

# SOCIALIST

# ORGANISER

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**UDR murders exposed in N Ireland**

# Thatcher backs sectarian killers

**S**ix thousand four hundred men and women in Northern Ireland are armed, paid, and organised by the British government to uphold Protestant power.

They form the Ulster Defence Regiment — a 98 per cent Protestant force with a long record of overlap with the Protestant-bigot murder gangs.

Since the UDR was formed in 1970, 16 of its members have been sentenced for murder or conspiracy to murder. Since 1985, 70 of its members have been discharged or have resigned after involvement in criminal offences.

Those are just the cases which have got as far as convictions in court. There is a long list of examples of Catholics being harassed by the UDR and told that the murder gangs will get them — threats sometimes made good.

A recent spate of revelations has highlighted this record. Yet Margaret Thatcher chose this moment to visit the UDR in Northern Ireland and announce: "The UDR have done remarkable work. They are a very, very brave group of men."

The UDR's involvement in sectarian killing is not a matter of isolated, accidental cases. It is built into the way Northern Ireland is ruled.

Over 25 years now the British government has made occasional sallies at reform in Northern Ireland. Its fallback policy, however, has always been to hold the ring and sustain the status quo.



Sustaining the status quo means beating down those who rebel against it, the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. British governments have turned to the Protestant majority to help them do that. Since 1972 they have reduced British Army numbers in Northern Ireland from 18,000 to 10,000 and built up the UDR to 6,400 soldiers and the RUC (armed police) to 12,000.

The RUC is not quite as purely Protestant as the UDR, and it did hold firm when used by the British government against Protestant demonstrations in 1986;

but it, too, has a sordid history. John Stalker's inquiry into its "shoot-to-kill" policy against suspected IRA people was conveniently suppressed.

Northern Ireland is an untenable, artificial political unit. It can be sustained only by permanent violence against the rebellious Catholic minority — violence which, in a sectarian society, inevitably becomes sectarian violence.

The Protestants of north-east Ireland do have rights to maintain their autonomy and identity against any threats of submersion in a Catholic united

Ireland. But the Northern Ireland unit set up by British force in 1920-1 is not the framework to secure those rights in a democratic manner.

The programme for guaranteeing the rights of both majority and minority, and uniting Catholic and Protestant workers, is a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the mainly Protestant area. British troops should be withdrawn, and replaced by a voluntary confederal relationship between Ireland and Britain.

## How the scandal broke

24 August. "Ulster Freedom Fighters" (alias for the Protestant-bigot Ulster Defence Association) claim responsibility for the murder of Laughlin Maginn. Maginn had been harassed repeatedly by members of the UDR and RUC. One occasion they had put a gun to his head and told him "We're going to get you".

30 August. UFF, claiming that Maginn was an IRA man, show a BBC reporter official files to back up this claim.

2 September. Unionist MP Peter Robinson says that he routinely receives copies of official files on IRA suspects through the post.

4 September. It is revealed that Cameron Hastie, a corporal in the Royal Scots Regiment who had been convicted, together with an UDR soldier, of passing information unlawfully to another Protestant-bigot murder group, the UVF, is still serving with his regiment (in England). Hastie had received only a suspended sentence.

10 September. Two UDR soldiers are charged with the murder of Laughlin Maginn. One of them is also charged with the murder of Liam McKee on 24 June — another killing claimed by the UFF.

10 September. British Army admits that a secret document with details of nine IRA suspects is missing from a UDR base in Ballykinlar, Co. Down.

12 September. Margaret Thatcher visits Ireland to praise the UDR.

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## 2 LABOUR PARTY

# Key issue will be Labour conference's right to decide

**Pete Willsman from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy briefed the Constituency Labour Parties Conference last Saturday, 16 September, on the rulebook issues coming up at Labour Party conference on 1-6 October.**

**Debates at conference over trade union rights, over public ownership, and over nuclear disarmament, he explained, will be empty unless the conference also gains the right to overrule the Policy Review in which Neil Kinnock has spelled out his intention to keep many Tory anti-union laws, to manage the capitalist market economy, and to keep Britain's nuclear weapons until they are negotiated away internationally.**

**If you think back to the victories we had on reselection and the electoral college, we were constantly being told at that time that party constitutional issues were diversionary.**

We shouldn't be talking about internal issues; we should be concentrating on broader campaigning among the public and winning elections.

That was a common refrain for many years — until the left were on the decline, and the right were on the up. As soon as the right were on the up, suddenly constitutional issues were no longer diversionary. They were a very important way of showing the public how democratic the party is.

Over the last few years we have seen rule after rule forced through. Now looming on the horizon is a complete restructuring of party conference and of the National Executive Committee.

This year the National Executive are bringing a constitutional amendment which says that in future the constituency section of the election of the party leader will be one member, one vote. This will not apply to the trade union section. There's one rule for them and another for the constituency parties.

There are proposals for rule changes in the women's section. They are changing the structure of Labour women's conference so that the trade unions will more or less control it.

Another constitutional amendment will stop reselections after there has been a by-election. That's so that Vauxhall won't be able to have a reselection now that Kate Hoey has been imposed by the National Executive.

The most important issue at the conference centres on the Policy Review. Nearly fifty constituencies

have put in resolutions and amendments in that section. It is the key battle at this year's conference.

Last year, when the leadership forced through the Policy Review, a lot of people said we should be allowed to *amend* it. The National Executive said they would see what they could do about it. Of course, they never had any intention of allowing amendments. If you present the Policy Review on an all-or-nothing basis, you can get through anything you like, because the trade unions will vote for it rather than defeat it en bloc.

In February at the National Executive, Dennis Skinner put a resolution that amendments should be allowed to the Policy Review, and that was defeated by 23 votes to 4.

In June a comrade from the CLPD wrote to Neil Kinnock's office to ask why he wasn't allowing amendments to the Policy Review. Neil Kinnock's office wrote back and said that no declaration had been made that there could be no amendments to the Policy Review.

The CLPD sent out a model resolution which said that resolutions carried at conference should take precedence over the Policy Review. We used the word "precedence" because we were worried that if we used the word "amendment" it would be ruled out of order; but it wasn't, and we've asked constituencies to put in amendments saying "be treated as amendments to" rather than "take precedence over".

Many unions are not willing to vote for the formula "take precedence over", but will vote for "be treated as amendments to".

That will be the big battle at conference — on Sunday evening, before the television cameras start. Of course, our proposal is not by any means foolproof, because even if resolutions are "treated as amendments" Kinnock can still ignore them, but it is going some way down the road.

We are also trying for a stronger proposal as a second composite. This will say that when a resolution is carried at conference which contradicts the Policy Review, we should then have a *second vote* between the Policy Review and the resolution. Then the Policy Review would be *defeated* on that issue.

There are also two resolutions in this section which welcome the Policy Review, but they can take their chance.

Amending the Policy Review is the key issue. Unless we can amend the Policy Review in some way, things are going to be rubber-stamped en bloc.

In the next section of the agenda, the GMB have a resolution to change party conference. John Evans and the Socialist Clubs are also in there, with a proposal for a secret postal ballot for the constituencies section of the National Executive; in other words, when you decide whether or not to vote for Dennis Skinner for the National Executive, you'll have to have a postal ballot of all members.

Obviously they think they might be able to knock Dennis off. The trade unions leave it to their general secretary to decide how they vote for the National Executive, but John Evans wants the constituencies to have a postal ballot.

The T&G Dyers and Bleachers section have an amendment slightly taking the teeth out of the GMB proposals, but that may make things more difficult for us by making it easier to slip through the essence of the GMB's ideas.

The GMB motion is effectively a proposal to destroy party conference as we know it — to bring in Policy Review-type structures for decision-making and make the conference a media event. They want to restructure the National Executive



Last year's Labour Party conference

so that we'll have an MPs' section, a constituencies' section, a councillors' section, a regional section, and so on. They also want to have the conference once every two years, not every year.

These proposals are being put forward as something new and progressive for the 1990s. However, almost identical proposals were in a pamphlet put out by the Campaign for Labour Victory — Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers and David Owen — in the late 1970s. For 20 or 30 years the right-wing have been trying to destroy conference; it's nothing new.

As well as the GMB motion, there is a National Executive consultation paper which will go out to constituencies — it's important that every constituency sends a critique back.

Three constituencies have submitted a proposal to give more votes at party conference to the constituencies. The leadership want to muddle this up with the general plan to restructure conference, but

we've got to keep the issues separate.

More votes for constituencies is an issue which we've been pushing for ten years. Year after year conference has agreed to give constituencies more votes, and there have been three working parties on the issue. Last year a motion was carried saying that the National Executive should bring a constitutional amendment to give constituencies more votes to this conference. They have rattled on that and produced no such amendment; they've just produced another consultation paper, trying to use more votes for constituencies as a carrot to help get through their other ideas.

Our view is that we should hold the National Executive to the decision of last year. The constitution should be amended this year to give constituencies more votes.

The GMB have also poked their nose in on the women's organisation. There are a number of resolutions from constituencies deman-

ding a 40 per cent minimum quota of women in the National Executive and among Labour candidates and representatives. The GMB have got an amendment which gives lip service to the principle but omits any definite timetable.

On black sections, the issues are still not entirely sorted out. They have been remitted to the next National Executive. It's a question of whether the National Executive will agree to a Black Socialist Society affiliated to the Labour Party like the Fabian Society, and whether it's a Black Society based on self-definition as black.

Roy Hattersley is trying to stop it, and there's a huge argument over whether the National Executive agrees to this Black Society. If it does, then black members will have a place on the National Executive through it. Black Sections are very worried that the National Executive will renege on it, so they have a fallback position of their own.

Those are the key issues of party democracy at this year's conference.

## Organise for CLPs' rights!

**50 delegates and visitors from Constituency Labour Parties across the country attended the CLPs Conference briefing for Labour Party Conference last Saturday, 16th. There were workshops on the economy, party democracy, unilateralism and trade union rights. In a closing plenary, Lol Duffy, secretary of the Constituency Labour Parties Conference, outlined the perspectives for the movement.**

**It's obvious there is something going for the Constituency Labour Par-**

**ties Conference, because we have already had three different offers of constituencies who want to entertain the next CLPs Conference — Wakefield, St Helens North, and Islington North.**

Winning issues at Labour Party conference depends a lot on the way we organise together. Our conferences are not just events for delegates, they're open to anyone who wants to come along; but it's important that we do establish a delegate-based CLPs Conference, so that when we take decisions they have some weight behind them.

We've started a newsletter for the CLPs Conference because we want the CLPs to start saying things themselves and to cut through the isolation between constituencies. We want people to be able to see that there is something developing nationally, so that they won't all just decide to leave the Labour Party after the next conference — you can understand why they feel like that, but we need to

keep people organised together and keep the fight going after Labour Party conference.

At the first CLPs Conference we adopted a Bill of Rights for CLPs. We've been talking about positive rights for trade unionists to organise effectively. We need positive rights as Labour Party members, and the Bill of Rights is about trying to establish those rights.

We need to push that Bill of Rights more. We need to motivate people who feel that they have got no rights to link up with other people to campaign for their rights.

It's hard work winning over constituencies, but that effort needs to be put in if we're ever going to change our fortunes. We can put all the draft resolutions we like, all the good speeches we want, but if we're not organised in the constituencies then we're going to lose every time.

So we've got to go forward with the CLPs conference, working hand in hand with other groups on the left in the Labour Party.

# Stop the Khmer Rouge returning to power!

## EDITORIAL

All Vietnamese troops are due out of Cambodia by 26 September. After that, the country will almost certainly lapse into a terrible civil war.

Socialists in the West should demand an end to Western support for the Khmer Rouge guerrilla movement, and aid to the present Cambodian government.

25 years ago Cambodia was a land of poverty and inequality, but one where the privileged classes' drive to exploit was relatively modest. Most of its people were peasants tilling their own plots of land. There was no big landlord class, and the state machine was lightweight.

Then the United States, the greatest military power on earth, unleashed its furies. The US was waging war against the Stalinist-led national liberation movement in neighbouring Vietnam, and resented the fact that Vietnamese soldiers could use Cambodia as a safe hinterland.

In March 1970 the US backed, or engineered, a coup in Cambodia. The 'neutralist' monarch, Prince Sihanouk, was ousted by his prime minister, Lon Nol. The following month, April 1970, the US invaded Cambodia in alliance with Lon Nol.

The Cambodian Stalinist movement had been leading rural guerrilla warfare since 1967. Its leaders, like the top brass of Lon Nol's regime, were drawn from Cambodia's tiny Western-educated middle class; its base was drawn from the peasantry.

The US intervention in 1970 raised the intensity of the conflict. Sihanouk, exiled in Beijing, made an odd alliance with the Stalinists under the banner of the 'Royal Government of National Unity of Cambodia'.

In 1973 the US launched huge bombing raids on Cambodia, destroying the whole fabric of society in much of the country. By 1975 some three million of Cambodia's seven million people had crowded into its capital, Phnom Penh. Lon Nol's US-backed regime became more and more grotesquely corrupt and brutal.

The cost of the war, and the protests of the American people, forced the US to wind down its military intervention. Lon Nol's regime could not stand alone. On 17 April 1975, a month or so before the final victory of the Vietnamese Stalinists, the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh.

Few people knew much about these Cambodian Stalinists. Groups like the forerunners of *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook* hailed them as great revolutionary communists, unfortunately a bit bureaucratic and 'empirical' in their methods. More critical voices on the left (like *Workers' Fight*, published by some of those today involved in *Socialist Organiser*) warned that the Khmer Rouge would establish a Stalinist regime, hostile to those fighting for workers' liberty.

But the criticism was only a footnote to support for the Khmer Rouge against the US-backed regime. None of our criticism went anywhere serious towards anticipating the horrors to come.

The same day that the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh, they started driving all three million of its inhabitants on forced marches into the countryside. The sick and weak died on the way. Teachers, government officials, 'intellectuals' of any sort, were singled out to be killed.

The rest were herded into labour camps, organised into a sort of

brutal 'barracks communism' under the control of the Khmer Rouge. In two and a half years of Khmer Rouge rule, some one and a half million of Cambodia's seven million people were killed.

It was like Stalin's great purges, or Mao's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, but uniquely concentrated, and unalloyed by any element of economic progress. The furnace of US saturation-bombing had forged a uniquely virulent brand of Stalinism.

Cambodia was in the hands of a small group of intellectuals who dreamed of restoring the country's ancient glories by forced-march autarkic economic development, at the head of an army of peasants who hated cities and civilisation.

It was horrifyingly definitive disproof of the ideas that the Stalinist-led revolutions of the post-war period are somehow bureaucratically deformed workers' revolutions, or at least progressive steps beyond capitalism and towards socialism. Whatever tiny working class had previously existed in Cambodia had been pulverised by the Americans' assault, and then Cambodia's workers became slaves of the Khmer Rouge like everyone else in the country.

Sometimes Stalinist-led movements do deserve socialist support — like the Sandinistas in their fight against Somoza, the contras, and the US. But it is the mass movement that deserves support, despite the Stalinist ideology. Cambodia showed that Stalinist-led movements can be no less reactionary than the most savage fascism.

In Cambodia, the movement behind the Stalinists did not depend even to the slightest extent on working-class support; nor did it even represent a mass rebellion of peasants against exploiting landlords. The social revolt which gave force to the Stalinists' ideology was directed against 'imperialism' but also against all modern civilisation.

The ultra-nationalist Khmer Rouge were bitterly hostile to the Vietnamese Stalinists. Their government had cut all Cambodia's foreign links, except with Vietnam's ancient enemy, China. Goaded by border attacks from the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese marched into Cambodia at the end of 1978, drove the Khmer Rouge into exile, and established a new Vietnamese-backed government. They were greeted as liberators by the Cambodian people.

In time the Cambodians came to resent the Vietnamese as a foreign occupying army (how much so is difficult to know). In any case, the



Vietnamese decided they could no longer afford to keep troops in Cambodia. Their own economy is in ruins, and their chances of breaking the economic blockade by Western powers depend on withdrawal from Cambodia.

The regime left behind in Cambodia by the Vietnamese is not just a puppet administration. It is a bureaucratic one-party state, a variety of Stalinism, but it has done something to reconstruct the country after the wrecking of the Americans and the Khmer Rouge, and it must have some popular support.

Its future, however, is uncertain. The Khmer Rouge is still a formidable force. It has been sustained, funded, and armed by those same Western imperialist rulers who try to use the horrors of the Khmer Rouge's period in power as conclusive argument against revolution of any sort!

Officially there is an alliance between the Khmer Rouge, the supporters of Lon Nol, and the supporters of Sihanouk, all operating from bases in pro-American Thailand and assisted by the US and China.

The Khmer Rouge leaders say that they have changed their views and now believe in free enterprise and

Western democracy; but assuredly not even the US government believes them. The US — and Britain's Tories — have backed the Khmer Rouge on the principle of using any weapon available to strike at their enemy, the Vietnamese. Margaret Thatcher has even said specifically that the Khmer Rouge should have a place in Cambodia's government.

By all accounts the Khmer Rouge's armed forces are much stronger than Lon Nol's or Sihanouk's. If they win, they will discard Sihanouk just as they did in 1975-6.

The way forward for this whole region has been shown by the recent workers' and students' revolts in South Korea and in China. Thailand is a rapidly-growing capitalist economy, an understudy of South Korea; Vietnam has a sizeable working class which could shake its Stalinist rulers as the Chinese workers shook theirs earlier this year. There is a long tradition of Trotskyist activity in Vietnam, and a Vietnamese Trotskyist movement still exists, mostly, for now, based in exile in France.

We should give what help we can to those Trotskyists; and, immediately, fight to stop Western aid to the Khmer Rouge.

## Profit is a jealous god

The Labour Party leaders have got themselves into a mess again.

Neil Kinnock has been anxiously reassuring shareholders in British Telecom and other privatised companies that they will continue to get dividends under a Labour government.

He was scurrying to give the reassurance because the media had interpreted an earlier statement by Bryan Gould as meaning that dividends would not be paid. Gould had said that public utilities should be managed according to the public interest, not profit-making.

Gould is certainly right, but then Kinnock is wrong in his attempt to propose a compromise between profit-making and the public interest.

If a Labour government leaves the bulk of shares in British Telecom, gas, electricity, water and so on in private hands, then it will

face a brutal choice. Either those businesses are run so as to yield maximum profit, or dividends and share prices will tumble.

Profit isn't an optional extra for a company trying to keep its share prices high. It is a cruel and jealous god, tolerating no rivals.

The Tories understand that. They have sacrificed all considerations of public service in order to get the utilities ripe for selling off. They have even promised to indemnify the future private electricity supply companies against the extra costs of nuclear power.

Labour should understand that too. The enterprises denationalised by the Tories should be taken back into full public ownership, with compensation only on the basis of ensuring that small shareholders get back the money they originally put in.

Neil Kinnock would have done better to pay attention to the scien-

tists debating at the British Association conference last week, rather than the baying Tory press. Professor Ian Fells told the conference that market forces were "less than useless" in making sure that energy industries were developed in a sustainable and ecologically sound way.

"Reliance on market forces," he said, "to give the correct signals to the newly privatised power generation companies and entrepreneurial investors seems the most unreasonable optimism".

He spoke not from socialist principle, but from scientific calculation. "It may be that we are privatising our energy industries, however laudable the principle, at just the wrong time."

Labour's leaders say they represent socialist principle. In fact they are so scared of triumphant Toryism that they will not even listen to scientific calculations.

Will the new Sunday survive?

## PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

By Jim Denham

Sales of the "quality" Sundays have been declining for some time.

And it's not surprising when you look at the present abysmal state of once-proud titles like the *Sunday Times* (an overweight bundle of Thatcherite propaganda), the *Observer* (badly discredited by the Al-Fayed/Harrods special edition fiasco) and the *Sunday Telegraph* (in the grip of a faction fight between Peregrine Worsthorpe and Max Hastings' yuppies from the daily paper).

Small wonder that so many people have stopped bothering with a Sunday paper at all, while the "quality" dailies cash in with increasingly bulky Saturday/"Weekend" editions.

In this situation, there can be little doubt that a gap exists for a new quality Sunday paper. Andreas Whittam-Smith has been hinting at plans for a *Sunday Independent* for more than a year, even going so far as to produce some dummies.

But now we have the *Correspondent*: the only question is, can it win over sufficient disaffected *Observer*/*ST*/*Sunday Telegraph* readers to secure a permanent niche for itself? It needs 360,000 regular readers to survive. Last Sunday's first edition sold over 600,000, but much of that can be put down to the curiosity that always accompanies the launch of a new paper.

Encouraging early sales will soon melt away if the product isn't right — as anyone who remembers the ill-fated *News on Sunday* will know.

On the evidence of the first edition, I'd give the *Correspondent* a better than even chance. It looks good (though not as good as the *Independent*, which it fairly obviously tries to copy) and on the whole it is pretty well written — especially the review section which even managed to interest an old philistine like me.

There were no scoops (unless you count an 'Exclusive' about yet another spy biography, wisely relegated to page 3) but it certainly carried more hard news than the average edition of the *Observer* — not a very difficult achievement, admittedly.

The editorial took a solid swipe at Mrs Thatcher's decision to cancel research into sexual behaviour and AIDS ("While she is quite happy to have an acknowledged adulterer in her Cabinet, she knows her party base is strongest amongst the kind of Tories who would rather pretend that AIDS does not exist"), but this was offset by a disappointingly chummy profile of Kenneth Clarke.

Incidentally, a few days before the *Correspondent* appeared, I (together, presumably with a few million other people) received a "personal" letter from Andrew Neil, the man who edits the *Sunday Times* in his spare moments away from Sky TV. Mr Neil offered me many inducements to buy his paper, but the most surprising was its alleged breadth of political discussion: "From Brian Walden on the radical right to Martin Jacques on the new left".

If anything was calculated to boost my support for the *Correspondent* that was it.

## 4 LETTERS

### A fitting monument

#### GRAFFITI

**H**ow green is your water? Lord Crickhowell's is looking pretty murky.

Lord Crickhowell (Nicholas Edwards) used to be the Tories' Secretary of State for Wales. His retirement present consisted of a lordship and a directorship of the Association of British Ports (owner of much of the land around former dockland areas).

Edwards is the man chosen to be chair of the new National Rivers and Water Authority to oversee privatised water.

All that will prove very hard for him in his other little interests. Also a board member of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation, Edwards is the prime mover of a £113 million scheme for a concrete dam to raise the water level in Cardiff Bay.

The idea is to flood over 'unsightly' mud flats as part of a plan for a lucrative docklands-style yuppie housing development.

The 'barrage' scheme will involve enormous environmental damage, expense and corruption and the flooding of many homes. Damage will be caused over a wide area by the raising of the level of groundwater — a fact recognised even in the parliamentary Bill seeking permission to build the dam. A major health hazard will be created by trapped sewage and industrial waste.

It is said that fading politicians like to build monuments to themselves, to be remembered by. Whilst there could be no more fitting monument to those involved in the Tories' water privatisation than a stinking algae-covered cesspool flooding out hundreds of homes with sewage and waste, Cardiff residents have good reason to wish these people would build their monuments elsewhere.

**J**uly 1989 saw more strike days than any month since the height of the miners' strike in 1984.

Railworkers, dockers, town hall workers, BBC staff and London Underground workers contributed to a total of 2.37 million strike days.

The latest reports from the Department of Employment also show that the total number of workers in employment is nearly half a million smaller than previous government estimates. Fewer new jobs have been created than the Tories claim, and much of the drop in official unemployment figures is a result of statistical fiddling or claimants being forced off the dole without getting jobs.

**T**he big Green vote in the Euro-election was strongest in Tory areas, and a recent opinion survey confirms the idea that Green voters are mostly middle-class.

27 per cent of Green voters are in the 'AB' social groups — professional and managerial — which include only 17 per cent of the whole electorate.

Green voters are also younger than the average. They include almost equal numbers of men and women.



Glue-sniffing in Rio de Janeiro — the problem is not chemistry but poverty and despair

**A** lot of the horror stories about cocaine are wrong, or at least misrepresented, according to research reported in the *Guardian* last week.

Two Canadian researchers reckon that only one or two per cent of cocaine users become addicted, and tranquillisers and amphetamines are a much bigger risk.

Many American inner-city areas are in a terrible state of decay, linked to cocaine. But the chemical or medical characteristics of cocaine are not the decisive cause.

The many Wall Street yuppies who are heavy users of cocaine are doing themselves great harm, but they are not transforming the business area where they work or the wealthy suburbs where they live into urban deserts, any more than the huge toll on health of alcohol and tobacco abuse creates instant wastelands.

The real disasters come where cocaine is mixed with poverty, unemployment, social despair, and the US government's noisy but utterly ineffective attempts to suppress the drug problem by police action. There, you get illegal drug trading becoming the economic mainstay of whole populations; penniless addicts desperate to get money to buy drugs; and the use of impure or specially dangerous forms of drugs, because they are cheaper.

**L**ast year the government put £2 billion extra into the Health Service. Or so it said.

Last week health authorities published their calculations. They reckon English health authorities in fact had only between £100 and £200 million extra. Even that is only a notional figure, dependent on the estimate that the health authorities saved £150 million on "cost improvement programmes" and had a £237 million windfall from a cut in superannuation contributions.

Without those factors, the health authorities were about £200 million worse off after the Tories' generosity.

They reckon that the Health Service is about £500 million short of the budget it needs to maintain standards as they were in 1980-1.

**W**hat makes a good boss? Vicious ruthlessness clearly ranks high with the 1,760 business people and financial analysts polled recently by the *Economist* magazine.

Their number one choice was BTR — notorious for sacking the entire workforce when they struck at its BTR-Sarmcol subsidiary in South Africa.

### If the Japanese like hurling, why not the English too?

#### LETTERS

**I** am not sure that Pat Murphy (SO 415) meant to imply that the survival of Gaelic games like hurling is dependent on the strength of pro-Nationalist feeling in a given area, but this is certainly the impression he gives.

That the Gaelic Athletics Association is a nasty sectarian organisation there is no doubt. But the games themselves are attractive in their own right.

Hurling is a game that can be played by anybody, requiring only a stick and a ball, and thrives in every part of Ireland outside Dublin. Indeed, after years of decline the game is going through somewhat of a renaissance, with previously weak teams like Galway coming through to dominate the game in the '80s.

A recent letter in the *Guardian* described hurling as "a sport of the Gods" and "the original poetry in motion". As a long-time follower of the sport, I subscribe to this view.

As for sectarianism, the Irish press has a much better record of reporting sport in Britain, like the Football League, than their counterparts in England have on sport in Ireland. Indeed, despite the large Irish population of Britain, Irish people have to order their own press if they want the Gaelic games results, let alone reports.

Last year Channel 4 dropped live coverage of the hurling and Gaelic football All-Ireland finals, only re-scheduling them this year after a lot of pressure from the Irish community.

I know Pat was attacking sectarianism and didn't mean to infer that soccer was somehow innately more cosmopolitan than the Gaelic games. All sport, and particularly games like soccer and hurling which arise out of the struggle of oppressed people, should be fostered internationally for the enjoyment of all.

As well as seeing soccer develop unhindered in Ireland, how about hurling as an option in English sports, for boys and girls?

Finally, it is worth noting that a Japanese TV network recently negotiated with Irish TV and the Gaelic Athletics Association for the exclusive rights to show the top hurling matches.

Liam Conway  
Nottingham



A sport of the Gods?

### Wendy Bartle is right, but so are the parents

**A**s a trade unionist who's been involved in getting people 're-deployed' because of councils making cuts, I read the article on the case of Wendy Bartle with interest, and think there are real problems with a 'pure trade union' approach to the issue.

As an individual union member Wendy Bartle has a powerful case and should be defended. But we should recognise that 're-deployments' are a result of cuts, and cuts mean that equal opportunities for jobs go out of the window. Labour councils like Birmingham pretend you can do both —

but they're not telling the truth. The main problem I see with the parents' protest is that it's been channelled and confined to protesting about the way one job is filled, not about the abysmal services provided for speakers of minority languages, and the way they're the first to be cut.

We should welcome the fact that there are protests against the insensitive and bureaucratic treatment meted out to ethnic minority communities by local councils as they keep making cuts. But we should argue to shift the protest to all cuts and make sure it is not seen as taking it out on other victims of them.

Nik Barstow  
Islington

### Cuts behind the Springfield school affair

**I**n your report on the Springfield school affair (SO 415) you rightly point out the trade union issues involved with Mrs Bartle's appointment.

It would indeed set a dangerous precedent if parents succeeded in upsetting appointments they didn't like.

However, the Asian parents may have justifiable grievances about the way in which the school relates to them. Whether it is Mrs Bartle or not, surely a school with 90% Asian pupils should have members of staff who speak Asian languages? Mrs Bartle should be able to take on interpreter with her when necessary. In Coventry, schools which have

a high percentage of Asian pupils have appointed to their staff a 'community language aide'. This of course demands extra resources, which Coventry Local Education Authority has made available.

As I understand it, the same situation does not pertain in Birmingham, therefore Mrs Bartle will indeed find her job difficult.

There must be underlying problems between the school and the parents. One of the parents claims that the governing body has a white majority and virtually all the teachers are non-Asian.

This situation is not unique to Springfield. What is the school and the Local Education Authority doing to correct these imbalances? Do

they operate any policies to encourage Asian parents, Asian members of the community and Asian teachers to get involved or come and work in the school?

It is through discussions with the parents on these issues and agreement on policies to encourage more Asian people to participate and work in the school that a way forward can be found.

More resources could be made available for appointments like community language aides.

The way forward is not to attack one unfortunate teacher who has herself become a victim of the inadequacies of the education system.

Ann Duggan  
Coventry

### Frontline Worker

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# Students fight poll tax

## POLL TAX

By Mark Sandell, Kent Area NUS Convenor (personal capacity)

The college term starts with students facing an unparalleled attack on our civil liberties from mass registration for the poll tax.

Students have been singled out for mass registration. Unlike anyone else, students will not be

asked to fill out registration forms. Instead we will have our private educational records handed over to the poll tax registration officer. In most colleges the government have chosen one person to be legally liable for handing over those records. Usually this is the official in the college who collects and keeps up to date student records.

This use of student academic records is not only a direct attack on students' right to have control over data given in good faith, it will also cost colleges money they can ill-afford to spend.

When a student is registered for the tax they will be issued with a bar-coded ID card. No-one has been able to explain why students need yet another means of identification.

At the moment the card is com-

pletely useless and never needs to be shown to anyone. But how long will that last? Is the state really likely to ignore the fact that poll tax will give it, for the first time, a national database covering everyone over 18, on a linked set of local computers? And how long until everyone has to carry ID cards?

Students will have to pay 20% of the standard rate of local poll tax. In some areas this will be £130.

Combined with the barring of all students from all benefits, including housing benefit, and the introduction of loans for Higher Education students, this will help to drive all but the rich out of full-time education and put many young people onto the streets.

In Scotland there has been no increase in the grant to cover the poll tax, so that the poll tax means yet

another cut in student income on top of the 21% cut in student grants since 1979.

If the poll tax is to be stopped, the campaign must start in our colleges from the first day of term. College anti-poll tax unions must be set up, and should be used to draw in workers and build links with college trade unions, who will be involved in compiling and handing over students' details. College groups should link up with local community campaigns.

Students should be mobilised to refuse to give details like new addresses, and to demand control over their data.

The National Union of Students has passed, at its last two national conferences, a policy calling for the National Executive to run a campaign of mass non-payment. The NUS women's conference passed a position proposed by Left Unity supporters for a campaign of mass non-payment and non-implementation.

## Campaigning in Cardiff

Mary Williams reports from Cardiff

Although ordinary people are strongly against the poll tax, the campaigns are still not really off the ground in Cardiff.

This week the Labour Council has organised a series of public meetings to explain the Tory tax to the local people. The meeting in Cathays ward was attended by over 100 people, who voted overwhelmingly for non-implementation.

The intervention by Cathay's anti-poll tax campaign was not well thought out, and the mood of the

meeting could have been used to strengthen the campaign.

Again, in Splott ward, over 200 people attended, and there was an angry response to councillors who said you can't break the law. Adamsdown and Splott anti-poll tax campaign organised a petition and handed out leaflets announcing the next meeting of the campaign which were received well, so hopefully the poor response to the campaign so far will change now that the threat of the poll tax looms nearer.

The Labour Party has done very little over organising opposition to the tax — we need now to turn the campaigns outwards from local communities to fight in the Labour Party, win the support of councillor

and launch a determined campaign against legal action against non-payers.

We should be lobbying City party, passing resolutions through our wards and putting councillors on the spot, if we are going to defeat the poll tax.

A lobby of the City Council is planned for 27 September, called by the local anti-poll tax campaigns. This is a good opportunity to really get down and do business.

Labour councillors were elected by ordinary people who cannot afford to pay the poll tax. They shouldn't be allowed to get away with implementing it.

Contact: Adamsdown and Splott Anti-Poll Tax Campaign at Cardiff 460565

## Poll tax throws Tories into disarray

Thatcher has lost the propaganda war over the poll tax, according to a *Sunday Telegraph* survey published last Sunday, 17th.

Over half the electorate in England and Wales now believe they will be worse off when the poll tax is introduced, compared with fewer than a third when the idea was first raised in 1986.

Most people think that the poll tax is even less fair than the present rates system, and even Tory voters are becoming more and more hostile to the Tory flagship.

This survey makes bad reading for Thatcher and her cronies, at a time when they are facing a Tory backbench revolt over the 'safety net' system, whereby rich areas will initially pay a higher poll tax to subsidise poorer areas.

Recognising the threat to their parliamentary careers, many shire

Tory MPs are pressing for an extra £650 million to be made available to cushion to impact of the 'safety net', threatening to vote against the government unless the Treasury coughs up.

Chancellor Lawson, however, is at present standing firm against any pay-out, and the row threatens to spill over onto the floor of the Tory Party conference.

Labour stands to benefit from this unaccustomed bitter division in the Tory ranks — but Neil Kinnock doesn't want to know.

Rank and file Labour Party activists must organise in their constituencies against the poll tax — by setting up ward-based anti-poll tax unions and linking up with community-based mass non-payment campaigns — to put pressure on the Labour leadership to lead a real fight against the Tories, and to ensure that Labour councils don't do the Tories' dirty work for them.

## \$50 billion from the starving to the bankers

### WORLD BRIEFS

In 1988, Third World governments squeezed a total of \$50 billion out of their people — who often live on the brink of starvation — in order to meet debt payments to fat-cat international bankers.

It will be about the same this year, because the Third World's total debt decreased only marginally in 1988, from \$998 billion to \$993 billion.

In the 1970s international banks, flush with cash from the oil-exporting countries' surpluses, lent billions to Third World countries,

especially the more developed ones. This debt explosion became a debt crisis in 1982, when recession in the richer countries cut down the Third World's export markets and rising interest rates increased their burden of repayments.

The newly-elected government in El Salvador, headed by the right-wing ARENA party, has agreed to a programme of talks with the left-wing guerrilla movement FMLN.

A preliminary meeting on 15 September agreed to monthly peace talks with observers from the United Nations and the Organisation of American States. The next meeting, on 16-17 October, will discuss a

ceasefire in the civil war which has raged for a decade.

The visit has tanked us with new energy and new ideas," declared a Soviet manager after going on a management course in West Germany.

Under a scheme organised by a West German businessman in cooperation with the Soviet government, the managers spend three weeks in West Germany studying and visiting factories, six months back home working with West German advisers, another three weeks at the management school, another six months at home, and then return to West Germany for a final exam.

Perestroika means more modern methods to exploit workers.

### Socialist Forum

A balance sheet

### 40 years on from the Chinese revolution

#### Speakers

John O'Mahony (editor, Socialist Organiser)  
Lam Siu Wai (National Committee, CSC)  
A speaker from Socialism and Revolution

#### Chair

Cheung Siu Ming (National Sec, CSC\*)

Wednesday 4 October

7.30

Small Hall, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq  
(Tube: Holborn)

\* personal capacity

This is the seventh in a series of forum discussions organised by Socialist Organiser, Women's Fightback and Socialism and Revolution (Iran)

# Why transport is a series of disasters

**Duncan Chapple looks at the decaying transport services of Tory Britain**

In ten years as Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher hasn't used public transport. As she swans around in her Daimler or her Jaguar, people travel to work in conditions that would be illegal for the transport of cattle.

Over the past years, crowded, expensive and dangerous transport has become the rule for working class people. While investment goes into transport for the rich like Intercity or the Channel Tunnel, most people get nothing. Traffic on the roads in London moves slower than it did at the start of the century, and it's getting slower still.

The 'Marchioness' disaster on the Thames is one of many water-transport disasters. And there will be more. Seventeen out of 72 ferries, nearly one in four, failed a standard Department of Transport test for stability earlier this year, but Tories will let them sail until 1992.

On the rail we saw three serious crashes in as many months this year. In the air, there were over 1,200 deaths in civil aviation accidents worldwide in 1988. And it's still the safest way to travel!

But transport which cuts corners on safety is more profitable than safe transport. Crowded transport is more profitable than uncrowded transport. Expensive transport is more profitable than cheap transport. Skippy public services which drive more people to use private cars make for more profits all round than ample public services which make people less willing to buy cars and petrol.

Fewer workers, with heavier workloads and lower pay, mean more loot for the bosses.

What's good for people is bad for profits. And we live in a society geared to profits.

Not all capitalist states are as blinkered and single-minded about profit-seeking as Tory Britain. The Tories are not only aiming to turn over transport to private profit, they are also dedicated to breaking the power of workers in the transport industries. For them, that is the way to rebuild British capitalism.

The waste and the failure of the transport system in Britain today is a direct result of the profit system. One of the biggest trends in transport since the war has been the shift from rail onto the road.

Private cars and private road haulage have been encouraged. The building of the motorways and the over 700% growth in European car production (from under 1.6 million to nearly 11.4 million cars a year) during the '50s and '60s were central to the post-war boom.

But road transport has huge social costs. If people travel by private car rather than public transport, it means extra road congestion, delays, stress for travellers, accidents and pollution.

The individual choosing to go by car doesn't have to weigh up those costs, only the speed and comfort of the car against the cost of petrol. For the Tories' big business backers, more car travel is good

news — more profits, more consumption, more growth.

Today, the Tories make sure the road still rules. They have sold off the national bus and freight business, and they plan to get shot of the rest — producing smaller and more 'profitable' (more expensive!) operations.

For most people, that's no good. 39% of households don't have a car. In Scotland, where the Tories are keenest on rail closures, the figure is 49%. We have to sit and suffer while they count the profits in their chauffeur-driven cars or their luxury jets.

Most capitalist governments try to put some elements of order into the chaos of capitalism. The Tory government in Britain has done very little, and it is doing less — privatisations, reduced subsidies and the deregulation of local buses.

How are things different elsewhere? Take the cost of public transport in big cities. In Milan, a ticket costs 29% of its true cost. In Paris, 35% — and it is common practice there for employers to pay half or all their workers' transport costs. But in London, a passenger pays 84.5% of the full cost themselves.

French and Italian bosses care about profits just as much as Thatcher. Cheap public transport works for them because it keeps their cities working well.

That would be just as useful in Britain, where congested roads cost us £15 billion a year. But the Tories don't care. They have taken a firm line against Labour Councils trying to improve transport.

Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council crumbled when the courts ruled against its 'fares fair' policy. Now peaktime rail arrivals in London break records — over 468,000 a day — and the system is giving way under the strain. But the government insists that BR can only invest where it can get an 8% return.

Outside London, many Labour Councils are turning to light rail systems like the Tyneside Metro to ease the load. Construction work on Manchester's system is expected to start next month. The system was planned to cost only £85 million, compared to £156 million for a conventional rail system. Light rail 'trams' can move 260 passengers cleanly and safely, producing no diesel fumes.

There are many other ways that transport could be improved, and with it the cities we live in: cheaper or free public transport; more investment in public transport; building car-free areas into the hearts of our towns and cities (as in some West German cities); ending the subsidies on company cars; developing dial-a-ride services, and so on. Of course the Tories and the Labour leadership will say that the money is not there.

They are short-sighted. Transport is now responsible for 13% of the gases which cause the 'greenhouse effect'! Public transport uses less energy, it takes up less land, it gives different groups of transport users better access.

In Britain, plans to improve transport are stifled by lack of government support. In the rest of Europe taxes are raised to pay for transport. In France it is raised by a 'payroll tax' on employers in the area. In Germany, money comes from taxing petrol heavily. We



A rail strike: part of the Tories' policy is to bash public transport unions. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, Report

ought to think about those alternatives. For the Tories, however, investing in public transport is a waste.

The Tories are wasting not only time and resources, but also lives.

In March the Transport Minister, Michael Portillo, authorised 17 unsafe ferries to go on sailing.

When the London Underground was extended to Heathrow Airport, the Department of Transport's railway inspectorate tried to stop London fire officers enforcing safety measures on platforms and subways — despite warnings that escape facilities were inadequate. Their reason? That the warnings came 'at a time of very considerable financial restrictions'. The Tories refuse to put up the cash to make transport safe.

The lack of safety is even clearer with private transport — not just in badly maintained equipment, but also overworked workers. In the air, for instance, while ageing planes creak and delays increase, more and more pilots are frequently

too tired to carry out their job safely.

Cumulative pilot fatigue, building up after a series of night flights, is the greatest single risk in air travel today. Pilots are made to work all the hours that can be squeezed out. Day and night work are mixed with no regular shift pattern. That can lead to acute fatigue.

What the air companies can't pound out of the crew, they pound out of the planes. Older planes are kept in the air for longer. Frequent inspections don't show up the hairline cracks that often lead to planes failing or falling apart in mid-air.

On average, planes in the Pan Am fleet are 64% older than in the recently privatised British Airways fleet. TWA planes are 52% older. That leads to more risks and more mistakes merely because profit comes first.

Socialists should demand adequate cleaning, maintenance and checking of all transport. We need decent independent safety inspec-

tors — who don't spend their time covering up mistakes as we've seen the Department of Transport bureaucrats do.

We have to raise the arguments for the workers to control and inspect what goes on, to make sure it is safe and that corners aren't being cut.

To stop the job cuts and the massive overtime, we should fight for a sliding scale of hours. That means instead of overtime, the bosses take on new workers with permanent jobs. If the bosses have some problem and they want to cut down the work they should pay, not us. They should cut the working week with no loss of pay or jobs.

A socialist transport policy would change the way things worked. We would aim to develop rail and buses, community transport services, and improve things for pedestrians and cyclists. But more than that, we'd put the ability to choose where they go and how they go into hands of ordinary people, not the bosses and bankers.

## The UDR: old wine in new bottles

### NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

**T**his week Mrs Thatcher visited Northern Ireland to give special praise to the Ulster Defence Regiment.

The Regiment has been under particular criticism recently because some of its members have been found with classified security documents which have the names of IRA suspects and have been passed on to Loyalist paramilitaries.

Nationalists have always been highly suspicious of the UDR, and the Irish Foreign Minister, Gerry Collins, appears to have made an issue of their conduct at the recent Anglo-Irish talks.

Mrs Thatcher made a special flight to Northern Ireland last Tuesday to assure all of us that the UDR are a "very, very, very brave group of men". The official line is not quite so strident but it is that the sectarian assassins are just a few bad apples in an otherwise fragrant barrel.

But what is the UDR? It was first set up in 1970 to replace the infamous and discredited B-Specials. The Specials were a police auxiliary who, before the Troubles, had the job of helping to deal with security, public disorder and policing the border.

They were very closely linked with the Orange Order, and had a reputation for viciousness

throughout the Catholic community.

In 1968 they openly attacked Civil Rights marches. They were instrumental in setting up the marchers who were attacked by Loyalist thugs at Burntollet Bridge in Derry in 1969.

All that is worth remembering because, although the B-Specials were disbanded as a concession to the Catholics when the Army went in, many of those who joined the new-image UDR in 1970 were in fact ex-members of the disbanded B-Specials. Their record since then suggests that the UDR is simply old wine in new bottles.

Very quickly the UDR, like the Army, found itself in a war with paramilitaries — especially the IRA. There was never any prospect of using the Regiment against Loyalist groups or resistance.

When power stations had to be staffed during the 1974 Ulster Workers Council Strike, the British Army was used in the knowledge that to call on the UDR at a period of Protestant solidarity would only have deepened the crisis.

In July 1975 three members of the Southern Irish Miami Showband were killed in a sectarian bombing. They were entirely innocent — except of being from the Republic. The bombing was attributed to the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

Unfortunately for the killers, two of them were also blown up in the attack. And it was revealed that UDR members had planned and carried out the operation.

The Showband had been returning from a concert in Bambridge, and had only stopped because they had been flagged down by a security force patrol.

Despite this type of incident, the policy of the Labour government, between 1974 and 1979, was to increase the role of the UDR and RUC. The British Army was to be gradually withdrawn and more control was to be given to locally controlled forces in a strategy known as "Ulsterisation".

Attempts to attract Catholics to the Regiment have failed dismally, and not just because of the IRA's determination to deter likely recruits. Several Loyalist paramilitaries have turned out to be members or ex-members. The part-time force is a training ground for paramilitaries.

Some of the problem is implicitly recognised by the government. The UDR, for example, is not issued with rubber bullets, and Britain avoids using them for riot control.

These and recent events explode the pretence that this is in any sense a neutral force. The assumptions of the British government in 1969 were that they could develop a reform programme which would get broad agreement, and then establish local security forces with the support of the majority on both sides to deal with these "men of violence" who wanted to disrupt reform. The reality was that they rearm one side in the communal conflict.

That side has resisted every serious reform and the government has no force which can compete with them.

Insofar as the government tries to beat down Republicanism they can rely on the UDR. Should they have to deal with a Loyalist mutiny or backlash they can not.

In that event, Mrs Thatcher and others will learn what a "very, very, very brave group of men" the UDR can be.



After the Anglo-Irish conference, Britain's Peter Brooke looks grim, and Dublin's Gerry Collins apprehensive

## How the free market works in the US

America's airways were "de-regulated" in 1978. All government controls on fares and routes were removed.

Fares did fall. They have risen by about 20% less than general inflation since 1978.

But chaos has boomed. Many scheduled flights cannot possibly take off on time, because sharply-competing airlines schedule more planes for peak times than airports can possibly handle.

The infrastructure of the airways has been increasingly strained. Airports are heavily over-used. Profit-hungry airlines are using older and older planes. In 1981 America's entire staff of air traffic controllers were sacked when they struck, and replaced by scabs. Safety standards are at risk.

Airlines have attacked unions. The fastest-growing airline in the US is Continental, part of Frank Lorenzo's Texas Air empire. When Lorenzo took over Continental, he smashed the unions and halved wages.

As for free competition, that is vanishing fast. After a wave of takeovers and mergers, the eight biggest airlines control over 90% of the business, and their control over take-off "slots" at airports will block new competitors.

Airline profits, after a dip in the mid-'80s, are booming. Meanwhile, mass public transport in the US — subways and buses — is in acute decay, the rail network has almost disappeared, and the roads get jammed solid as fast as they can be built.

# Two Germanies, two oppressive systems

By Bruce Robinson

**1** 4,000 East Germans have crossed from Hungary to the West in the few weeks that the border with Austria has been open to them.

This has been the first chance East Germans have had to leave en masse since the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Most of these emigrants are not leaving because of political persecution or absolute economic need. Political opponents or absolute economic need. Political opponents of the regime in the 'German Democratic Republic' (GDR) are usually the least willing to leave and often the Stalinist regime is only too willing to give them a one-way ticket to the West.

Nor do the emigrants come from the worst-off sections of society. According to an analysis of those arriving at one camp in West Germany, 90% are skilled workers who have served apprenticeships and a further 7% are graduates. They are overwhelmingly young and would probably have had reasonably comfortable lives had they stayed.

As far as one can tell from interviews in the press, their motives include a desire for more access to consumer goods and better job opportunities, and an almost universal rejection of the stifling, ever-present, paternalistic party/state machine in the GDR.

Whatever their motives, the exodus represents a massive rejection of the East German Stalinist regime. If many more people with skills leave, it will begin to have an impact on the GDR economy, which only has a working population of 9 million.

The GDR is both one of the most politically and ideologically rigid states in the Stalinist bloc, and the most prosperous economically. The two go together: while the economies of the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland had collapsed to such an extent that change was unavoidable, the GDR has had more economic room for manoeuvre.

A journalist on the SED (East German Communist Party) paper *Berliner Zeitung* makes this clear: "Only thanks to the economic help of the Federal Republic can the GDR leadership stand and say we don't need perestroika because we are so strong economically." (The GDR gains a lot from gifts from the West to its citizens, and transfers such as payment for the use of roads to Berlin.)

Shops in the GDR (at least in the big cities — in the countryside there are more shortages) don't have

empty shelves or lack very basic necessities, as in Poland. However, what there is is often drab, and people seeking high quality consumer goods have to buy them with foreign currency in special shops.

The GDR does have the industrial base to produce fridges, washing machines, furniture and so on — they flow across the border to the West at little above cost price, ending up in MFI or the West German equivalent.

A comparison of the GDR's standard of living with that of the Federal Republic depends on what indicators one chooses. If you measure incomes against the cheap rents, free services (health and education) and cheap basic foodstuffs in the East, then standards are roughly similar East and West; if you take account of the fact that expensive consumer goods can usually only be obtained in the East as gifts or for foreign currency, a ratio of 3:1 in favour of the Federal Republic is more realistic.

The East's standard of living has stagnated in the 1980s, despite a growth rate last year of around 3%.

The GDR is one of the most ideologically rigid and traditional Stalinist regimes in the Eastern bloc — to the extent that it openly rejects Gorbachev's limited reforms and is now looking towards stronger ties with Rumania and China. The old leadership around Honecker is the last generation to have been handpicked by Stalin, while Hitler was in power.

Many of the Stalinist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe can shift to a more market-oriented and less openly repressive regime while still retaining their privileges and control of the state, but it is not so easy for the East Germans. If it were not for the existence of two different social systems in the parts of Germany occupied by the Western powers and the Soviet Union after 1945, Germany would not have been divided and the GDR would never have been created. (Stalin originally wanted a united, but neutral capitalist Germany on the lines of Finland or Austria today. But the Cold War aims of the Western allies wrecked that prospect by 1948, since when the GDR has served as a 'frontline state' for the Soviet Union.)

Even today the GDR depends on this difference for its raison d'être. A leading SED ideologue recently summed this up: "What reason would a capitalist GDR have for existing alongside a capitalist Federal Republic? None, naturally."

The GDR, unlike the other Eastern Bloc countries, has no history as a national unit, though in recent years the GDR has made increasingly bizarre attempts to link



Refugees in West Germany telephone friends and relatives back in East Germany

the 'Marxist-Leninist' regime to the heritage of German nationalism. First Martin Luther ceased to be a reactionary advocating a bloodbath of the peasants and became a national hero. Then the SED claimed to be the true heir of the Prussian state and the 18th century absolute monarch, Frederick the Great. (There may be some truth in this one...Erich Honecker is not known for his sense of irony!)

The ideologising of everyday life goes all the way through to being assured that waiters in every restaurant are serving you in the spirit of "socialist emulation". The SED would itself, no doubt, win the "socialist emulation" prize for hollow rhetoric in Eastern Europe.

Despite endless exhortation and being able to deliver at least some of the goods, the regime has still been unable to create a solid base of support outside the ranks of the party itself. One complaint of many of those leaving, and oppositionists remaining, is the absence of any opportunity for a real public debate on any issue. The party and state take the best decisions on everyone's behalf, in true paternalistic style, and smother any attempt at participation in decision-making or even discussion. Another is the easy comparison of Germans in the West, available through access to Western TV and radio.

But what really awaits the emigrants in the Federal Republic?

Despite the apparent warm welcome, the government has already initiated legislation to exclude East German emigrants from receiving full unemployment benefits. There have also already been stories of employers offering jobs at low wage levels to exploit the emigrants' ignorance of West German law.

A positive sign is that in one camp local trade unionists have been holding meetings and distributing leaflets advising them of their rights.

On the whole the emigrants have skills that are in some demand, though there is already high unemployment among teachers in West Germany and technically trained workers have difficulty matching exactly the skills required for similar work.

The massive wave of German refugees from Eastern Europe immediately after 1945 formed a major right-wing bloc in West German politics, arguing for a refusal to recognise the GDR or the borders of Germany after 1945. This is unlikely to be the case now.

Sociologists who have followed the fate of a group of 32,000 refugees from the GDR in 1984 report more ambiguous feelings. After five years only 18% were totally positive about their move and 22% were totally negative, the rest were undecided.

Many found problems with the

individualism, lack of human warmth and having to provide for themselves many things they were used to the state providing. 38% couldn't find jobs relevant to their skills.

But the first 14,000, at least, of this wave of refugees will probably find jobs and housing and become integrated fairly quickly into West German society. But if there are a lot more people leaving the GDR, they won't be so lucky. Ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union, many of whom cannot speak German already face severe problems — and so, even more so, do the Gastarbeiter from Turkey and Southern Europe.

That so many people take the first opportunity to leave the GDR for good shows that the Stalinist state has nothing to offer, politically or economically, as a socialist alternative to West Germany. Yet in the long run leavers will do little to change that society, leaving those remaining more resigned and the political opposition more isolated.

The real result may be to reinforce the systems that exist on both sides of the border, states which have been at the heart of the status quo in Eastern Europe since 1945.

Only a fight for a democratic, working class socialism can provide an alternative to the unemployment and exploitation in the West and the bureaucratic police state nightmare of the East German state.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Thursday 21 September**  
Newcastle SO: 'The Alternative to the Policy Review'. Moorside School, 7.30

**Saturday 23 September**  
Campaign Group of Labour MPs: one day seminar — 'Planning for Victory'. Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7, 11.30. Conference fee £2, to Jeremy Corbyn, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N7

**Sunday 24 September**  
North London SO: 'Solidarity with China's workers and students'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

**Wednesday 27 September**  
South London SO public meeting: 'Bankers and bureaucrats trap Solidarnosc'. The Two Eagles, Austral St, nr Elephant and Castle,

7.30  
**Thursday 28 September**  
Nottingham SO: 'What is socialism?'. International Community Centre, Mansfield Road, 7.30

**Friday 29 September**  
Leeds Socialist Organiser and Socialist Outlook debate: 'Where is the USSR going?'. Leeds Poly Student Union, 7.30

**Sunday 1 October**  
North London SO: 'Social Democracy goes Thatcherite'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

**Sunday 1 October**  
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign: 'Sandinista Sprint', sponsored run and dance for Nicaragua. Brockwell Park, Brixton, SW9, 11.00. Details from NSC, 23 Beviden St, London N1 6BH (253 0246)

**Sunday 1 October**  
Labour Left Liaison conference fringe meeting: 'The Policy Review and the Left'. Speakers include Tony Benn. Corn Exchange, Brighton, 8.00

**Sunday 1 October**  
Campaign for Labour Party Democracy pre-conference rally. Speakers include Tony Benn. Corn

Exchange, Dome complex, Church St/New Rd, Brighton, 10.00

**Sunday 1 October**  
CND 'Rally for a nuclear-free future' at Labour Party conference. 'The Level', Lewes Rd, Brighton, 12.00

**Monday 2 October**  
Labour Women's Action Committee conference fringe meeting. The Old Ship Hotel, Brighton, 1.00

**Tuesday 3 October**  
Labour Party Black Sections conference fringe meeting. Royal Albion Hotel, Old Steine, Brighton, 12.30

**Tuesday 3 October**  
Chinese Solidarity Campaign fringe meeting at Labour Party conference. Speaker: Cheung Siu Ming. Curzon Hotel, Brighton, 6.00

**Tuesday 3 October**  
Labour CND conference fringe meeting. Norfolk Resort Hotel, 7.30

**Tuesday 3 October**  
Canterbury SO: 'Socialists and the Labour Party'. KJCR III

**Wednesday 4 October**  
CLPs Conference fringe meeting at Labour Party conference. Curzon Hotel, 1.00

**Wednesday 4 October**  
London Socialist Forum: 'The Chinese Revolution 40 years on'.

Speakers: John O'Mahony, Lam Siu Wai and others. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 7.30

**Saturday 7 October**  
Socialist Lecturers' Alliance: 'NAT-FHE 1989 Pay Claim Action Conference'. New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Rd, Birmingham B20

**Sunday 8 October**  
Socialist Platform Memorial Meeting for Harry Wicks. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1, 3.00

**Sunday 8 October**  
Canterbury SO day school: 'Workers' Liberty 1989'. Keynes College, University of Kent, room JCR111, 9.30am

**Monday 9 October**  
Sheffield SO: 'Stalin's heirs face the workers'. SCCAU, 73 West St, 7.30

**Wednesday 11 October**  
Cardiff SO: 'After Labour Party Conference'. The Comet, Moira St, near Cardiff Royal Infirmary, 7.30

**Thursday 12 October**  
North London Women for Socialism: 'The future of socialist feminism'. Speakers: Martha Osamor, Nadine Finch and others. Red Rose, Seven Sisters Rd, N7, 7.30

**Saturday 14 October**  
Socialist Movement supporters in the Labour Party meeting. Key Books, 136 Digbeth, Birmingham, 11.30. Contact Davy Jones 01-607 9579

**Friday 3 November**  
History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601)

**Saturday 4 November**  
'Fight for the Right to Study! Defend NUS!' Conference organised by Kent Area NUS. PCL, Marylebone Rd, London W1, 11.30. Details: Mark Sandell, Kent Area NUS, 0227 766725

**Saturday 11 November**  
Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions'. Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond St, 10.30. Credentials £6 waged, £4 unwaged from Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1

**Friday 17 November**  
Labour Youth conference (three days), Bournemouth

**Friday 17 November**  
CND annual conference (three days). City University, London EC1. Contact CND, 22-24 Underwood St, London N1 7JG



# "Rosa Luxemburg would turn in her grave"

## A refugee describes life in East Germany

**A refugee from East Berlin spoke to Gary Scott from Socialist Organiser about conditions in East Germany, the nature of the opposition movement, and how he escaped**

**worked as a tailor, working at home. It's common for women to work in the home, but not for men.**

It's difficult for men to get part-time work. You have to be ill or handicapped. The pay for part-time work is very poor. The minimum wage in East Germany is 360 DDR marks per month (£120). The minimum pension is also 360 DDR marks.

The pay is so poor that people have to have more than one job. People often have to work an extra ten hours a week in restaurants or similar places at the weekend. It's allowed for people to earn up to 3,000 DDR marks per annum on top of their normal wage.

Sometimes people feel it is necessary to do work illegally. If you are caught you could be put in prison. Sometimes people use another person's name so that they can earn up to 6,000 DDR marks.

I wanted to live in freedom. There were a number of reasons why I wanted to leave. I wanted to travel around the world rather than the Eastern Bloc countries.

It's difficult just travelling in the Eastern Bloc. Nobody trusts each other. You never know who you are talking to. You could be talking to a Stasi (a member of the plain-clothes police, the Staatssicherheitsdienst).

I wanted to set up my own business but found it very difficult. I filled in all the necessary forms and made all the preparations to set up my business, but the government said I couldn't do it. I got a job working as a tailor for the theatre. I had to work eight and three quarter hours a day and was only paid 360 DDR marks a month.

It was May 1988 when I decided to escape. There were three possibilities. The official way is to fill out a form. This is difficult for young people and it's a long process.

The second option was to fill in a form to visit a friend or relative in West Berlin who is ill.

The third option was to escape.

The first option was impossible.

It takes years and I would have problems because I had not been in the army. When I was approached to go in the army I was too young. If I had been old enough I would have refused to go into the army.

The second option was a problem. I hadn't worked in a factory, so if I wanted to visit somebody in the West I would not be able to get a written guarantee from a trade union official or supervisor that I could be relied on to return to the East. So any request I made would be turned down.

The only option was to escape. In East Berlin there is a hospital called Charitee. Normally it is not allowed to walk near the wall but along the street near the hospital you can walk quite close to the wall. From this place I could observe everything that was going on around the wall, and I made arrangements with a friend in West Berlin to help me escape.

Near the hospital there is a house where it was possible to see straight through and observe the wall. On the night of the escape the glass had been changed so that it was impossible to see through. And there were guards at the wall that I had not seen before.

I waited for the soldiers to leave for an hour and a half, all the time getting more and more nervous. All the time military vehicles went past, patrolling the wall.

After waiting for more than an hour and a half I decided to go. I had with me a four metre pole, an anchor, and a rope ladder to get over the first wall, a fence, and the outside wall. I knew I had to move quickly because of the guards.

With the four metre pole I pole-vaulted the first wall; but I lost the anchor on the barbed wire. From the top of the wall I could see a taxi. This meant that the guards had changed. I knew I had no hope of escape, because I knew I had been seen. I jumped down and was taken by the guards.

Cars came immediately. I was forced to lie down and was searched for weapons. They asked me if I was alone. They took me underneath the S-bahn bridge so that West Berliners couldn't see. Then they put me in the back of the car and took me to the watch tower. I was forced to lie face-down for an hour.

I was then taken to a police hospital where I was checked to find out whether I was sober. If you've been drinking, trying to escape is not such a serious crime. I was sober.

I was taken from the hospital to the police station at Keibeler Strasse



The Berlin Wall

near Alexandra Platz and kept there from 5pm to 3am, being questioned.

They asked me everything. Everything to do with my attempted escape. Why? Who else? Everything.

I slept for three hours and then they took me to a remand prison in Ankona Strasse in Pankow. I was there for two or three weeks and interviewed twice a week, each week on different days. I never knew on what day I would be questioned. The interview would take up most of the day.

The remand prison was for political prisoners. Two people shared a cell. You couldn't see out of the window because they were like the ones you have in bathrooms.

The man I shared a cell with was in the remand prison because he filled in two official forms. One he sent off to the authorities. The other he put on a blackboard which he put in his garden so people walking past would see that he wanted to leave East Germany. It was in the garden for forty-five minutes before the Stasis came.

He ended up being sentenced to one year and four months in prison for a breach of paragraph 114 of the constitution, a paragraph that deals with making fun of the authorities. He has since been released and now lives in the West.

I was sentenced to one and a half years in prison for a breach of paragraph 213. This deals with trying to cross the border against the law.

The next prison I was sent to was in the city of Kottbus. The remand prison was for political prisoners but this prison was an ordinary prison. There were about half political prisoners there, and half ordinary prisoners.

The prison is watched by the United Nations. The prison warders don't beat people and there are no extra penalties. I showered once a week.

The food was not very good. The sausage was only fat and they put chemicals in to change its colour. The law states that prisoners should be given plenty of vitamins but we weren't given any, or not very much. I still have a bruise on my arm that will not go away because of the lack of vitamins I received in prison.

I became ill. I developed scabs on my body. Wounds did not heal properly because of the lack of vitamins and my gums bled. I had problems with my teeth. Sometimes there would be no toothpaste available to brush my teeth.

If you have toothache in prison you are put on a waiting list. It takes a long time to see a dentist and an abscess can develop. Normally if you have toothache you have to pull the tooth out yourself.

There were a lot of dissidents in prison. Well-known dissidents could be released quite soon because the authorities didn't want any bad publicity. If you were not known you would just be forgotten.

I served about one year of my sentence. I went in on 22 July 1988, and was released on 25 July 1989. The West German government paid 40,000 deutschmarks (£13,000) for me to leave the East.

I was taken from Kottbus to Karl Marx Stadt to fill in a form so I could leave.

I have lost my East Germany citizenship. At the moment I can't visit the East. It will be another five years before I can visit the East, unless there is an amnesty and I am allowed to return sooner.

At the moment I don't want to go back. I've developed a hatred for East Berlin.

Any perestroika or glasnost in East Germany has been stamped on immediately, except that the Protestant Church has been allowed a little bit of freedom.

There are underground groups, but they can't operate openly. If you want to demonstrate you have to inform the authorities about the type of posters you intend to show.

Showing posters of Rosa Luxemburg [a Polish-German Marxist leader murdered in 1919], for example, isn't allowed.

The opposition sometimes quote from Rosa Luxemburg. For example, placards had printed on them: 'Freiheit ist immer die Freiheit des anderen Leuten!' ('Freedom is always for the one who disagrees'). The placards were torn down by the Stasis.

There was a day to commemorate Rosa Luxemburg. The Lesbian and Gay group of Leipzig put flowers on her grave. The Stasis came and removed them.

The government say Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht [another Marxist leader, also murdered in 1919] are heroes. Luxemburg and Liebknecht would turn in their graves if they saw what was going on today. But they are not popular with ordinary people because they have become associated with Communism.

Marx, Lenin and Luxemburg said some good things but the government ignores most of what they said. The government use what they need and everyone knows their work is censored.

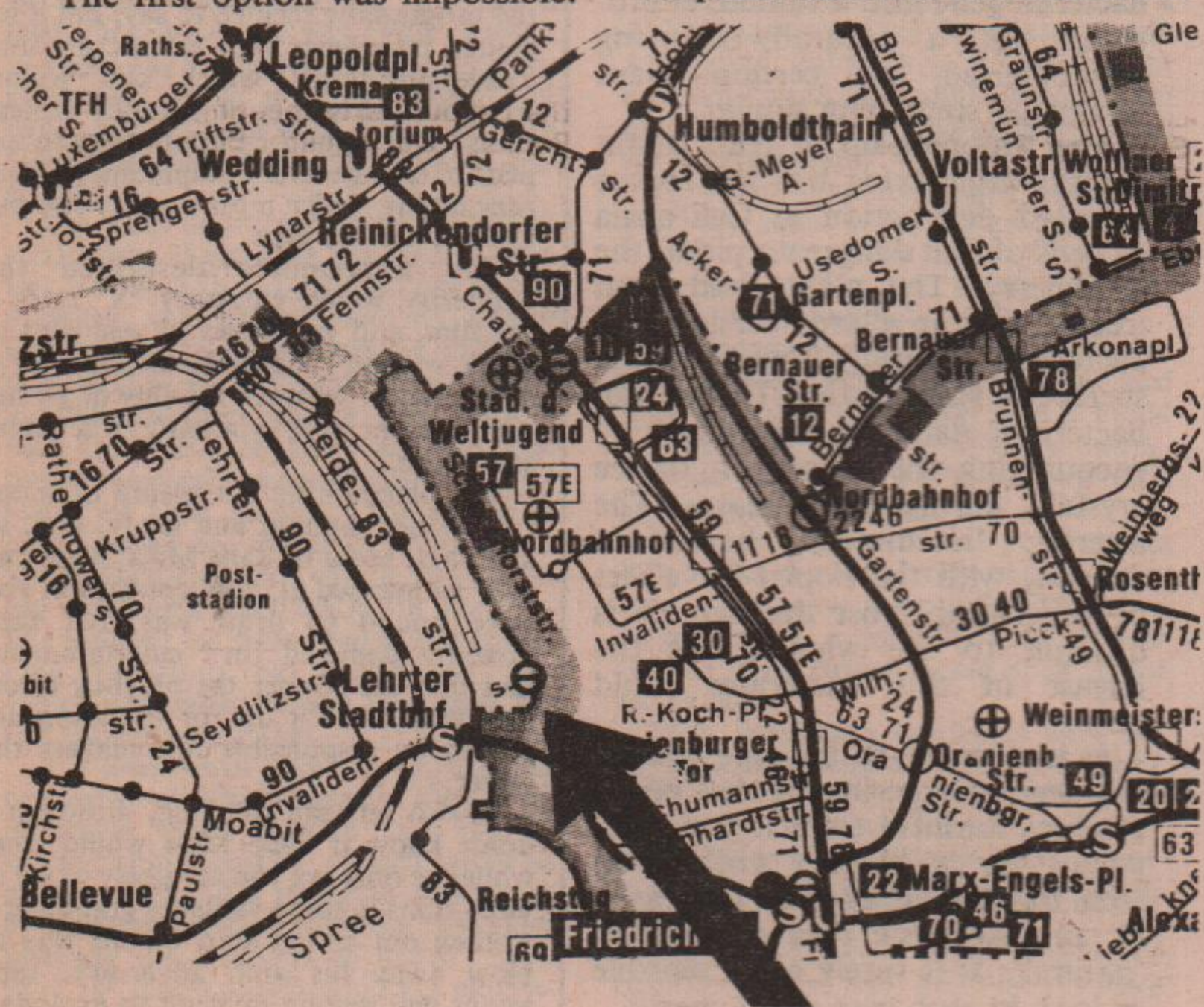
East Germany is not as Stalinist as Russia was under Stalin, but it is a kind of soft Stalinism.

There will be change, but I can't say whether it will be good or bad. It could be like Hungary or Tiananmen Square.

Erich Honecker is very ill, and soon there will be a new leader. This may mean change.

What people in the West can do for people in the East is very little. Take information about what it is like to show other people. Visit the countries in the Eastern Bloc and see for yourself. Give people in the East some moral support. Give them some hope.

While I was in prison some Western people sent food parcels to my mother, but this just helps one person. And people need help before they go to prison. Once they are in prison it is too late.







# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## The unions shouldn't leave it to the BMA

Mary Williams writes about the fight against the NHS White Paper

The National Health Service is under grave threat from Thatcher and her

policies.

Public concern over the Paper is widespread, and the implications of it are quite horrifying. Basically it's aim is to dismantle the Health Service.

So far the campaign has been led by the British Medical Association (BMA) and has consisted of adverts and the odd public meeting. One such meeting in Cardiff attracted 300 people last week, but instead of organising a campaign that might really do something, the organiser urged people to write to their MPs and to newspapers in the hope that a tidal wave of public objection might stop the Tories!

As if Mrs Thatcher ever cared what anyone else thinks!

The unions' response has been abysmal. Although all are firmly against it, little has been done to rally the members in a concerted response.

Faced with competitive tendering, clinical regrading and reviews, the unions — NUPE, CoHSE and to a lesser extent RCN — have been bogged down with localised work.

Doing individual appeals for on average 1,500 nurses per health authority takes a lot of time. Putting together a competitive tender takes time.

However, we are not seeing the wood for the trees. In reality none of the appeals will be won and in the meantime the threat of whole scale privatisation in the White Paper lurks.

The RCN's response has been to wag the tail of the BMS. Anne Pegington, the Welsh Secretary of the RCN, responded to a question about what the RCN are doing about the White Paper by saying:

"Well, I voted Tory in the last election, but next time, I might think again" and "The RCN has attended two meetings in the Welsh Office in the last month — and I just had to cry about what it means to the NHS"

With fighting talk like this, who needs Mrs Thatcher?

Nurses are quite ignorant about what the Paper will mean to them. The RCN has failed to organise any education, leaflets or meetings on the subject. In fact nurses do not realise that this Paper could radically alter their working environment.

If GPs are working to a budget, will they send their chronic sick elderly to an expensive hospital (which is expensive because there are always trained nurses on duty who attempt to give proper care) or to the local nursing home which runs on the slave labour of teenagers on government 'training' schemes?

One such home in Cardiff pays £18 a night to its staff for a 12 hour shift — the NHS pays at least £50 a night. Nursing will become all about money — inevitably at the expense of the patients.

NUPE and CoHSE nurses must organise in their unions for joint committees and meetings to fight the White Paper. Joint campaigns involving all the unions, trades councils etc would be a start towards organising demonstrations, petitioning and education.

In Cardiff, a Health Emergency campaign has been set up and is meeting every week. We are mainly Health Service trades unionists although anyone is welcome to attend.

Next meeting: Monday 25 September, on 168, A7 and B7, Link corridor, University Hospital of Wales.

## Labour must back lesbian and gay rights!

By Janine Booth

This Saturday, 23rd, thousands of people will take to the streets of Manchester in *Loverights '89*, a celebration of lesbian and gay sexuality.

Following the massive mobilisations against Clause 28, and the success of this year's Pride march, Manchester plays host to a march, rally and festival in proud defiance of the growing climate of State-sponsored homophobia.

The strength and determination of the lesbian and gay rights movement has put the Labour Party to shame. The Policy Review is the latest cop-out from a leadership seemingly embarrassed about the principle of defending oppressed people and fighting for freedom.

Considering lesbian and gay rights an 'electoral liability', the Labour leadership fails to realise that it is unlikely to inspire confidence in anyone if it does not appear committed to its own policies.

The labour movement needs to be changed. Socialists should work to open up the Labour Party, to purge it of homophobia, to make it

a habitable environment for lesbians and gay men to get involved and fight for our rights.

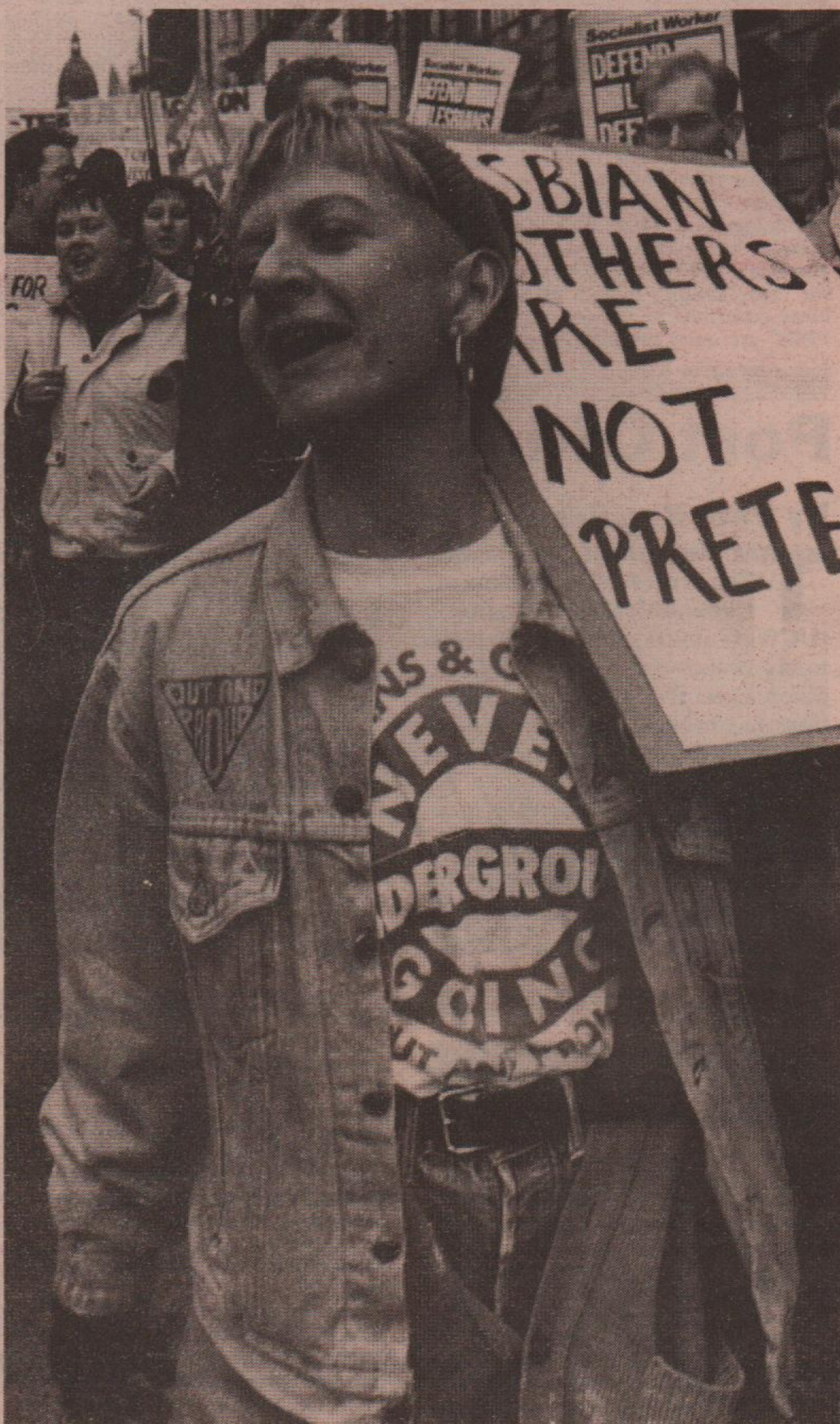
Most importantly though, the labour movement must stand firmly on the side of lesbian and gay liberation, taking an active part in the campaigns and struggles of the lesbian and gay community.

The lesbian and gay community itself is not perfect, lacking particularly in political direction. Instead of being eternally defensive, we should make *positive* demands, for positive rights in education, in employment, in housing, for reproductive and *autody* rights.

One of the best things about both *Pride* and *Loverights* is their refusal either to apologise or merely to defend, but to insist on everyone's right to determine and express their own sexuality.

The lesbian and gay movement needs to be more internationalist, and we should take on the right wing in our own community (exemplified by the misogynist, Tory-worshipping *Action* newspaper).

We should also realise that there can never be full liberation for lesbians and gay men while we still live in a society which thrives on inequality and exploitation.



Demonstration against Clause 28, 1988. Photo: Peter Walsh

## Poll shows a majority for socialism

An opinion poll published in the *Guardian* on 18 September shows a 38% to 29% majority for the view that "more socialist planning

would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems".

It is not a freak result. Other polls, with differently phrased questions, have shown similar majorities preferring the principle of democratic planning and control to the free market.

The poll also showed a 62%-20% majority against privatisation of profitable industries, a 58%-21% majority for better public services even if it means higher taxes, a 71%-18% majority agreeing that "there is one law for the rich and another for the poor", and a 70%-16% majority denying that the

National Health Service is "safe in the hands" of Mrs Thatcher.

There was a majority against unilateral nuclear disarmament, but a narrower one — 51% to 35% — and among Labour voters the majority is still for unilateralism.

In the working class there is demoralisation and defeatism, and there is also support for a radical alternative to Toryism. The Policy Review has chosen to build on the demoralisation and defeatism, and try to stamp on the radicalism.

## Workers' control for Ferranti

The big electronics and armaments firm Ferranti may have lost £200 million because of a swindle by bosses of a US company it merged with.

And the best Labour's leaders can say about it is that the government should make sure that Ferranti is not taken over by a foreign company!

The world arms industry is a jungle of rip-offs. In the US, many cases have recently been exposed of the armed forces being charged hundreds of dollars for items like coffee pots and toilet seats.

Almost certainly the difference between the US and other countries is not that such scams are more common in the US, but that they are exposed more readily in the US, with its relatively high level of public scrutiny.

No-one need shed any tears for the Ferranti bosses because they have bet on a loser in the game they have been playing for many years.

But Ferranti workers' jobs must be defended. The whole industry should be opened up to workers' inspection and control, to root out the corruption and to prepare plans for the reconversion of arms production to peaceful purposes.

## Killers

From page 1

13 September. Jim Smith is charged in a Belfast court with procuring weapons for the UVF and possessing a UDR photo sheet, which he says he got from a UDR soldier.

14 September. RUC says that a list of IRA suspects' details is missing from Dunmurry RUC station, Belfast.

15 September. Anglo-Irish conference meets to discuss UDR, fails to reach any agreement.

17 September. Seamus Finucane and Brian Gillen say that they are considering suing the RUC for including them on the list stolen from Dunmurry RUC station. Brian Gillen says that when he was arrested by the RUC in 1988 they told him that they would give his name and that of his solicitor, Pat Finucane, to the UVF. Pat Finucane, brother of Seamus, has since been assassinated.

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Stalin's heirs face the workers



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# WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

## Thousands of students may be driven out of college

Further Education students don't have a lot of perks. The overwhelming majority don't get any form of grant, or other financial support.



Engineering workers lobby meeting of Confed and employers over 37½ hour week, 1987. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

## Women engineers back union demand

# Fight for 35!

By Kath Byrne, T&G shop steward Lucas Kienzle, Birmingham

Basically there's a lot of support — even enthusiasm — for the idea of a 35-hour week. Everyone likes the idea and most people agree that after all the cutbacks and productivity increases of the 1980s we deserve it and the bosses can certainly afford it.

For women with children especially it would mean we needn't be run ragged going to the supermarket, doing the housework, and so forth. The idea of going home on a Friday dinner time is very attractive to everyone — it would make life

for workers that much more civilised.

But I have to say that in my factory at least people are not very happy about the way the campaign has been organised.

A lot of people remember the 1979 strikes when we won the reduction to 39 hours. They're saying why has the question of the reduction of hours been left 10 years? Shouldn't there have been an annual reduction every year since 1979? — I'm sure that's what Terry Duffy and the rest promised at the time.

Then there is the question of the way the so-called hit-list has been drawn up. There's no consultation with the shopfloor. Why, for instance, is Lucas on the hit-list but not Austin Rover?

Then there's the matter of all the plants with no-strike deals, they've obviously been left out and there's a lot of bad feeling about that as well.

Finally, a lot of people have been confused by the fact that last year Jordan was pushing a deal for a 37½ hour week in exchange for flexibility and then it was thrown out. I know that the reason was that the AEU National Committee rejected the total flexibility strings and quite rightly too. But that's the kind of thing that's caused some cynicism and confusion on the shopfloor.

I'd like to see some sort of national action involving all federated workplaces and all engineering workers in the country even if only for, say,

half a day at first. That would involve all the workers in the industry and build up a real sense of solidarity around the campaign.

Instead of which, it seems like certain groups are being used as shock troops while others are not really involved at all apart from contributing to the levy.

That said, we've obviously got to give the campaign full support. It would be an amazing step forward for all workers if we could win the 35-hours — and working women will benefit especially. So, for the time being we've got to support the official campaign and the Confed's tactics. Sooner or later we should start pushing for united national action.

Many work evenings and weekends to pay their way, others survive on hand-outs from parents, and some, a small minority, study under 21 hours a week and are able to claim unemployment benefit or Income Support, providing they state they are actively seeking paid work. For those able to do this, it is a lifeline. But unfortunately a lifeline soon to be abruptly cut.

The new Social Security Act that comes into force next month means that anyone claiming unemployment benefit or Income Support has to prove they are actively seeking paid employment.

In other words, you can be called into your local Unemployment Benefit Office any time and asked to provide evidence of your endeavour to find a job. Should you refuse, or should your endeavours be deemed insufficient, your benefit could be suspended for at least 26 weeks and you may find yourself facing the choice of the Employment Training scheme or starving.

The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) have estimated that one third of all those studying under 21 hours and claiming benefit will be forced to quit college. Many will be half way through A-levels or other such courses. These people will be forced through necessity onto the Employment Training scheme, which even industry itself has declared as "little more than a low-level basic skills training programme".

Does this make any sense? People taking the initiative to get educated, being kicked out of college and then being forced into one of those ever-so-useful training schemes to learn those ever-so-important skills such as how to make a brew and how to sweep up, and all that for £10 extra on top of the dole.

Of course to any rational human being it makes no sense at all, but unfortunately there's very little rationalism about capitalism or those who manage it. Thatcher and co. want to reduce the unemployment figures. Slave labour schemes such as ET and YTS do the job perfectly. They fail to train but they succeed in making unemployment figures disappear.

The Tories have no regard for the waste of human potential of the millions of women and men who get processed on these schemes.

The new Social Security Act will not only affect students studying under 21 hours and claiming unemployment benefit or Income Support. The new rules will affect everyone claiming these benefits, but the changes do coincide nicely with the Tories great plans for education.

Their plans look something like this: Lord and Lady Toffee-Nose send Tarquin to prep school and then on to a jolly good public school, and then off he goes to university — or poly if he's not so academic but he's got no royal blood.

Lord and Lady Toffee-Nose pay the tuition fees and fund Tarquin for his three years in higher education (and they do all of this out of the dividends of their shares — they were sensible and became H<sup>2</sup>Owners).

And of course when Tarquin can't keep up with the payments on his cellular phone and the Next card he pops off to see his friendly bank manager who loans him loads of dosh which he pays back once he gets his job in the City.

For the rest of us the Tories' plans are somewhat different. We go to overcrowded, under-resourced, crumbling schools to be taught by highly demoralised, underpaid staff. We then either go on to a two-year YTS course or we go off to a semi-privatised, under-resourced further education college and then, if we manage against all the odds to get any qualifications suitable for

Turn to back page

# The feminist case against censoring pornography

**Would banning pornography be a powerful blow against the roots of sexism and male violence against women? Or would it play into the hands of bigots, censors and puritans? Ruth Cockcroft argues that a ban on pornography would risk too much to achieve too little**

Feminists are once again discussing the issue of pornography. On 25 November the Campaign Against Pornography (CAP) is holding a 'Women on Porn' conference. This event promises to be lively, if not positively acrimonious.

There has also been the recent launch of a new anti-pornography group called Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship, which has the backing of the National Council for Civil Liberties. Clare Short MP has pioneered the campaign for an end to Page 3, accompanied at every stop of the way by the acclaim and support of many thousands of women.

Surely all this must be a step forward — at least an attempt to deal with the more insidious side of sexist society? I think not.

Pornography has become a pivotal issue around which many feminists have campaigned — the reason being that contemporary feminism is not moulded and guided by socialist women but, on the contrary, by cultural feminists, most notably Andrea Dworkin.

Dworkin made her name as a brilliant, controversial figure after writing 'Pornography — men possessing women'. In a speech in 1978 she starkly summarised her whole case against pornography when she stated:

"...sex and murder are fused in the male consciousness so that the one without the imminent possibility of the other is unthinkable and impossible," and said: "This propaganda [pornography] does not only sanction violence against women, it incites it. This propaganda does not only threaten assault, it promises it."

Clearly, if one holds such views it is easy to justify censorship. It is easy to reduce the complexities of human desire to the predatory nature of men. It also serves the argument that pornography is a tool of ideological oppression of women, it theorises and justifies rape, it teaches rape, it is at the root of all women's social inequality.

Not all feminists care for such extreme and intransigent arguments. Most socialist feminists criticise Dworkin for suggesting male sexuality is biologically determined and that men are inherent rapists. However, most of us who have been involved within fragments of the women's movement have been influenced by what cultural feminists have to say about pornography. In many situations we have not had the courage to speak up for a more liberal attitude to pornography, and a more sophisticated understanding of what it represents.

Let me state quite categorically that I believe most heterosexual pornography is a gross and distorted representation of sexuality. Most of it represents pure misogyny and all of society's barbarity spewed up in a single image — not only is pornography sexist, it is also racist and obsessed with power.

So why not accept the need to ban porn, as so many other women do? Why have only a few lone voices been left to defend the in-



"The shift from sentimental to a less romanticised pornography for women is progressive"

defensible and argue against censorship and for a liberal attitude in the sphere of sexual images?

Firstly, we're not in favour of the state defining sexuality and imposing limits on sexual 'norms' (with the exception of paedophilia and incest). We're not in favour of the state using anti-pornography legislation to prosecute lesbians and gay men and censor what they read. I would also add that it is not in the interests of women to see sex sentimentalised or 'cleaned up' and made less 'dirty'.

The natural allies of feminists who have attempted to make laws

against pornography (such as Dworkin and McKinnon in America) have been the right-wing and religious fundamentalists. Any socialist woman intent on a campaign against pornography must accept the fact that the issue attracts our enemies — the very same people whom the American feminists are in a vicious fight with in order to save abortion rights. Hopefully this point illustrates the problem of developing a socialist response to pornography.

The Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship has attempted to avoid the issue of censorship by campaigning for a law equivalent to the Race Relations Act, which makes it illegal to incite racial hatred. This particular campaign obviously would give a lot of power to the courts to define what is suitable erotica on the basis of very flimsy evidence, ie. that there is a causal relationship between pornography and rape. At best, evidence shows an inconclusive relationship between pornography and rape and in my mind is too causal and simplistic. It's like saying smoking dope gets you hooked on crack.

Even more worrying about the CAPC is that it sees racial oppression and sexual oppression as the same. We are for free speech except in the most extreme of circumstances. These circumstances are when oppressed minorities are at risk from a direct, politically-motivated act of hatred, whether a speech or organised violence. Even then we should recognise, along with militant sections of the black community, that the law is feeble in preventing such attacks, and only the mobilisation of whole communities, of the labour movement, is an adequate defence.

Placed in this context, we can really begin to see how socialist feminists have become ensnared by Dworkin's fundamental argument: is pornography as malicious as fascist propaganda? Do men who look at pornography deserve the same treatment as organised racists? Is the porn empire built by men whose political motivation is the same as a conscious racist's? Is pornography an issue around which we would mobilise the whole labour

movement to fight to its last breath as if a matter of life and death were at stake as we would in a fight against fascism? Clearly not.

Pornography is different to racist literature in another important respect. The reason why, I think, is obvious but uncomfortable for feminists to face. Pornography does not only appeal to men, it also appeals to those it denigrates and abuses.

Images and fantasy are not the same as reality, and in a society where women are taught to be subservient and even to fear their own bodies, a desire for erotic domination, a turn on by images of passivity, of subordination should not be surprising to us. Of course, we could be pious and simply proclaim it is not in the interests of women to be turned on, which is the same as pretending the problem doesn't exist.

More controversial still is the hard fact that the pornography industry has changed. A few American women run vast porn industries, while the business itself has diversified and an expanding market has developed with a specifically female clientele.

This market not only includes women who buy videos and magazines for husbands and boyfriends, but women who buy pornography for themselves. Ann Summers parties are booming, and women-only visits to male strip-shows are extremely popular.

This marks a shift away from the soft-focus porn of Mills and Boon which has dominated the female market. Although a cultural feminist response would just label these women consumers as collaborators and outsiders to the feminist project, we have to look at the contradictions of what's going on.

The shift from sentimental porn to a less romanticised porn for women is, in my opinion, progressive. In addition, many lesbians have begun experimenting with ideas of erotic submission and domination, with sado-masochism and with lesbian pornography. There is an objection that this kind of pornography reproduces heterosexual sexuality in lesbian relationships and that lesbians

## Where we stand

We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers,

the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many others, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in the face of the onslaught against women by this government.

Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full part at all levels.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

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