly opposed to any deals with the British authorities there.

Zionists 'collaborated' with Nazis? Many Zionists not only did not 'collaborate' — they lost their lives fighting Nazism. The Zionists who helped lead the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943 are calmly ignored by modern 'anti-Zionists'.

SA evokes the memory of the Trotskyist, Abram Leon, who died in Auschwitz, whose book "The Jewish Question" they describe (not very accurately) as "the first...systematic Marxist critique of

Zionism." Yet Leon's basic argument was that it was *impossible* to create an independent Jewish state under capitalism — hardly the same argument as today's 'anti-Zionists'.

The point to providing a historically balanced picture is not retrospectively to endorse the Zionist project, and still less to justify the actions of the Israeli state today. Zionism was a nationalist response to the murderous (and eventually genocidal) growth of European anti-semitism in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## Impulses

It was no more a 'correct' response than any other such nationalism (the 'back to Africa' movement among American blacks, for example). Zionism did not save the Jews; the establishment of Israel has not abolished anti-semitism or rendered it harmless. But it was not an evil conspiracy. It was a movement given mass support and momentum by terrible oppression and by the failures of the labour movement. Socialists must be sympathetic if not to Zionism, at least to the impulses which drove the mass of the world's oppressed Jews towards Zionism.

SA write: "There is an unbroken continuity from the earliest Zionist writings, through Zionism's criminal response to the threat of Nazism, to its present day policies towards the Palestine people". But this is demonology, rather than serious analysis.

Israel did not come about just because a handful of wicked Zionists managed to get their way — either by convincing some imperialist power or other that Israel could be an "outpost of civilisation against barbarism" or by any other devious trickery. Above all, Zionism achieved its objective because of what happened to the Jews in Europe, and because of the utter failure of the labour movement to prevent it.

The traditional Marxist critique was not wrong. The nationalist answer to the Jewish problem did lead to conflict with Arabs; as an answer it was foredoomed by the 'colonial' character the Zionist enterprise had to take. Deutscher likened what happened in Palestine to someone jumping out of a burning house who lands on a person walking past and injures them. They might pick each other up and live peacefully afterwards, or they might fight each other. In fact, the one who is to blame for it all is the person who set the house on fire.

The Israel/Palestine conflict is a bit like that. The Zionist settlers, fleeing from the fires of European anti-semitism, from the beginning behaved like settlers — mistreating their Arab neighbours. Israel was eventually founded via a war of conquest and the driving out of 500,000 or more Arabs; later more wars of conquest followed. But without even attempting to understand the rise of Zionism as more than an evil pro-imperialist plot, the realities of the conflict today can only be blurred.

What Israel has done to the Palestinians is to be condemned by socialists (though SA and SW might at least *mention* the brutalities committed by Arab regimes). The Palestinians must be supported. But we must also *understand*. It is not a question, as SA idiotically alleges, of Socialist Organiser "striv(ing) to find a progressive content within Zionism". It is a question of rejecting one-sided and unscrupulous propaganda (which is also a propaganda of hypocrisy and double standards) and trying instead to develop serious socialist politics.

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London SE15  
4NA

01-639 7965

Latest date for reports: first  
post Monday or by phone,  
Monday evening.

Editor: John O'Mahony  
Typesetting: Upstream Ltd  
(TU). 01-358 1344.

Published by Socialist  
Organiser, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.  
Printed by East West Graphics  
(TU). Registered as a  
newspaper at the Post Office.  
Signed articles do not  
necessarily reflect the view of  
Socialist Organiser.



# GRAFFITI

## Militant go for Hatton



It looks like the Militant are finally going to get round to expelling Del Boy Hatton.

Apparently he's been given several warnings by Grant and Peter Taaffe about his 'un-socialist' lifestyle. Chubby Derek's modelling assignments, personalised car number plates and general high living have been a cause of much embarrassment to the Militant and much hilarity to everyone else for some time.

But the final straw is the forthcoming publication of Hatton's memoirs 'Inside Left' in February. The appearance of Hatton's book will clash with the publication of Tony Mulhearn's and Peter Taaffe's official history of the Liverpool experience — 'Liverpool — the City that dared to fight', and the Militant aren't happy.

It is gratifying to see that Militant have finally understood what we've been saying about Degsey for the past two years.

## Romania's standing

Romania's ageing Stalinist leader, Ceausescu, is celebrating his 70th birthday in style. Earlier this week he hosted a 5,000-strong meeting in his own honour, at which he awarded himself three of the highest national honours.

Other antics of one of the world's most wacky Stalinist despots include inventing a birthday greeting from the Queen, describing him as "a

statesman of world stature with widely recognised excellence, experience and influence", and putting full page adverts in selected foreign newspapers to make up for what the Romanian government sees as the appalling lack of coverage of Romanian affairs.

Apparently these adverts are then quoted back in the Romanian press as examples of Romania's high standing internationally.

## Israeli phrasebook

Arab-Israeli conciliation is unlikely to be brought any closer by the new Israeli Army-issued Arabic phrasebook. Phrases described in the

book as "typical" include "Put your hands up", "Stand by the wall" and "I don't want to see you any more tonight. Get out of here fast".

## Castroites

Whilst we're on expulsions, Socialist Action's Groganista faction have been cast out into the wilderness. Reports have it that the Castroites have been spotted lurking around pit-entrances in the Doncaster area trying to sell copies of the phenomenally dull US Militant to bemused miners. Reports from other areas on the antics of this peculiar little group would be much appreciated. A bottle of Cuban rum and a box of Havana cigars for the best story.

## No print for Zionists?

FOR SEVEN years *Socialist Organiser* was printed by the printing company associated with the Socialist Workers' Party.

At the end of last year we were told by their manager that East End Offset would not print SO any longer. Why? He couldn't give a reason, but "the decision had been taken". He did not say by whom, but the clear implication was that 'the decision' was taken by the leadership of the SWP.

Since then SO supporters who have queried *Socialist Worker* sellers about the affair have garnered a rich crop of contradictory explanations. 'You didn't pay'. (We did). 'SO had been printed at a special discount rate and they couldn't do it any more'. (SO paid full commercial rates; in fact, our new printer is cheaper). Or: 'It's because you're Zionists'.

Most likely the SWP's decision — it was plainly a political decision — was the result of the sharpening conflict between SWPers and SO supporters in student politics, where the Middle East is the emotive issue. The SWP's banning of SO from its printshop reflects the irrationality with which the SWP approaches this question.

The SWP is notoriously shifty on its politics, picking things up and dropping them. For example, does it now or doesn't it call for troops out of Ireland? Headlines try to give the impression that nothing has changed, but read the articles!

For seven years they condemned Khomeini's Iran; now the arrival of US ships in the Gulf makes them believe Iran is 'fighting imperialism'. Go back to 1967, and they had a line

on Palestine much closer to what we say now than to what they say now.

They are not too fastidious to print the sometimes disgusting, and sometimes anti-working-class, *Private Eye*. But they make a religion out of advocating the destruction of Israel. 'Anti-Zionism' is the test of 'hard', r...r...revolutionary politics — and even of commercial relationships.

Their members in colleges harass Jewish students, demanding that they accept SWP policy for Israel or be branded as 'Zionists' and therefore racists. They have supported student union bans on Jewish Societies which will not condemn Israel. They help poison the atmosphere in which the Middle East and other questions are discussed by mindless sloganising and emotionalism.

The SWP is an unstable amalgam of syndicalism, bits of Third World populism, and pseudo anti-imperialism, all held together by belief in 'the revolutionary party', which they understand in Zinoviev's terms, as an organisational machine, rather than Lenin's, Trotsky's, or Gramsci's. But there are still some serious people in the SWP.

They should take a look at where their organisation now is. The 'ban' on SO is petty: after all, there are other printers. The SWP doesn't have state power.

Yet it is a product of the — perhaps accelerating — descent of the SWP down the vicious spiral of irrationalism that ravages so much of the left.

John O'Mahony

# The snoops who infested the left

Do you like shoddy thrillers? Try this story, then.

The cast of characters: A very well-known actress and film star, Vanessa Redgrave. Her brother, a less well-known actor, Corin Redgrave. Colonel Gaddafi, military dictator of Libya. Various unnamed members of the Libyan intelligence service. The Labour leader of the Greater London Council, later to be an MP, Ken Livingstone. Ted Knight, Labour leader of Lambeth Council. Gerry Healy, long-time leader of a quasi-religious sect known as the WRP and lying calling itself a Trotskyist organisation which deals in working-class politics. Steven Miller, journalist and a member of the WRP Central Committee.

And many others — photographers, accountants, left-wingers in the labour movement, rank and file members of Healy's party.

The story is roughly as follows. Mr Healy's organisation was the biggest organisation calling itself Trotskyist in Britain for over two decades, until the early '70s. In the '50s and early '60s, it was not nearly as crazy politically as it later became, but it was always run like a mini-police-state.

No dissent was tolerated. There was no discussion. From about 1960 the members were mainly young people who were subjected to immense moral pressure and, if that failed, sometimes physical violence. The organisation became a sort of cross between the Moonies and the Scientologists, spouting an incoherent pseudo-Marxist gobbledegook. Its politics zig-zagged wildly.

As it became crazier, denouncing almost everyone who disagreed with it as 'police agents' or spies, the organisation was overtaken by other groups on the left, in the first place the SWP. By the mid-'70s its most important base was in the theatre. It recruited or influenced a large number of well-known players, directors, and managers.

It had started a daily newspaper in 1969, and had all the trappings of a mass party, though it never had a membership of more than a few thousand. By the late '70s it had perhaps no more than 500 members. But it continued in the old lavish style. How?

It was possible because in 1975-6 Gerry Healy had sold the organisation to the Libyan government and secret service. Over the subsequent years he received an immense amount of money, at least a million pounds, probably more. He also put the organisation to doing money-spinning jobs for the vile tyrants who run Iraq, and entered into lucrative relations with other Arab states.

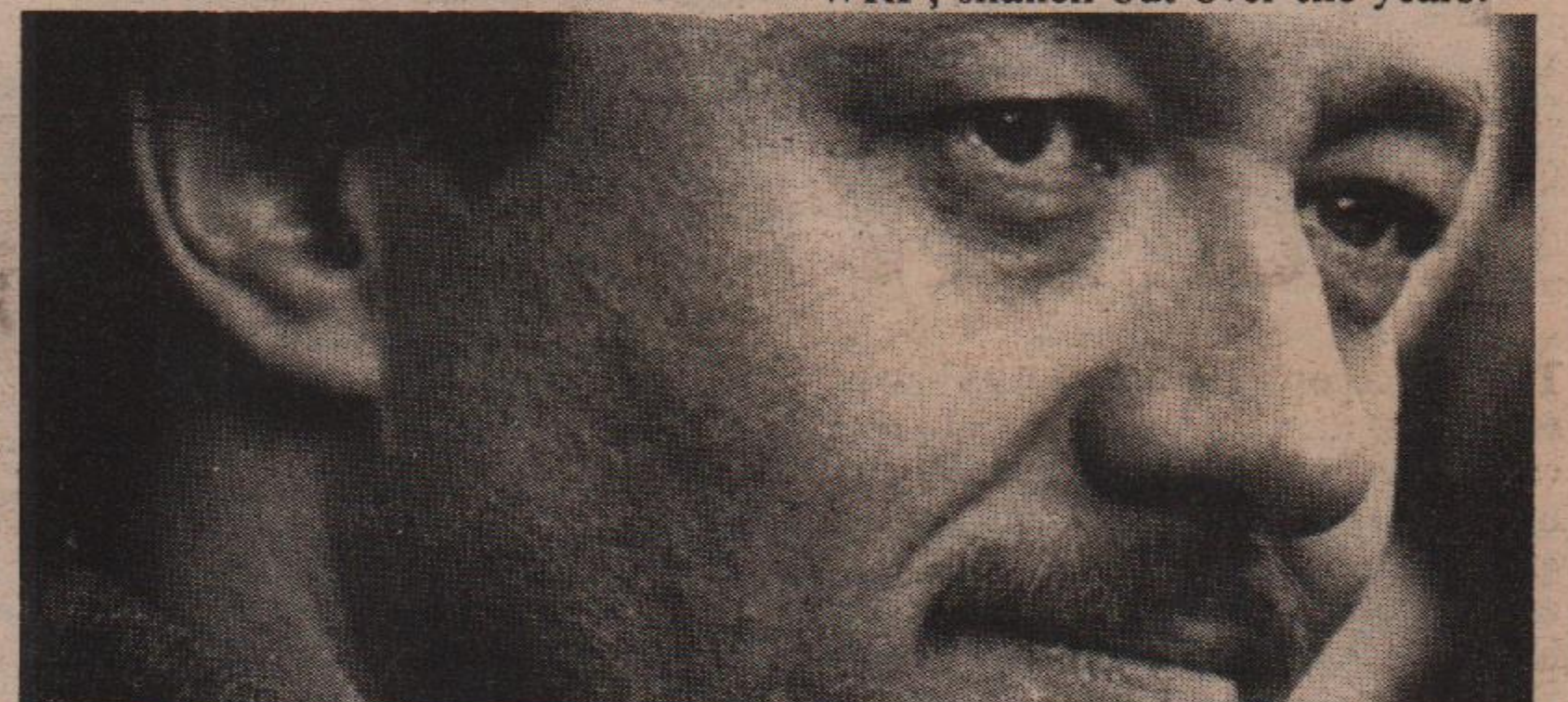
The WRP's press, which in the early '70s had (wrongly) denounced Gaddafi as a 'fascist', now glorified Gaddafi and his regime. It praised Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein.

And more: Healy offered the information-getting capacities of his organisation, and of the reporters and photographers of its

## Sean Matgamna discusses the latest revelations about Gerry Healy's 'WRP'

paper *Newsline*, to his employers. In this capacity the WRP spied on and photographed Libyans, Iraqis, and other Arabs in this country, and sent reports about them back home.

Some of those spied on no doubt paid dearly for it. *Newsline* publicly justified the execution of 20 Iraqi leftists for the 'crime' of organising politically in the army: one of them had five months previously brought greetings to a WRP conference! The WRP's leading committee decided with one dissenting vote to



Ken Livingstone kissed the Queen's hand when she opened the Thames Barrier; his backer and friend Gerry Healey kissed Gaddafi's backside.

approve the executions.

Mr Healy provided another service for his paymasters. His formal agreement with the Libyans obliged him (and his organisation) to provide information of prominent 'Zionists' in business, entertainment, journalism and the arts. Here 'Zionist' meant Jew (and readers of the denunciations of 'Zionism' in Healy's press could not but be aware of it). Healy and his organisation spied on Jews for Gaddafi.

Healy's organisation filled the air around them as far as they could reach with 'anti-Zionist' propaganda. The film stars' publicity value was high and was used as part of the operation. The good and important

## Gaddafi's foreign legion

What we wrote in 1981

... The WRP is no laughing matter. It is a pseudo-Marxist gobbledegook-spouting cross between the Moonies, the Scientologists, and the Jones Cult which committed mass suicide in the Guyana jungle three years ago.

It recruits and exploits mainly raw, inexperienced, politically, socially and psychologically defenceless young people. It employs psychological terror and physical violence against its own members (and occasionally against others).

It is very widely believed to be in receipt of subsidies from one or more Arab governments, from Gaddafi's Libya at least. Of course there is no public proof of this. But for years, during which its membership has not been more than four or five hundred, it has published a very glossy daily newspaper, *Newsline*, which has survived despite having only a tiny circulation.

Its relationship to Gaddafi was and is that of a mercenary Hollywood

cause of the Palestinians was made part of the circus, used by the WRP as cynically as by their Arab bourgeois paymasters.

But the WRP continued to decline and become more and more cut off from the labour movement. By about 1980 it was an irrelevant side-show.

Meanwhile, Labour's defeat in the 1979 election had led the left wing to go on the offensive in the Labour Party. Tony Benn challenged the Labour Establishment and got the enthusiastic support of the rank and file, 83% of whom voted Benn for deputy leader. At the same time, the Labour left won control of a number of local councils — in the first place Lambeth. This Labour left contained a heavy sprinkling of ex-members of the WRP, shaken out over the years.

The question arose: how would Labour operate in local government under the newly-elected Tory administration? The slump which was to destroy millions of jobs and dampen working-class militancy had only just started. The labour movement plainly had the strength to make the Tories' anti-working-class programme impossible, by direct action.

But the Labour and trade union leaders were not willing to mount a concerted challenge to the Tories. So in 1979-81 the ball was at the foot of the local government left.

Would they use local government as a springboard for struggle, and refuse to carry through Tory cuts —

publicity-agent to his client... It also supports and shamelessly justifies the widespread murder of Communist Party members by the Hussein dictatorship in Iraq.

It supports the repression of women, gays and socialist activists by Khomeini of Iran, whose reactionary Muslim regime it also supports.

Its vehement campaign against Israel and much-publicised support for the Palestinians has nothing in common with working-class politics when it is coupled with crawling, uncritical, cap-in-hand support for the Arab bourgeois regimes who have in the past betrayed the Palestinian masses (and will in the future)...

Today the WRP — the sycophant of Gaddafi and other bloody anti-working-class dictators — is no longer a part of the labour movement. Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter, Michael Banda, etc. long ago betrayed Trotskyism, socialism and the working class itself. (And, as a matter of fact, they betrayed themselves too. But that's their business).



# Pay the nurses!

The growing militancy of nurses and other hospital workers is not just over a reduction of night payments, or the lack of facilities which gets worse by the week.

Although that is enough, our protest is more to do with continuous low wages over years, and the growing work load which is pushed upon nurses' shoulders. Even the Royal College of Nursing admits that in nearly a quarter of wards in London staffing levels are below official guideline minimums. Student nurses who work a full working week at 38 hours get less than £60 a week. London nurses with London-weighting get £70 a week.

With this miserable pay we're supposed to pay our rent, which can average £35 in London, and then survive on the rest.

After a month of working

weekends and anti-social hours we get just around £30 extra before tax.

Trained nurses, after 2-3 years of training are paid £6,500 a year. The pay of about two in every five nurses is less than the Low Pay Unit's poverty pay threshold. Compare this to the police who as soon as they start are on over £7,000.

Nurses in London get an allowance of £920 a year, while the police are on up to £3,700. It shows whose side this Tory government is on.

When fighting for a decent wage, decent conditions and decent health care, we must be careful we don't let management create divisions between us.

Already the proposed reduced night payments could set up nurse against nurse. We must be united in our action, with all health workers coming together and taking action for a decent wage and a decent health service for all.

## Tories starve the NHS

There is a constant barrage of Tory reports of impressively large and increasing sums of money being spent on the NHS. These figures are a greater tribute to the abilities of creative accountancy than to the illusory expansion of the NHS.

Figures are often quoted in simple cash terms, with no allowance for inflation. When inflation is allowed for, it is at the general rate of inflation in the economy — although it is admitted that the goods and services used by the NHS have increased in price at a rate well ahead of general inflation.

However, in 1981, government White Papers abandoned the use of real-terms expenditure figures following the Chancellor's announcement in the 1981 budget that from then on expenditure was to be planned in cash terms. Perhaps the fact that corrected expenditure (referred to as cost in 'input volume' terms) fell in 1984-5 explains why the government declared in 1985 that input volume is not "a sensible measure of expenditure in real terms".

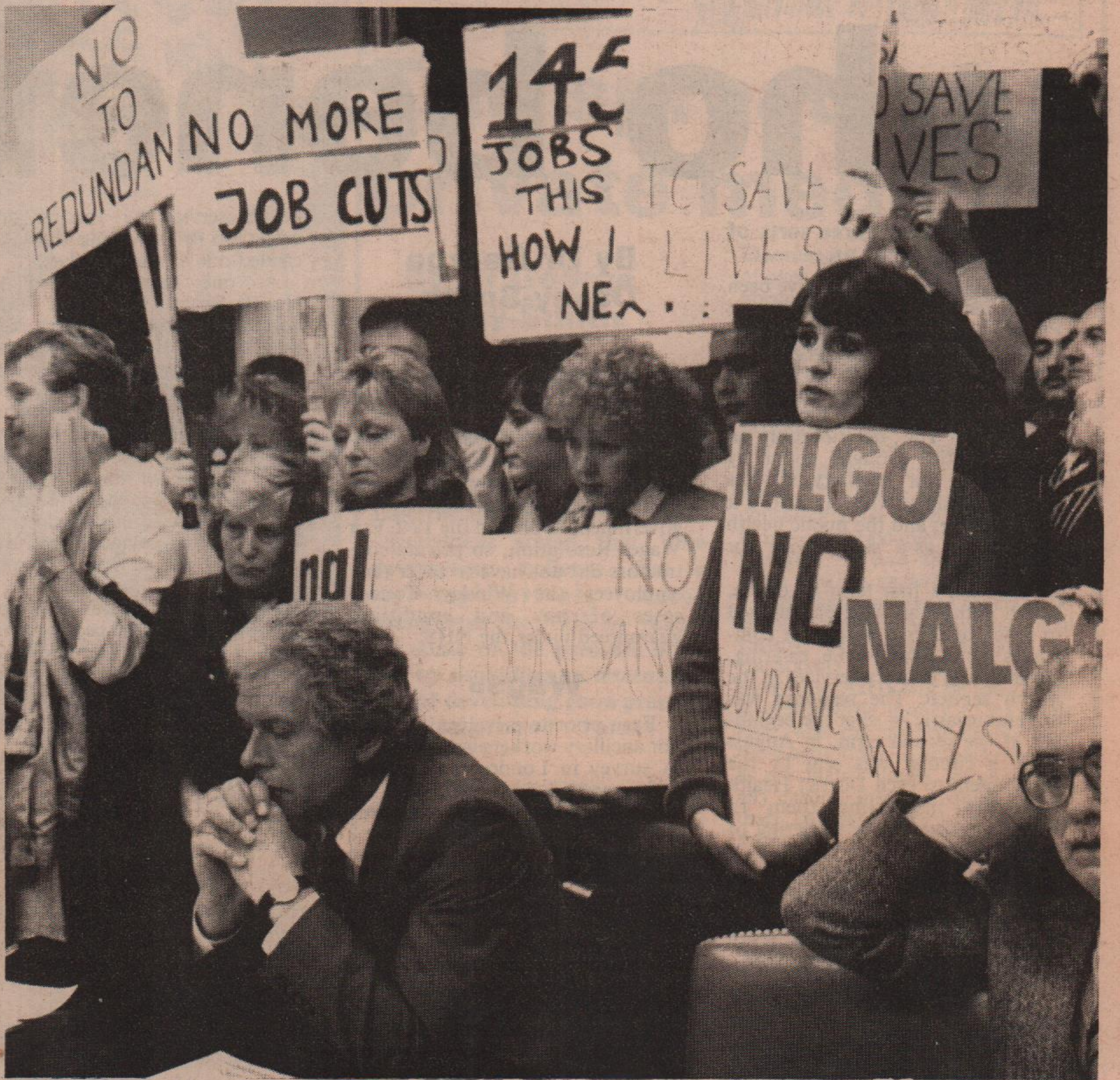
The gross NHS spending figures quoted include income from NHS land and property sales, and from charges to patients. Clearly, like North Sea Oil, flogging off NHS

land can only be a short-term measure — unless privatisation plans start advancing even faster than at present! If proceeds from land and property sales are removed, there has been a decline in capital spending on hospital and community health services since late 1981.

Any credence to a growth in NHS expenditure under the Tories rests with change between 1979 and 1981: what is not stated is that increases seen then were because of the Clegg pay awards, won by strike action during the 1978-9 winter of discontent from the previous Labour government, and because the working week for some hospital workers had to be reduced to be in line with an EEC order.

Increased demands upon the NHS because of the increasing number of people aged over 75, because of technological advance producing new treatments and therapies, and because of new health problems, such as AIDS, are not taken into account by expenditure figures.

The official DHSS estimates of increasing needs due to these factors — 1.2% to 1.5% — are generally considered too low. Similarly no account is made of the increasing needs discussed earlier due to unemployment, poverty and



Health workers occupy meeting of Manchester Health Authority demanding no cuts and no redundancies. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

poor housing. What is clear is that current projected increased expenditure of 0.9% for 1988-90, which includes revenue from land and property sales, is, in terms of what will happen to the health service, a huge cut.

Health authorities have already been faced with losing money because of the pre-election pay awards to nurses which have not been met from central funds, and with increases in funding well below the NHS prices inflation rate. Three-quarters of the District Health Authorities expect to overspend next year, which will mean more hospital closures, even worse service to patients and even worse pay and conditions for staff.

Nor will the occasional publicity stunt handouts suffice — what is needed is a comprehensive overhaul of the funding system demonstrating a true commitment to the NHS. A useful start in this

direction would be to get rid of supposed "health" ministers whose main interest is in doctoring the figures, not doctoring the sick.

Finally, in light of all the claims that resources spent on the NHS are sky-rocketing and needs are potentially infinite, it is worth looking at how British health expenditure compares to other countries.

It is well known that NHS expenditure as a percentage of gross national product (GNP) is about half of that in the USA. Compared to other EEC countries UK expenditure is low — only Greece and Portugal, the two poorest members of the EEC — spend less. The UK spends about 6% of its GNP on health, France 8.5%, and West Germany 9.5%. Since 1983 Greece has begun to introduce a national health system and is probably overtaking the UK.

In real terms, Britain spends about \$500 per person per year on

health, France spends \$850 and West Germany \$1,000. Clearly the NHS is cheap, and the reasons aren't hard to find. Contrary to government propaganda, the NHS isn't overrun by bureaucracy and administration costs — it is much more costly to collect private health insurance and fees for services done as in France and West Germany, than to collect money along with other government taxes.

Growth of the British service is also low; we are bottom of the European ladder for percentage increase in expenditure on the health services since 1960. In direct contrast to this we are top of the European league table for expenditure on defence. Clearly to this government, bombs are more important than health care.

It is not surprising that other countries are moving towards more state involvement in health care — as is happening in Canada, Australia, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands, amongst others. Meanwhile the British government is attempting to move in the opposite direction — but the civil servants sent to report on the health systems in other countries return unimpressed by the arguments to introduce more private health care.

The government is clearly blinkered by its commitment to the supposedly "free" market, something which would be very expensive for users of health services.

The government has got to be shown that users of, and workers within, the health service consider a free, comprehensive service more important than a few more pence off the rate of income tax — which would mainly benefit the already wealthy, whose dependency on the NHS is least.

## The case for emergency cover

The health service unions' policy is for emergency cover during all strikes. Sometimes militants get impatient with this policy. But the policy is right.

The aim of strikes is to hit the NHS management and the government, not patients. If, through exasperation or through bravado, strikers do not organise emergency cover, then that has bad effects in one of two ways.

Usually emergency cover is provided by non-unionists, and the

strikers do not make any serious effort to picket them out. This means a licence for scabbing.

If a policy of no emergency cover were enforced seriously, then patients would suffer seriously or die. Don't think that this would somehow stir the government's conscience and make it give in. NHS workers care much more about patients than the government does. If patients suffered seriously or died because of an NHS strike, it would shock and demoralise the strikers, and ruin the strike. The media

would seize on the chance to denounce the strikers.

Emergency cover is difficult to organise under trade union control. But it is possible, at least for short periods. Sometimes management is obstructive. But then the union should do all it can to show that it is willing to organise emergency cover, and the obstacle is management.

Does emergency cover make a strike weaker? Not in real terms, because a strike without emergency cover either assumes a lot of scabb-

ing, or would ruin itself. What makes strikes in the NHS weaker than strikes in some other sectors is that they do not hit profits, and removing emergency cover does nothing to get round that problem.

The only way round it is for other workers who do produce profits to strike in solidarity with the health workers. That is possible. Dockers, miners and other workers have struck to support NHS disputes. But proper organisation of emergency cover is essential if that solidarity is to be won.



# Privatisation: who benefits?

There have been three sorts of privatisation in health.

NHS ancillary services have been contracted out to the private sector. Private health insurance and private health care have been promoted. And charges for NHS services to patients have been increased.

These three strands have been connected. The deterioration in NHS facilities brought about by contracting out ancillary services encourages those who can afford it to go private, and the public health sector is left as a 'sink service' for the poor.

In Thatcher's first term of office, health authorities were encouraged to solicit tenders from private companies for ancillary — i.e. catering, cleaning and laundry services in the health service. The response was not enthusiastic — so at the beginning of the second term, in August 1983, a circular was sent by the government to each District Health Authority instructing them to return a timetable for tendering of these services by April 1984.

The government was urged to initiate this form of privatisation by the right-wing pressure group Aims for Industry and the Adam Smith Institute. However, they didn't need much persuading.

At least 30 Tory MPs either had shares in or were directors or consultants for the firms involved. Crothalls, for example, the company with the most ex-NHS contracts, pay two Tory MPs as consultants — Michael Forsyth and Sir Anthony Grant — and are part of

By Dr George Davey-Smith

the Pritchard Services Group who gave £10,000 to the Conservative Party in 1982-83.

The effects on the pay and conditions of hospital ancillary workers, and on services provided for patients, have been devastating. The government abolished the 1946 Fair Wages Resolution, so private contractors did not have to offer their employees the Whitley Council rates of pay and conditions guaranteed under the NHS.

## Wages

Even prior to privatisation wages for ancillary workers were very low. A survey in London published in 1980 revealed that nearly four out of five ancillary workers were born overseas.

The degree of unionisation is often low. Full-time workers on NHS pay grades 1-3 earned £72-75 per week in 1985-6, and four-fifths of female ancillary workers earn less than the supplementary benefit level — the 'official' poverty level.

Even before contracting out the situation was bad. However, to make contracts attractive to private firms, health authorities were told not to include minimum wages and conditions clauses in the contracts. Private contractors could only undercut the current costs to the

health service by forcing down wages or by increasing the labour carried out by each worker.

As one commentator in the Health Service Manpower Review noted: "The margin of cost reduction is the contractor's ability to increase the intensity of labour and cut real wages".

In the civil service, where three-quarters of cleaners' jobs have been contracted out, the result has been 10p-35p per hour wage cuts on the already low 1986 rate of £1.89 per hour. Pay is also effectively cut by loss of bonus payments and overtime, and by an increase in the workload.

Private firms prefer to employ part-time workers since they are not entitled to sick pay or holiday pay, pensions or maternity allowances. Up to three-quarters of contract cleaners are currently women employed part-time.

The firms were helped in their quest to cut pay and conditions by the 1979, 1980 and 1985 Employment Acts, which have progressively reduced rights against unfair dismissal, so that now full-time workers have to be employed for two years before they gain such rights.

## Turnover

Many part-time workers fail to qualify for any rights at all. A rapid turn-over of workers ensures that few will ever get employment protection — for example in Croydon 87 people passed through the 25 jobs in a Crothall's cleaning contract in the first five months it was running.

Contractors claim they can do the job of the NHS units with less staff. At Leeds General Infirmary Hospital, Hygiene Services (director of subsidiary, Tory MP Marcus Fox), cut the staff by over a half; at Milton Keynes, Exclusive Health Care Services (donations by parent company to Conservative Party in 1982-3 — £5,164) cut the staff by over a third.

Of course the service simply gets worse, or is done by someone else.

Nurses now spend over 20% of their time on catering and domestic duties, according to a National Audit Office report.

Behind the forcing down of pay and conditions lies an attack on the ancillary workers' unions. A desire to reduce the power of the public sector unions lay behind the privatisation plans — indeed in 1982 the Institute of Directors pointed to the contracting-out of services as "the most obvious and most desirable" way to smash the unions.

Breaking up ancillary functions into many small units working for different companies, with no unified pay or conditions agreements, greatly reduces the ability of workers to organise together to protect themselves. At the level of individual contracts the firms have been quick to oblige as well.

When Exclusive won a contract with Medway Health Authority, they refused to employ union stewards — and cut pay and conditions for all workers. At High Royds Hospital, Leeds, union

recognition was won only after a strike; at many places there is now simply no union recognition.

In the most notorious case, at Barking Hospital, Crothall's refused to negotiate with the unions, then cut total working hours by 40%, cut holidays by 1-1½ weeks per year and abolished sick pay entitlement totally.

It is not surprising that the level of services to the patients has declined dramatically. There are reports from all over the country of dirty and unhygienic hospitals — dangerous to patients and staff alike — of dreadful catering and unclean linen. In some places operations have been cancelled because of filthy operating theatres.

In addition to these obvious effects, the social contract between ancillary staff and patients is removed. At some hospitals, ancillary staff work with medical staff in rehabilitation and therapy programmes for patients which involve domestic tasks.

For many patients, simply being able to talk to someone is important, but as one former ancillary worker wrote to the Guardian "we were explicitly instructed by the management not to talk to the patients in the firm's time. So that cheering up sick and depressed people even for a couple of minutes was disapprovingly categorised as wasting time".

Ironically the official objective of contracting out — the saving of money for the NHS — has hardly occurred. The House of Commons Social Services Committee reported that in 1985 savings of £9.4 million had been made, and since there was a VAT refund of £27 million to the private firms "the savings were hardly a startling success". Since then savings have apparently been greater, but these are simply calculated by the NHS's bills. If the other costs are added — redundancy pay, unemployment benefit, rate rebates, and the hidden costs of increased unemployment, it is unlikely that any savings have ever been made.

A survey of approximately half of the country's District Health Authorities in 1985 found that nearly 3,000 workers had been made redundant. "The estimated saving for each employee made redundant was £3,400; the net cost to the public through loss of tax and social security benefits was £7,000", it reported.

This bears out the fact that the prime motivation for privatisation is ideological — an overbearing faith in the market, and a desire to break the unions. Indeed the government ordered Cornwall Health Authority to offer a contract to a private firm even though the in-house service would have been £47,000 cheaper.

So the NHS has not done well out of contracting-out, but some firms — and, of course, the Tory MPs who are directors or whom they pay as consultants and the Conservative Party to which they give money — have done. For health service workers and their patients the results have been a disaster and are one of the reasons why a massive struggle to defend the NHS for its employees and users is now developing.

## Safe in their hands?

On 22 January the beleaguered Social Services Secretary John Moore unleashed the ritual denunciation of the 'deplorable' striking nurses, then went on to claim that "Our health record is good. We have provided more money. More patients are being treated."

This echoes the claims made by Mrs Thatcher during last year's election campaign, and repeated ad nauseam since, that the NHS is expanding under the Tories and, moreover, she has the statistics to prove it.

What are we to make of this? It is obvious to anyone using or working in the health service that it is in a terminal crisis. Everyone from the respectable old men who head the Royal Colleges of Medicine and Surgery, to the person with a chronic kidney or hip condition falling off the end of an ever-expanding NHS waiting list, can see this. Yet the government appear to think we are getting more of everything.

The Tories make a great play about the potentially infinite demand for health care. While the notion of insatiable demand is nonsense — do you have an insatiable demand to

go to hospital or take medicine? — need for health care is increasing — and often this increase is caused by Tory policies in other areas.

When established, the NHS was intended to be one arm of a comprehensive welfare service guaranteeing decent housing, schooling and pension rights, together with full employment.

All of these have been under attack from the Tories. Unemployment, poverty, lead to poor health and hence the need for health care. The increasing demands, then, reflect the government's attempts to use the NHS to mop up the results of its disastrous and inhumane policies in other areas.

There is an increasing percentage of the population aged 75 and over — and this trend will continue until the turn of the century. The elderly make greater use of the health service because of greater risk of sickness, and this is exacerbated by social policies which leave many of the elderly in poverty and isolation.

There are, then, real increasing needs within the NHS — and these should be taken into account when considering the spurious claims that the NHS is ever expanding and improving — but these increasing needs are generated in part by the Tory drive to make the rich even richer and the poor even poorer.



Before the stock market crash, shareholders were making profits at a rate roughly double the total NHS budget.

Researchers have estimated that for every 100,000 people who lose their jobs, deaths increase by 5,000, and mental hospital admissions by 6,000. A separate survey found that workers made redundant and their families had to visit a hospital or doctor 20% more often after they lost their jobs.

One hospital patient in four is there partly or wholly because of alcohol. Heavy drinking, in turn, is worst among the homeless, the unemployed, and the poor.

The Trident missile programme will cost as much as 500 new hospitals. The EH101 helicopter project comes to as much as the total existing hospital-building programme plus the cost of electrifying all main-line railways.

The Tories boast that they have increased spending on the NHS. But cash for hospitals and community health increased only 0.5% a year from





Photo Stefano Cagnoni

**1980-1 to 1985-6.** The minimum necessary increase to keep pace with an ageing population and new medical techniques which mean that patients live longer (expensively) rather than dying quickly (and cheaply) is 1.5 or 2% a year.

The Conservative Party and allied organisations are £1 million better off as a result of donations from NHS contractors.

According to a report prepared by the Joint NHS Privatisation Research Unit, 10 companies which have won NHS contracts since the privatisation drive in 1983, have been 'generous contributors'.

One of the largest contributions came from the cleaning and catering firm, Spinneys, which contributed almost £370,000. The company has a reported 46 per cent of private NHS catering.

Last year, a leading surgeon estimated that 5,000 people a year were dying needlessly because of cuts, especially in ambulance and casualty services.

Since the Tories took office in 1979, prescription charges have risen from 20p to £2.40. Now the Tories talk about charging patients for stays in hospital, and they will make us pay for eye and teeth check-ups.

**161 NHS hospitals have closed since 1979, and 78 new private hospitals have opened. Over 90% of the population is totally reliant on the NHS.**

The Tories claim that waiting lists have fallen. But they have fiddled the figures. Since 1979 day cases have been removed from the total, and there has been a drive to weed out names on the waiting list of people who have died, gone private in desperation or moved.

Support staff in the NHS are badly paid, too. Secretaries get between £4,900 and £6,500 a year, and in London hospitals over half the secretaries are agency staff. In the laboratories, graduates start at £5,300 and go up to less than £9,000. Pharmacists get £5,000 to £7,000 less in the

**NHS than in high street pharmacies. Qualified accountants get £5,000 to £10,000 less in the NHS than in the private sector.**

In a recent survey, 38% of low-income men, and 33% of low-income women, said they were in poor health — as against 17% of high-income men and 13% of high-income women.

**Up until 1965, the US had almost no government-provided health insurance. You got health care if you could pay, you didn't if you couldn't, and that was that.**

Since then, the Medicare programme has improved things a bit. But this is how it was in 1965:

\*The US spent far more on health care than any other nation.

\*The average expectation of life for US men was lower than in Bulgaria.

\*Infant mortality for black children was 42 per 1000 — around the same as Thailand or Paraguay today.

That's what the free market means in health.



## The spread of private medicine

By Dr George Davey-Smith

The Tories' enthusiastic championing of private health care reflects their perception of the NHS as the last bastion of the welfarism they so despise. In 1986 the Conservative Research Department stated that "the government believes that a thriving private sector strengthens the NHS by relieving some of the pressure on it and by providing an alternative way of developing good practice and improved forms of treatment."

It is not surprising that the number of private hospitals increased from 150 in 1979 to 199 in 1985, with the number of private beds increasing from 6½ thousand to over ten thousand. This increase disguises the fact that the big increase has been in private health care provided by 'for-profit' organisations. In 1979 three-quarters of private beds in the UK were in private hospitals run by charities or religious groups, but now over half of the private beds are in hospitals run by groups such as American Medical International, Humana and BUPA.

These hospitals are concentrated in the affluent South of England. Most of the work they do is funded by private medical insurance, which now covers nearly 10% of the population — a doubling since 1979. Much of the increase occurred because of company schemes, organised by employers, sometimes in collaboration with trade unions. Company schemes often end at retirement when health care becomes most needed and used.

Like private hospitals, private medical insurance is concentrated in the South, and private insurance is largely the domain of the rich — only 1% of semi-skilled and unskilled workers are covered.

Private medicine is a parasite on the NHS. Equipment and supplies are often "borrowed" from the NHS. Patients who have been seen at private clinics often mysteriously get admitted under NHS care ahead of people on waiting lists. Furthermore, even when the NHS attempts to collect fees from the private sector the bills are left unpaid: just one District Health Authority,



Bloomsbury, had uncollected debts of over £1 million in 1986. Most importantly, the private sector is run by doctors and nurses who were trained in the NHS. The private sector caters mainly for profitable, non-urgent work — with one in four hip replacements being done privately, and a considerable proportion of non-urgent hysterectomies and varicose vein operations. This gives an incentive for consultants to keep waiting lists long — more people will then come privately — and there are cases when this has definitely happened.

Naturally, insurance schemes exclude expensive conditions: renal failure (requiring dialysis or transplant) is an example and it is likely that AIDS will be too. There is clearly little money to be made here, and the insured people with these conditions — and others, such as psychiatric illness, pregnancy or any chronic disease requiring more than 180 days care in a year are shipped off to the NHS.

The government has suggested that the spare capacity in the private sector should be used to reduce waiting lists for non-urgent operations. However, when Bath Health Authority did just this the cost was greater than treatment under the NHS.

Clearly, contrary to the Conservative Research Department views, private medicine weakens rather than strengthens the NHS. It offers additional care to those who need it least — the wealthy, who experience less ill-health than the poor, and are in a better position to get optimum NHS treatment if they want it. The government will continue to encourage the spread of private medicine.

The 1986 Green Paper on primary care has suggested ways in which general practice could be partially privatised. More ominously, recently 'respectable' groups such as the Institute of Health Service Management and even the usually progressive Kings Fund for Hospital Research have produced reports on the commercial funding of the health service — previously the domain of loony right wing groups like the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute for Policy Studies.

John Moore has recently suggested extending the tax relief on private health insurance. One effect of the worsening conditions within the NHS may be to scare more people into taking out private health insurance. However, as shown above the private sector is dependent upon the NHS: ultimately private medical insurance just gives an illusion of independence from the health service. Private health care takes away from the NHS whilst giving nothing. It adds further to the inequalities between the rich and poor, and the only people who really benefit from it are those who get a share of the profits.

One way in which the TUC could show its commitment to the NHS would be by opposing any deals between unions and medical insurance agencies. Labour should be committed to abolishing private medicine altogether, not merely to withdrawing active support from it.



# Defend the NHS

## Management's friends

150 years ago there were no nurses as we know them today. There were no properly organised hospitals.

Nursing as a job was carried out in workhouses by the inmates. The rich were always nursed at home, and the few hospitals around were largely the resort of poor people.

As doctors began to rationalise treatments, hospitals expanded. Florence Nightingale started nurse training schools. Nursing came to be seen as a suitable occupation for young ladies from wealthy backgrounds. In 1916 the newly formed Royal College of Nursing (RCN) finally won a register of trained nurses.

The RCN's articles of association specifically prevented the college from imposing on its members or supporting with its funds 'any regulation which, if an object of the College, would make it a Trade Union'.

The real object of the RCN at this time was to become the controlling body of nursing. It was never meant to be a body that would campaign for higher pay and better conditions at work.

But instead the General Nursing Council (GNC) was set up (and this body still exists today) to keep the register of trained nurses.

The RCN went on to develop as an independent professional organisation. More middle class nurses were being recruited. Unlike the ladies of the previous generation of nurses they wanted proper pay.

In 1919 the RCN published 'The Nurses' Charter', calling for a 48 hour week and better pay.

In 1926 however, the Labour Party declared that the only way that nurses could advance their pay and conditions was to be organised into Trades Unions. So started the battle for nurses to be organised.

Some joined the RCN, and others Trade Unions. Even today about a third don't join anything at all.

The RCN maintained its elitist, protectionist, non-militant stand. In 1939, the Athlone Committee met to discuss nursing conditions and the RCN recommended **AGAINST high salaries to student nurses on the grounds that this would attract unsuitable applicants.**

Although that was 40 years ago, and things have moved on among the hierarchy of the RCN this attitude still lingers on.

They still refuse to recognise the necessity for industrial action, despite the groundswell of opinion that way amongst rank and file RCN members.



Photo: John Smith (Profile)

Management, Nursing officers and the like, are usually the shop stewards of the RCN.

The RCN stewards (although some are very good) are usually hand in glove with senior management — being 'professionals' themselves, they often provide very ineffectual stewarding and representation.

The 'No Strike' clause is seen as almost a type of religious commitment — frequently it is called a no strike vow in RCN circulars.

There are many reasons for the reluctance of RCN members to strike. Popular myth is that it would harm patients. However, all nurses must recognise the fact that low wages and poor conditions of work harm patients more, and the RCN is guilty, not only of depressing wages, but of allowing nurses to be exploited in hospitals with appalling conditions.

In particular the RCN has never conducted a real campaign against the enforcement of night duty rotas on student nurses. Although training only stipulates 3 months of night duty to be necessary for registration, all British hospitals force student nurses to work 9 months, using them as cheap labour.

The role of the RCN in the present disputes has been appalling. The Daily Mirror has stated the nurses' case more boldly than the RCN. Indeed RCN officials often seem to be doing the Tories job for them, arguing that striking will only serve to harm patients.

Many nurses are voting with their feet and leaving the RCN to join COHSE and NUPE. Nurses know they cannot carry on being selfless 'Angels' on starvation pay and working in ever more stressful conditions. Whatever the RCN leadership would like us to believe, nurses want to fight back

## 'Christmas was diabolical'

**Ian Morton, Claire Newby, Mandy Sharp and Michael Ridge, nurses and members of COHSE at Maudsley Hospital in South London, spoke to Cathy Nugent about their plans to strike on 2 February.**

**IAN:** Here the issue is very much staffing levels. There has been a deterioration over the past 18 months in the numbers of nurses on the wards because of an increasing inability to recruit. Since the autumn people have been doing masses of overtime, wards haven't been properly covered, students haven't been supervised.

Christmas was diabolical. The whole hospital was terribly unsafe. People were very angry, wanting to know what the union was going to do.

And then the Manchester strike happened. After that we called an emergency executive meeting. We decided to have a 24 hour strike on 2 February, with emergency cover. At that point we weren't sure of anybody else doing it.

By the time we knew that other hospitals would strike on 3 February, we had already agreed on 2 February here. What I think is important now is to organise something London wide or nationwide, but things have happened so fast that I don't think it was feasible anyway.

I've been to one London co-ordinating meeting. At that meeting it was agreed that one of the issues we ought to be pushing on was London weighting. We get the lowest London weighting of virtually any group going, half of what local authority workers get and less than a third of what the police get. There are masses of nurses leaving the capital simply because they can't afford to live here.

**MANDY:** London Health Emergency and 'Radical Nurse' held a big joint meeting where they formed a sub-committee which a few of us go along to. They were talking of having a national march and rally on 19 April for all health workers

**CLAIRE:** We are going to write to COHSE and some nurses in NUPE were going to write to NUPE, hoping to get the General Secretaries of both unions down to the rally on the 3rd and to start trying to co-ordinate things.

Until other industries back us, I don't think health workers going on strike for a day will make Thatcher change her mind. But hopefully this is a precursor for further action. We need a national strike with support from other workers and hopefully this sort of action will start people thinking along those lines.

**MICHAEL:** The major issue is the future shape of the NHS, how it should be funded, and the fact that nurses and health service workers have been exploited in order to maintain what has been a very economic service. Nurses are forcing the issue of funding, forcing the government to fund the NHS adequately, and they are forcing them by taking strike action.

The RCN say that striking will damage the NHS. But nurses in other unions, NUPE, COHSE are saying that this isn't true. Nurses should become more radical and take control — not only through strike action but if necessary when there are hospital closures, through occupation and other forms of action.

**IAN:** At this hospital we have got fairly strong links with other groups apart from COHSE, especially the junior doctors. We had lots of active co-operation with them during the cuts campaign of 1986. We work with other unions through the staff side of the Consultative Committee, but you're talking about handfuls of people.

In 1986 the doctors claimed an awful lot of credit. Because they were good at gaining access to the press they put themselves down as being a major cause of the fight against the cuts. In fact the bulk of the work was done mainly by nurses and porters. This time round it's going to be hard for the doctors to assume their traditional dominant position, or maintain the illusion of it.

I heard on the radio that NALGO are considering taking action on the 3rd. Whether NALGO here will consider taking action with us, I don't know. I'll have to see them next week.

What we're asking doctors to do is to work as nurses for the day and to maintain the emergency cover. It will be a learning experience for them, anyway! And it will free more nurses to be out on the picket lines.

Doctors have started joining COHSE. We've got about half a dozen, who we hope will be out with us.

**CLAIRE:** We'd like people to come on the day from different unions and workplaces and bring their banners.

## Steward victimised

**A persistent cause of dissatisfaction in the Health Service is victimisation of shop stewards.**

The rule books for employees in the health service are notorious — it is impossible not to break some rule, some time.

Currently there is a dispute at Hill End Hospital over the issue of victimisation. Socialist Organiser spoke to DOUG LANDMAN, the suspended deputy branch secretary of the St. Albans and district COHSE branch.

The trouble started on 8 January when St. Albans and district COHSE branch secretary Jane Barclay-Taylor was suspended from work by management for speaking to the press about the cuts in the NHS and about plans to open a non-NHS, charity-run psychiatric hostel in the region.

She pointed out that such an institution wouldn't have regular funding, obviously making life perilous

for patients and staff alike. The hostel could employ unqualified staff and union recognition and organisation could not be guaranteed. Jane's suspension notice was delivered to her at home, and then management demanded access to the COHSE office. When Doug refused them entry and then spoke to the press about the incident, he was suspended — after he had worked his shift, of course.

Doug was suspended three years ago when management attempted to make it difficult for him to attend union meetings.

Straight after Doug's suspension, nurses, porters, catering and domestics across the district went on strike against union victimisation. On Thursday 21st, there was a day of action across North West Hertfordshire District — made official by COHSE and supported by NUPE — with over 6,000 health workers coming out. Night nurses at Hill End Hospital struck for a

full week. Management used the strike as an excuse for closing two wards at Hill End, wards probably already targeted for closure.

CHOSE approached management to organise emergency cover — but were turned away, with agency nurses being used. As we go to press COHSE are balloting for a 24 hour strike on Friday 29 January. Clearly Jane and Doug will not be reinstated without concerted industrial action throughout the St. Albans district.

If this can be tied in with action in other areas — and over other issues — then union rights, conditions and pay for NHS workers could be protected — as well as ensuring that a decent health service manages to survive another four more years of Tory rule.

Donations and messages of support should be sent to St. Albans CHOSE, c/o Union Office, Hill End Hospital, St. Albans, Herts A14 0RB.

## Anger in Manchester

**By Karen Reissman, acting branch secretary, COHSE, North Manchester Hospital.**

**Hospital workers in Manchester are becoming increasingly angry with the government following statements that there is no more money for the NHS.**

There is now a general feeling that we must fight back.

Nurses are continuing to leave the RCN. At North Manchester hospital COHSE has balloted its nursing members and got 98% backing for a strike. This will probably be on 3 February to link up with London nurses.

The Joint Shop Stewards Committee has called a one-day strike and Manchester-wide demonstration for 19 February and has the support of Central and South Manchester Stewards' Committees.

Despite all these spontaneous actions the North West TUC has only called for a one hour vigil at lunchtime on 10 February to highlight the plight of the NHS and we have heard nothing from the TUC, NUPE or COHSE nationally about co-ordinating a fightback.

The reaction of the Labour Party to the hospital strikes is even worse, with both Robin Cook and Neil Kinnock saying they would not vote for a strike themselves.

Hospital workers need to get together to co-ordinate the large number of strikes and demonstrations and force the trade union leaders to call a national demonstration.





Gerry Healy

or would they administer the cuts? That was the real choice, and *SO* said so at the time. The local government left decided to cut while swearing blind they weren't. They raised rates — that is, they compensated for cuts in central government money by taking money from local working-class people in taxes.

The left was then organised in the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which published *Socialist Organiser*. We split on the issue. A minority — who were to start *Labour Briefing* — went for the disastrous rate-rise policy which was to lead the local government left, stage by stage, to shameful collapse.

The first test case was Lambeth, where a former leading WRP member, Ted Knight, was council leader. He had left the WRP perhaps a decade before. Knight wanted to go for cuts. The local Labour Party overruled him, at first. Then he went for rate rises, before finally pushing through cuts in April 1981.

The orientation of the left was debated at a series of conferences. At one of these, in early 1981, something not seen for a long time happened. The WRP turned up at a mainstream labour movement event.

A new alliance was being forged: the WRP, the paid snoop and spy of the Arab police states, was getting into bed with the leaders of the local government left.

Soon a new weekly paper was started, *Labour Herald*. Its editorial board included Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone. Its executive editor was Steven Miller, a member of the WRP Central Committee!

Pumped up with advertising from local government, and able to get 'big name' contributors on the strength of its 'big name' editors, *Labour Herald* became something of a force on the Labour left. The WRP printed it on terms which allowed it to survive with a very small paid circulation and without a visible network of supporters.

The relationship continued after Ken Livingstone became GLC leader. While Ken Livingstone kissed the Queen's hand at the opening of the Thames Barrier, he had his

arms linked with Gerry Healy, who was kissing a different part of Gaddafi's anatomy!

*Labour Herald* printed the standard articles glorifying Libya and denouncing demon Zionism. Its cartoons on the Middle East were especially vicious, and are cited as evidence by those who allege that sections of the left are anti-semitic.

The whole thing blew up in October 1985. Mr Healy — now 73 and enfeebled — was expelled by the WRP on charges of physical violence, including rape, against some of his comrades. Those who expelled him must have known about these activities for decades. *Labour Herald* was one of the casualties of the WRP split.

Of course, it isn't a shoddy thriller but a true story. All these things happened in our own movement and on its fringes. Nobody capable of thinking about politics could have read the WRP press and failed to know that those who produced it were singing for their supper. You didn't have to know that they had a contract to spy on Jews for Gaddafi to recognise that their press was blatantly anti-semitic. The vicious character of the internal regime of the WRP had been the subject of horror stories by ex-members for decades, even when it was still more or less a political organisation.

How was it possible for such an organisation to gain the influence it did through *Labour Herald*? Why was it not exposed? Why did the

normally witch-hunting press keep silent?

It was all done by the libel laws! The Healyites would go to court at the drop of a disparaging adjective. When *SO* published a little article telling some of the truth about the WRP in response to their incursion into the debate on the local government left as voting fodder for Knight, we were hauled into the toils of litigation with the millionaire Ms Redgrave.

The process cost us thousands of pounds and is still unresolved. The case is still in the lists — dormant, because, of course, Ms Redgrave will not go into court with people who will fight the WRP and tell the truth about them.

But it wasn't just the libel laws. The foul politics of the WRP and *Labour Herald* could get by on the left because they differed only in degree, and not in kind, from the politics of much of the rest of the left. And the left is too often cynical, and willing to live with a high degree of corruption. Ken Livingstone has been able to get away with naked careerism as well as his association with the WRP, which he went into because having 'his own' sycophantic weekly would help his career.

The fact is that bought and paid-for snoops, spies and vulgar apologists for vicious Arab police states could, when they choose, pass themselves off as part of the left and find acceptance there. It's something for us all to think about.



Gaddafi



Vanessa Redgrave. Photo: Ian Swindale

## THE EVIDENCE

The magazine 'Solidarity' has just published the report of an inquiry set up by the WRP and its international co-thinkers after they expelled Gerry Healy. We reprint extracts.

The Commission was able to secure a section of the correspondence relating to the Middle East from the files in G. Healy's former office.

The documents examined by the Commission are seven relating to Iraq, four relating to Kuwait and other Gulf states, 23 relating to the PLO and 28 relating to Libya. The following report bases itself mainly on these documents.

From internal evidence in the documents under our control, it is obvious that much more material must exist, which was either taken out of the centre when the rump was in control or kept elsewhere.

Therefore the actual amount of money received from these relations and the extent of these relations must be considerably bigger than what we are able to prove in this report. The documents at our disposal clearly prove that Healy established a mercenary relationship between the WRP and the Arab colonial bourgeoisie, through which the political principles of Trotskyism and the interests of the working class were betrayed.

A secret agreement with the Libyan government was signed by (name suppressed in original) and Corin Redgrave on behalf of the WRP (exhibit 5). This was never reported to the ICFI. The Commission has not yet established who in the leadership of the WRP, beyond the signatories, knew of the agreement.

This agreement includes providing of intelligence information on the "activities, names and positions held in finance, politics, business, the communications media and elsewhere" by "Zionists". It has strongly anti-Semitic undertones, as no distinction is made between Jews and Zionists and the term Zionist could actually include every Jew in a leading position.

This agreement was connected with a demand for money. The report given by the WRP delegation while staying in Libya included a demand for £50,000 to purchase a web offset press for the daily News Line, which was to be launched in May 1976. The Commission was not able to establish if any of this money was received.

In August 1977, G. Healy went himself to Libya and presented a detailed plan for the expansion of News Line to six regional editions, requesting for it £100,000...

G. Healy lined up publicly with the reactionary forces in the Middle East. During a visit to Kuwait,

Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai in March-April, 1979, G. Healy, V. Redgrave, and (name suppressed) met with the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Sa-ad, and some of the ruling bourgeois families. The sole purpose of this trip was to raise money for the film 'Occupied Palestine'.

The trip ended finally by the delegation urging the feudal and bourgeois rulers to censure a journalist of the Gulf Times who had written an article on the real purpose of their visit. The delegation finally received £116,000. In October 1979, Vanessa Redgrave visited Libya and asked for £500,000 for Youth Training (exhibit 9). As of February 1982 the WRP had received "just over £200,000" from Libya for Youth Training (exhibit 10).

In April 1980 a WRP delegation led by G. Healy visited Libya, presenting his redrafted WRP perspective and asking for more money. From March 8 to 17 1981 G. Healy made a further visit to Libya, putting forward demands totalling £800,000. The Commission found a report in Healy's handwriting of this (exhibit 11).

### Money received from the Middle East.

The following report on monies received from the Middle East was put together by the Commission from a careful analysis of many documents and cash books. We were told repeatedly that Healy wanted no formal record kept of the money coming in. A full list and graph of what was found is in exhibit 16. A list by year shows the following amounts coming in:

	£ sterling
1977	46,208
1978	47,784
1979	347,755
1980	173,671
1981	185,128
1982	271,217
1983	3,400
1984	nil
1985	nil

TOTAL £1,075,163

Analysed by country, where it is possible to distinguish, the amounts are:

Libya	542,267
Kuwait	156,500
Qatar	50,000
Abu Dhabi	25,000
PLO	19,997
Iraq	19,697
Unidentified or other sources	261,702

TOTAL £1,075,163

The Commission was told by both (name suppressed) and (name suppressed) that frequently cash was brought to the centre which would not be immediately banked. Therefore, it was possible for large sums of cash to come and go without ever being recorded.



## Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

### More risky than they say

The Windscale fire of 1957 was brought into the news again recently with the release of some of the cabinet papers of the time. These revealed that facts about the fire had not been made public because Prime Minister MacMillan hadn't wished the Americans to think the British nuclear industry incompetent.

Coincidentally, an article\* in *New Scientist* discussed the evidence that radiation might be many times more dangerous at causing cancer than assumed when the likely death toll from Windscale was calculated.

That radiation causes cancer is agreed. That more radiation causes more cancer is also agreed but how much more is less certain. Such uncertainties have led recently to a hundred-fold discrepancy in predictions of the extra cancers expected from the Chernobyl fire — from 500 to 500,000!

With high doses (over 1 Gray or 100 Rads) there are so many more cancers that it is obvious they have been caused by the radiation. But with low doses, it is difficult to pinpoint the effect of radiation. After all, there are many other causes of cancer. To demonstrate the effect of just 1 Rad of extra radiation, it would be necessary to study 10,000 times more people than for 100 Rads.

The only example of mass exposure to radiation we have is that of the US bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Hundreds of thousands of people were irradiated and survived, an ideal population to study for long-term effects. Indeed, some say this was one reason for dropping the bombs when Japan may have been about to surrender anyway.

Unfortunately, there are no direct measurements of radiation doses from the bombs. There are rumours that the American army confiscated and subsequently "lost" material collected by Japanese scientists, such as undeveloped photographic film which could have registered radiation.

After the war, the American-Japanese Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF) started to follow the fate of some 120,000 survivors, recording cause of death when this occurred. By 1985, 40% had died. The rate of death of those irradiated was compared to the rate of death of survivors who had not been irradiated.

An estimate of the radiation was worked out on a system called T65D — since discredited. It had used air bursts in the dry desert air of Nevada but "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" had sent their deadly rays through the humid air of Japan. This would have filtered out many of the neutrons so that the victims would have been affected mainly by gamma rays.

Intensive and elaborate recalculations of doses to the survivors then followed. Factors such as whether the victims were indoors, upstairs, outside, standing up or lying down were allowed for. The result was DS86 (Dosimetry System 1986).

DS86 confirmed that the neutron radiation had been greatly overestimated. Hence, survivors had received far less radiation than thought and therefore the radiation had been more effective in causing cancer.

Despite this, RERF's report to the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) in 1987 suggested that the overall risk was unchanged. Another report by RERF researchers showed this to be misleading. The data used in the '60s and the '80s was different and it could be argued that radiation was up to 15 times worse at causing cancer than previously thought. The best estimate is that the ICRP's current limits are about five times too high.

The ICRP has refused to reduce its limits yet though the British National Radiological Protection Board has cut theirs by two-thirds. This means that once more the limits said by the nuclear industry to be completely safe and in fact over-strict, have been cut to a small fraction of their previous value.

\*by Professor Joseph Ratblat, formerly part of the Los Alamos A-bomb team but later an opponent of nuclear weapons.

# An exquisite miniature

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'The Dead', the last film John Huston made before he died.**

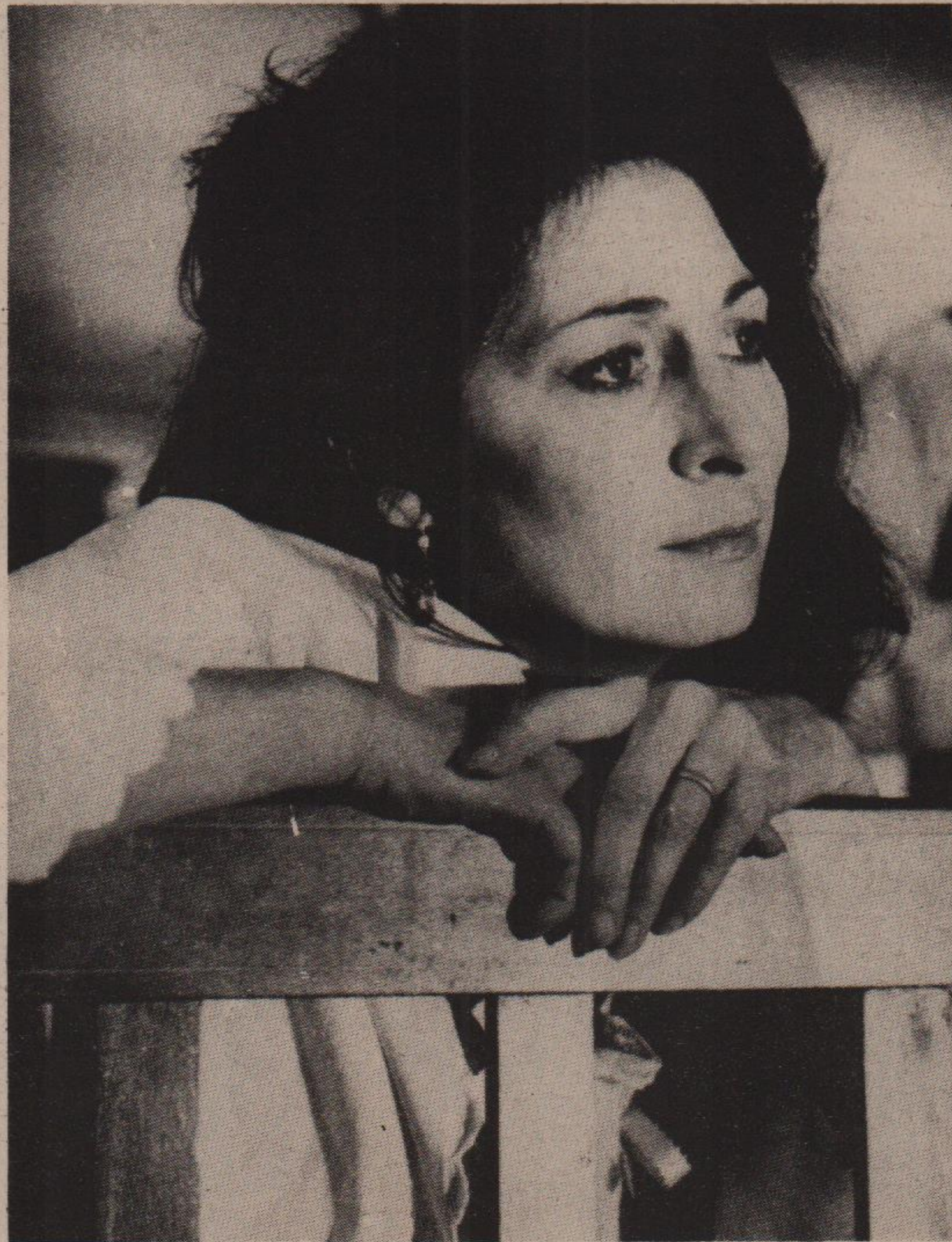
'The Dead' is like an exquisite miniature; what is striking is the fitness of the detail. The film is John Huston's dramatisation of the story 'The Dead' from James Joyce's collection, 'Dubliners'.

It's a small film, but not a negligible one. After the primary action-centred plots of Hollywood films, it's a pleasant change to see a film primarily concerned with character and atmosphere.

This doesn't mean that there's no plot. The story is well constructed. It builds from small hints and allusions to the climax of Gretta's revelation in a logical and satisfactory way. What people say, the music we hear, the look in Gretta's eyes, all mean something for the development of the story; they aren't just there as filler. The story is, however, just the skeleton which Joyce fleshes out with the themes he wants to tackle.

And the film is concerned with large themes — love, loss, death, memory, and the haunting pull of the past.

The story begins at the home of the Misses Morkan, two elderly Dublin spinsters who are holding a dance followed by supper for family and friends. It is before World War I. Snow is falling outside as Gretta and Gabriel Conroy arrive for the evening. Gabriel is the Misses Morkan's favourite nephew,



Anjelica Huston as Gretta

to whom they defer.

The film only slowly comes to focus on Gretta and Gabriel. At first we meet a variety of characters, all of whom we'd be happy to

follow. After a time, the camera rests increasingly on both Gabriel and Gretta, and it is they whom we follow out from the party to their hotel room.

Though the gathering is a cheerful social one, there are minor strains. The aunts fret about Freddy who drinks too much. Another guest is of a different religion. One of the younger female guests, a nationalist, chides Gabriel for writing for an English newspaper and for looking to Europe before looking to his own country. Half in fun, half in disappointment, she calls him a 'West Briton'. In reply, Gabriel uses his speech to congratulate the older generation with their hospitable traditions as a way of pointing up the impatience of the up-and-coming generation.

Throughout the evening, Gabriel notices the increasing abstraction of his wife. In the carriage later, he will try to pull her back to him and their shared reality. What Gabriel learns is how little he really knows of Gretta.

Music and the power of music to conjure up the past are central to the film. The background music in the film is pleasant but unobtrusive. The foreground music — piano playing, dance music and singing — is central to the characters' lives. Over dinner, people discuss singers they have heard, and look longingly and sometimes tearfully back on moments that have moved them. It is overhearing the plaintive song 'The Lass of Aughrim' that brings the past so sharply back to Gretta.

Joyce's story is largely descriptive. Apart from the long talk between Gretta and Gabriel, what happens in the story occurs largely inside people's heads. But Huston's film manages to convey much of the feeling and atmosphere of the story. What we see on the screen evokes the time and the place in a strangely touching and moving way.

## The underside of Down Under

**Lilian Thomson reviews John Pilger's series on Australia (Tuesdays, ITV).**

John Pilger's three programmes on Australia, 'The Last Dream', make a welcome antidote to the nationalistic gush of Australia's bicentennial celebrations — "the \$80 million party".

Pilger is not concerned with the advertising clichés of Australia. He keeps rattling all the skeletons in the Aussie closet instead.

He opened up with the real reasons behind Australia's settlement. The British ruling class used the colony to export two 'problems' — the poor and the Irish. Australia entered European history as a dumping ground.

The 'crimes' of those transported would hardly get into court these days — stealing food, poaching, petty thefts. And of course there were the politicals — both British and Irish. If your face didn't fit, then out to the colonies you went, and there wasn't much hope of getting back again.

Australia was a big place, but seemingly not big enough for the first white settlers. Through drink, disease, and simple murder, 500,000 Aborigines were wiped out. There are barely half that number left in Australia today, a tiny percentage of the population.

The Bicentennial is no party for them — it is a wake.

They're using it to push their cause — through demonstrations, tent embassies and mourning

ceremonies. They can finally get world attention to these shameful statistics — 90% of Aborigines live below the poverty line; Aboriginal children still die of preventable diseases like measles; 100 Aborigines have died mysterious deaths while in police custody in recent years.

Pilger's programmes also focussed on the poor, whom the Bicentennial 'party' also excludes. One in five children in Australia lives in poverty. Youth unemployment is one of the highest in the world.

In the 1950s Australia had one of the most equal societies in the world. Now at least one in three lives in poverty.

But while there's not much on offer for the poor in 1988 Australia, the rich are doing very nicely indeed.

Under the Hawke Labor government, the top 200 rich have increased their wealth from \$5 billion to \$25 billion. Australia has 31,000 millionaires out of a population of 16 million.

Much of their wealth has come from speculative gains after Hawke and Keating floated the Australian dollar. They've had a few handouts directly too. Rupert Murdoch's company tax rate has fallen from 49c in the dollar to less than 13c. Alan Bond, another millionaire, pays 9c. And Bond's profits from gold are tax-free.

But not much of this gets out. Media ownership in Australia is incredibly concentrated. 16 daily newspapers are owned by only two proprietors of whom Murdoch is one. He also controls 60% of circulation and owns the only paper mill!

Information and debate are hardly free in Hawke's Australia. As a former Labor colleague bitterly said, "Murdoch is probably the

**HIS FUTURE is in your hands**



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION APPLY TO AUSTRALIA HOUSE LONDON W.13

**Take him to Australia**

Poster seeking migrants from Britain in the 1950s

most powerful man in Australia. Hawke's just a figurehead, a PR man posing as a Labor Prime Minister." Not much to celebrate there.

Australia's history has been one of speedy development. Once convict transportation ended in the 1840s, free workers could earn relatively high wages. The sale of wool and wheat abroad, and the discovery of gold and other minerals, brought wealth into the colony.

It seemed as if Australia was a land where anyone could get rich. With no hereditary nobility, it seemed as if a classless society was

being born, a 'working man's paradise'.

But the 1890s depression changed that. Workers who struck were locked out and starved by their employers. In the 1930s many workers learned that the 'working man's paradise' was a myth.

And the lesson is still relevant today. When the first convict ships sailed into Botany Bay they carried the seeds of capitalism in their holds. It took root in Australia and trampled the Aborigines and their claims to their land. It has ruined small farmers and it has tried to crush the workers. What has grown up is a paradise for spivs.



# Teachers' crucial fight

**Haringey teachers have now been on strike for three weeks against cuts.**

Under conditions imposed by the NUT National Action Committee, schools have been called out on an escalating weekly basis.

Over 30 schools are now closed for three days a week. If the dispute is not resolved by week four, then the majority of the Borough's

schools will be out on official 3-day strike action.

This is the first major official action against the cuts, and councils everywhere will be looking to see if the Haringey teachers win. Other NUT branches, faced with similar problems, must push to come out alongside Haringey.

The most important of these is the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA), in which the

left has a strong base, and where teachers face 10% job cuts.

The key now is that other NUT branches strike alongside Haringey. It is certain that considerable pressure will have to be put on the union leadership to get other areas out now, rather than wait and leave Haringey isolated.

The rank and file teachers organisation, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA), should

be waging a campaign in the union and amongst the membership in support of Haringey and demanding that other areas faced with cuts get official backing.

A series of such strikes across London would provide a major challenge to the policies of Labour councils providing a focus for the fight against cuts and the potential for linking up with the movement generated in the health service.

WHEATON'S WEEK

## Victory for Scargill

**I am delighted that the members have decided to endorse Scargill as leader of the NUM. It is an endorsement of the policies the miners have been deciding at Conferences over the years.**

I hope we will now see a coordinated campaign against 6-day working, against any moves to join with the UDM, against pit closures and for our jobs and communities.

Some are now arguing that the result will give a chance to Scargill's opponents on the National Executive to draw the reins in on him. But when Mrs Thatcher got elected on 46% of the vote there was no chance of her moderating her stance! In fact, she has gone from strength to strength in pursuing her policies.

I would hope that Arthur Scargill takes that same attitude with his 54% majority, and sees the result as a mandate by the rank and file to push for the policies that much harder.

If anybody wants to criticise on the NEC, let's hope they have the guts to do what Arthur Scargill did — resign and offer themselves for re-election and then see whether their policies get endorsed by the membership.

Personally I was not surprised by the final result. The 70% majority in his first election was obviously not going to be repeated.

In Notts a good majority voted for Scargill despite the considerable difficulties we had with holding the ballot. We were given no facilities by the Board. The ballot was run from bus shelters, and at Bevercotes we hired a furniture van. Unfortunately on the morning it broke down so we had to conduct the first three hours of the ballot from the boot of a car at the top of the pit lane. We had a good turn-out, despite the fact that buses had been ordered not to stop and let men off to vote, and there was a blizzard blowing that morning. I want to congratulate all those who took part in the ballot in Notts despite the difficulties. Men stood in the freezing snow at the end of the pit lane from 5am to 5pm. That shows the kind of spirit we have in Notts.

As I said before the election, the ballot itself is not going to solve the problems facing the miners. I think that British Coal will dig its heels in even further. British Coal's price for recognising the NUM in Notts — which they hinted at in the event of a Walsh victory — is not worth paying. We are prepared to go on backing Scargill, and Scargill will back us. If that means greater difficulties, then so be it.

British Coal will step up their campaign to put the fear of God in people. In South Yorkshire last week they sent letters to some of the Bentley pickets threatening them with the sack if they go on strike again or picket other pits. Apparently they had been identified by video cameras on different picket lines. Some are now saying that, in future, they will go picketing with balaclavas on!

My own view is this sort of threat will not make a real difference because men have been facing heavy harassment for the last three years.

Paul Whetton is a member of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

**Mark Thomas, Branch Committee NUM Tower Lodge (personal capacity) comments on the voting in South Wales.**

We had a ballot in South Wales on the overtime ban just before the election. It simply asked whether members were for or against an extension of the present ban. From that I don't know whether South Wales will vote for taking off the overtime ban at next week's Special Conference or for keeping it the same.

I think the ballot was a tactical move by South Wales to get men's attention off the national president's ballot. There was not much of a turn-out for it, and the ballot wording was not very good.

But on the ballot for president 61% of South Wales voted for Scargill, which was a complete reversal of the overtime ban ballot result.

Perhaps this will make the South Wales leadership sit up, because they had been claiming the overtime ban ballot result as a political triumph. For them, the national presidential result was a kick in the teeth.

## DHSS: strike while Tories are weak

**By Trudy Saunders, CPSA**

**Under the Fowler Reviews supplementary benefit is being abolished and Income Support is replacing it.**

The Tories have set 11 April 1988 as the date for the conversion.

From 11 April, supplementary benefit can no longer be paid out to claimants. If the conversion has not taken place by this date, no benefits will be available to claimants.

The Tories have set themselves a tight deadline. CPSA members are being pressurised into working overtime in order to ensure the conversion. If all overtime is stopped the Tories won't achieve their objective.

This puts DHSS workers in a strong position.

The DHSS Section Executive Committee of the CPSA should launch a massive campaign immediately including a ballot in late February or early March, calling upon all members in the local office network to stop all overtime and to stop all work on Income Support conversion from mid-March.

The ballot would also have to commit members to strike action should management suspend workers.

The union would then be in the position to make, among others, the following demands:

- 1) All LPAs (Limited Period Appointments — casual workers with no rights) to be made permanent.
2. No YTS in the DHSS.
3. Management commitments on jobs plough-back.
4. No overall job losses.

Socialist Caucus supporters (the left in the CPSA Broad Left, including Socialist Organiser supporters) are currently arguing for the strategy outlined

above. Militant supporters have repeatedly put off the fight.

This is our last and arguably our best chance to force the Tories to back down

on their plans to casualise and privatise the DHSS. The DHSS SEC must act now.

## Dispute on YTS

**By Ray Ferris**

**Civil servants have taken strike action at the Manpower Services Commission headquarters in Sheffield over the imposition of a YTS trainee.**

21 CPSA members of the Community Programme Department walked out on Thursday 14 January, and their strike has been made official. Pickets at the MSC are asking members of their own department not to go in to work and handing out daily strike newsletters to other workers in the building.

Union officials were not consulted about the imposition of the trainee. A ballot was held and a majority voted to strike.

Management immediately panicked — one of their hand-delivered letters to the strikers arrived at midnight! They have confiscated security passes necessary to enter the building and have called a series of unsuccessful "open forum" or "information" meetings to put their case.

While the audience had plenty of questions, management clearly didn't have a clue what they were talking about. And when asked, they failed to produce a training programme for the YTS scheme.

The strikers have spoken to the trainee to put their case. They are insisting she is given trade union rates of pay, proper training and the guarantee of a job — or that she is withdrawn.



**Thousands of trade unionists marched through Cheltenham on Saturday 23rd, on the anniversary of the banning of trade unions at GCHQ. The rally was addressed by Norman Willis, Michael Meacher MP, Clive Jenkins and a GCHQ trade unionist.**

With increasing numbers of workers in the MSC building on casual contracts there is an obvious need to stand firm against further erosions in job security and work conditions.

Messages of support should be sent c/o Sheffield Co-ordinating Centre Against Unemployment, 73 West Street, Sheffield S1 4EQ. Further information can be obtained on 0742-557084.

## Half victory for lecturers

**College lecturers have been offered substantial pay rises in return for the selling of conditions locally.**

Last week the Labour-dominated Local Authorities negotiators offered us a two-year deal from April 1987, with an average 16.9% rise in salary. Other sweeteners include a reduction in the hours spent in the classroom from 22 to 21, though this is balanced by a clause requiring us to work an extra 2½ hours over any nine week period.

Part-time lecturers have been offered three weeks' sick pay per year, maternity benefits, and a vague promise of more permanent contracts.

In return for this there are enough loopholes and "review bodies" to allow Local Education Authorities to begin to dismantle conditions of service built up over years. They have made it clear that they expect the cost of this settlement to be met in this way and this inevitably means job losses.

This does represent, however, a major improvement on the previous offer! That set out the comprehensive destruction of conditions as the price of a pay rise. The new offer leaves the hatchet-work to the LEAs.

It is important to point out that the

improvement has only been achieved because of the willingness of lecturers to take industrial action in a series of regional strikes.

Branches should reject this offer and campaign for a Special Salaries Conference to make our voice heard.

We must argue for an end to the dirty dealing and a campaign of national strike action. If the deal is eventually accepted we must argue for the Executive of the union to give automatic support to branches taking action against the effects of the deal cooked up by our negotiators.

Contact Socialist Lecturers Alliance, c/o Barry Lovejoy or Sue Pratt, Handsworth Technical College, The Council House, Soho Road, Birmingham B21 9DP. Tel: 021-551 6031.

## Rent strike

**By Paul Carey**

**The rent strike at North Staffs Polytechnic is now into its third week, and the Poly administration is obviously shocked at the resolve which students are showing.**

Students have refused to be intimidated by threatening letters sent out in the first few days of term, and the Students' Union has also refused to be intimidated by the Poly's informal threats of financial punishment.

The rent strike is to force changes so that students can leave halls without paying for the whole year.

The most important date of the rent strike so far was Thursday 21st, when the dispute was discussed at the Poly governors' meeting. We organised a highly successful lobby.

First we decided to occupy the Board Room where the meeting was to be held. Then we left, on condi-

**32,500 Ford workers could be on the brink of a national strike against the company's latest attacks on their wages and conditions.**

The final result of last week's ballot on industrial action will be announced later today (Tuesday), but already the major plants at Dagenham and

## Ford strike looms

Halewood have returned 90% yes votes.

They have rejected out of hand the bosses' insulting package of a 3-year deal, major changes in work conditions (including 'quality circles', 'team leaders' and temporary workers brought in to cover peak periods), a miserly pay increase of 6.25% in the first year and subsequent increases at the level of inflation.

They know the company is booming — profits of over £300 million will shortly be announced — and they have had to pay for it in job losses, massive productivity increases (40% since 1985) and low pay rises. They are not going along with it anymore.

The union leaders recommended a yes vote, but as a negotiating ploy. They have continued publicly to name their price for a deal. They want more money and no temporary workers on the line — but they'll go along with the 3-year deal, 'quality circles' and the bosses' other radical proposals.

Long forgotten is the unions' own claim for a one-year deal, a 10% wage rise and a shorter working week.

At stake is not only winning wage improvements, but also defending basic conditions in the factories. The Ford bosses have good reason to be pushing through these attacks; it will take an all-out national strike to stop them.

## TGWU elections

**By Jim Denham**

**The elections now taking place for the executive of the TGWU are of crucial importance, not just to the union itself but to the entire labour movement.**

Essentially this is a left-versus-right battle although the bitterness of the dispute (which has been raging behind the scenes since 1985) often seems out of all proportion to the political differences involved. Both sides, for instance, claim to be loyal supporters of Neil Kinnock.

The right wing group around Welsh regional secretary George Wright and union president Brian Nicholson presently has a narrow majority on the executive, which it has used to swing the union behind "one member, one vote" in the Labour Party, to attack the union's unilateral stance and to keep deputy general secretary Bill Morris off both the Labour Party NEC and the TUC General Council. It may or may not be of significance that Morris is black.

The same people have also used their majority on the finance and general purposes committee to impose their chosen candidates as regional secretaries. This happened in 1986 in Region 3 (the South West) and has just occurred again in Region 5 (the Midlands) where Ron Todd was actually excluded from a regional committee meeting!

In Region 1 (London and the South East), the behaviour of Brian Nicholson in breaking his region's mandate and deliberately misleading the regional committee in order to install his supporter Ken Reid as regional secretary, has provoked a row that nearly resulted in a strike of full-time officials.

What Nicholson and his cronies want to impose on the union is the kind of dictatorial regime that existed under Arthur Deakin in the 1950s. The issue in the words of one prominent member of Region 1 is "whether the TGWU will be a lay members' union or a full-time officials' union."

TGWU members should study the "biographical details" of Trade Group and Territorial candidates for the executive closely. Get rid of Nicholson's gang and vote for candidates who stand for a fighting, democratic union.



tion we could meet with the chair of the governors before the governors' meeting itself.

The governors' meeting deferred a decision until a meeting of the Student-Governors liaison sub-committee on 12 February. We achieved a small step forward by getting the deadline for payment of rent, after which a £25 extra fee is due, put back from 9 to 16 February.

Now we are organising to link up the demands of the rent strike with the NUS national shut-down on 11 February, the day before the Student-Governors liaison meeting. If no satisfactory solution is reached on the 12th, then our campaign will be escalated, and we will make use of the links we have made with NUPE members to organise lock-outs and occupations.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Picket the Israeli Embassy

# A lawless state?

**Tony Benn MP comments on the most recent revelations about the security services.**

If you piece together the jigsaw puzzle now, the following points emerge.

**First**, that anything that is done in the name of national security is exempt from the processes of the law.

**Two**, that national security is defined by the Government, under the Royal Crown Perogatives.

**Three**, that what may be done extends to and includes murder.

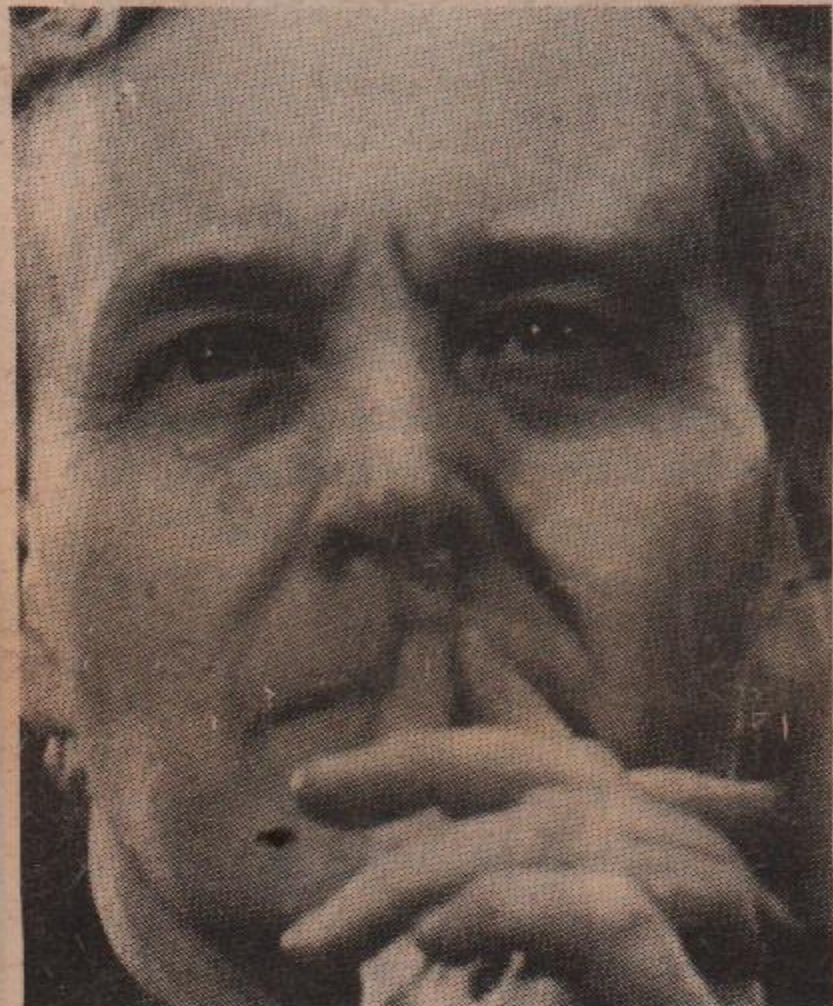
**Four**, that where the Government defines national security interests, the courts will always uphold them.

**Five**, that where national security is defined by the Government, there is a life-long duty of confidentiality demanded by the Government and accepted by the courts.

**Six** that if any newspaper prints any report on acts committed by the security services in the name of national security, they are liable to prosecution.

**Seven**, that if cases are pending on these matters then Parliament is prohibited from discussing them. This came out in relation to the Stalker inquiry yesterday.

It is necessary for people to take on board the totality of this situation. It covers



**Spycatcher**, the attempt to assassinate Nasser, the Stalker/Sampson inquiry into the shoot-to-kill policy — it covers everything.

It is all done under the Royal Perogative, every bit of it — appointing security services under Royal Perogative, giving them Royal Perogative power to break the law, appointing the judges by Royal Perogative, defining national security by Royal Perogative, appointing the BBC chairman by Royal Perogative and so on.

So few people are aware of these interconnections that it is necessary to set them down in a very clinical way, and then take on board how we deal with the situation.



## Action against Alton

**About 8,000 people took part in last Thursday's protest against the Alton Bill. Get your organisation to build for the 19 March demonstration in London. Assemble, 11.30 a.m. at the Embankment. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report.**

**Sixteen years ago on 30 January 1972, 14 people attending a peaceful Civil Rights demonstration were killed by soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment.**

This Saturday, a demonstration to commemorate 'Bloody Sunday' and demand British withdrawal from Ireland is taking place. It starts at 12.30 from Whittington Park, near Archway Tube, London, and will end with a rally at Islington Town Hall.

A few days ago *Today* carried an "exclusive" on the report into the RUC's "shoot-to-kill" policy by Colin Sampson, Chief Constable of the West Yorkshire police. Sampson recommends to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) that two

senior detectives and six junior officers in the RUC should be charged with "conspiring to pervert the course of justice".

This is the inquiry that John Stalker was removed from just when he was due to see RUC Chief Jack Hermon about how a youth and five unarmed IRA/INLA suspects were shot dead in police ambushes in 1982-3.

Probably Stalker had probed deeper than the RUC had bargained for, and Sampson was put in to limit the damage.

Far from trying to find a political solution to the conflicts in Ireland, British governments have met the Catholic resistance with repression which they cover up by whatever means necessary. So it comes as no surprise to hear that "in the interests of national security" the

DPP has announced that there will be no prosecutions of RUC members arising out of the 'shoot-to-kill' policy.

Britain's military presence is part of the problem, not of any solution. But a solution requires more than just 'Troops Out'.

The Protestants have real fears about being incarcerated in a repressive 32-county Catholic state. This makes it important to argue for a federal-type structure, as a real prospect for true Irish self-determination.

Only such a prospect can have any chance of winning sections of the Protestant working class to a united Ireland, a workers' republic, and a Socialist United States of Europe in which relations between countries would be equal.

**Student Unions are calling a picket of the Israeli Embassy on 28 February.**

We believe:

1) That the uprisings on the West Bank and Gaza are the direct result of forty years of occupation, by Egypt and Jordan before 1967, and by Israel now.

2) That the mass detentions and use of live ammunition against Palestinians will only increase bloodshed and violence in the area.

We condemn:

1) The killings and detentions of Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, and the "iron fist" policy being used to quash legitimate Palestinian grievances.

2) The conditions in the refugee camps, brought about by the cynical treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli occupation and by Jordan, Egypt and Syria.

We support:

1) The right of the Palestinians to govern themselves in an independent state.

2) The right of the state of Israel to exist within secure borders.

3) Palestinian nationalists and those progressive forces within Israel seeking an end to occupation.

We call for:

1) An end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

2) Genuine international support for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

3) Firm international recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure borders.

4) An end to violence and a political solution based on the slogan: two nations, two states! Israel off the West Bank and Gaza!

Sponsored by MANUS, Tyne Tees Area NUS, Newcastle Poly and more.

For further details, contact UCL Union, 25 Gordon Street, London WC1. 01-387 3611

**Thursday 28 February 11am — 2pm. Picket the Israeli Embassy.**

**Two nations, two states! Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza!**

**RUC 'shoot to-kill' cover-up**