

For Workers' Liberty East and West

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**Towards a
Soviet
Solidarnosc?
See centre
pages**

Twelve million aren't paying the Poll Tax!

Around twelve million people aren't paying the poll tax.

If we keep this up, the tax will be unworkable. This Friday, 1 June, Tory-controlled Medina Council in the Isle of Wight, is taking the first batch of non-payers to court.

If even one in forty non-payers keeps their nerve and demands a hearing in court — where the worst that will happen to them is that they will be ordered to pay up, with a small amount added for legal costs — then the courts will be swamped.

In Crewe, 60 per cent are not paying; in Bristol and Rochdale, 50 per cent; in Cardiff 45 per cent. Islington council, in London, has collected only one-sixth of the amount that should have come in for the first instalment of poll tax; Hackney only one quarter.

In Islington, the Labour mayor, Maureen Leigh, has pledged not to pay — and she's angry about the fact that, in order to save face for the council, an anonymous "well-wisher" has paid her first instalment.

Meanwhile there is a spate of disputes by members of the Town Hall union NALGO over collection of the tax, the latest in Greenwich.

The union's conference, starting on 11 June, will hear demands for strike action to save jobs cut because of the impact of the polltax on council finances.

Teachers are already being sacked because of this poll tax and the Tories' "Local Management of Schools", and are pressing for strikes, so far blocked by their union leaders.

Union and community resistance to the poll tax can make an unbeatable combination, each reinforcing the other.

In Scotland, anti-poll tax activists reckon that about 600,000 or 700,000 still haven't paid their poll tax from last year. Councils have gone softly, softly against non-payers for fear of the people's reaction, but they're being pushed towards the point where they have to abandon the tax or start ordering 'warrant sales' where bailiffs seize TVs, stereos, videos and other household goods and auction them off to pay the debt.

Anti-poll tax activists pledge: "We will fill not only that person's house but the whole street with activists". Attempted 'warrant sales' will produce uproar.

Don't pay! Don't collect! Defeat the poll tax!



Trafalgar Square, 31 March. Photo: John Harris

Labour's
new
programme

Comments
from Tony
Benn, Eric
Heffer and
Vladimir Derer

Page 2

2 LABOUR PARTY

'The most right-wing document ever'

Why Labour needs socialism now

By Tony Benn MP

The problems confronting the British people now cannot all be attributed to the Tory government — though they have made them worse.

The injustice of unemployment and homelessness and poverty which scar our society are the direct product of market forces which, by definition, always put profit above need, and the victims are decent men and women who are locked into this system, nationally and internationally.

The power of Capital is political as well as economic and it operates through the City of London, Brussels and Wall Street to bring pressure to bear on all elected governments to adopt the policies which capital wants.

The trade union movement and the Labour Party were established to use collective action and the Ballot Box, to provide a countervailing power that can look after those whom the market ignores and we were influenced in this by the thinking of many socialists who have deepened our understanding of the forces at work in modern society.

Though the technology has changed radically over the years Labour still represents those who create the nation's wealth by working in industry or at home and that economic and social interest has not in any way altered over the last decade.

The next Labour government will inherit problems on a scale that we have not seen since 1945 and we have to be ready to take whatever measures are needed to put our society back on its feet.

We shall also have to offer some vision of the future we could build for ourselves and inspire our fellow citizens to work with us to bring it about.

A clinical analysis of the problems, clear policies for the future and a vision of the social justice and peace we want to achieve will all be necessary if we are to win majority support for a majority Labour Government and these must be included in the Manifesto we put before the electors.



Robin Cook with Labour's new well-groomed image

Eric Heffer MP comments on the new Labour policy document

I read the document with great interest, and it's the most right-wing document that I can ever remember coming from the NEC of the Labour Party.

It's far worse than anything we had under Attlee or Gaitskell or Wilson — the NEC in those days wouldn't have tolerated such a document.

It's a totally revisionist document. In practical reality it spells the end of any kind of genuine

socialism as far as the Labour Party is concerned.

We all accept that the Labour Party has never been a 100 per cent socialist party, but at least since 1918 it has kept some socialist roots. Now those are being cut.

Although I want a Labour government — and I want even this sort of Labour government — it won't do anything to change society. We'll just have a watered-down version of Thatcherism.

It's extremely depressing; and it makes it even more important that the left in the Labour Party should start to organise, as it did at the Sheffield conference [of 'Labour Party Party Socialists'] last weekend. We have to break down all the barriers on the left, and build a strong socialist current.

A programme of political disarmament

By Vladimir Derer (CLPD)

The leadership fails to recognise the seriousness of the economic situation Labour will face.

It has presented a programme which makes substantial concessions to Thatcherism in the false belief that this will make Labour electable.

In fact whether we win the next election does not depend on the degree to which we soft-pedal what needs to be done, but on the extent to which the Thatcher government discredits itself.

Concessions to Thatcherism such as the promise 1. to more or less retain the existing level of taxation and most of the present government's anti-trade union legislation; 2. to have no significant extension of public ownership and government intervention go along with the attempt to outdo the Thatcher government in its embrace of the

European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

All this is intended to appease the imaginary centre ground in British politics.

It means that if Labour wins, it will be returned on a programme of political disarmament, not only in the sense of going back on the party's socialist aims, but also in the sense of failing to win a mandate for taking the radical measures that the British situation requires.

The result will be the repetition of the kind of blundering we saw between 1966-70 and 1974-79 and the reinforcement of doubts about Labour's ability to govern.

This is why it is vital that the rank and file must ensure that at this year's conference the leadership attempt to do away with all accountability must be defeated.

Details of the resolutions which will help to organise this defeat can be had from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH; 081-458 1501. Conference resolution newsletter supplied on request.

Conference calls for Labour links

By Chris Barnes

The second Northern Region Anti-Poll Tax Federation Conference on 19 May adopted two motions by Socialist Organiser supporters calling for a greater effort to organise support for the non-payment and non-implementation campaign within the Labour Party.

Both because of the links Labour has with the unions and because of the role of Labour councils, such a move could be crucial in defeating the tax and getting rid of the Tories.

New figures show the huge numbers of citizens who haven't paid a penny towards this unjust tax. In North Tyneside 45,000 out of 145,000 have not paid; Gateshead figures are just as impressive, 35,000 out of 95,000.

In South Tyneside, where 36% of the population haven't paid, the council has sent out intimidating letters demanding the first instalment within 7 days, or the non-

payers will be liable for the full amount immediately.

Only four anti-poll tax unions exist in South Tyneside now, but this council tactic will mean many more will join the campaign.

In January the Regional federation had 50 affiliated anti-poll tax groups but by the conference the number had mushroomed to 121 including community groups, workplace groups and student organisations.

Political debate at the conference was in 2 sessions. The first on trade union responses and the second on the law and the way forward for the campaign.

The enormous opposition to the poll tax that has developed in the local communities have provided new confidence and inspiration to trade unionists.

Speakers called on the TUC to launch a mobilisation of the great strength of organised labour to help defeat the Tory tax.

Though only local government unions will be directly involved in the poll tax, wage arrestment could become an important issue in any workplace.

Poll tax defendants rally support

The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign set up by defendants solicitors to co-ordinate the defence of the 341 defendants after the 31st March.

relatively minor offenses and the discrepancies between different courts treatment of those charged.

We appeal for funds to help these defendants and to co-ordinate their defence.

The campaign also highlights the fact that many defendants, particularly those from outside London have been obliged to plead guilty purely on the basis of their inability to bear the cost of repeated court appearances.

The campaign is concerned about the way in which defendants who have been reported to the police feel that press reports are prejudicial both to their own and to the interests of justice.

to the interests of justice.

The campaign is appealing to all defendants and their solicitors to contact us through the **Haldane Society, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London, WC1. 071-833 8958.**

The campaign is also appealing to all witnesses who have any information they feel could be of use to gain the acquittal of those arrested, or to prove wrongful arrest/police misconduct.

Sunday 17 June, 11-4pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn Tube)

National Solidarity Conference

For all defendants, supporters and affiliates

Credent from CLPs U Promenade, Wallasey, 8BG

No war in the Middle East!

EDITORIAL

Will there be a war in the Middle East? In Israel and Iraq, there is a war fever.

Children in Israeli schools are learning how to use gas masks, because of the threat by Iraq's Saddam Hussein to use chemical weapons against Israeli cities like Tel Aviv. In Iraq there seems to be considerable support for a war with Israel, despite the terrible hardships of the only recently ended war with Iran.

Each country has the capacity to do terrible damage to the other. Iraq's readiness to use chemical weapons is not a matter for speculation. Towns in Iran, and areas in Iraq populated by the Kurdish minority, have first-hand experience of how ruthless the Saddam Hussein regime can be. Thousands of Kurds fled bombardment of their villages with mustard gas at the end of 1988.

And Israel has nuclear weapons. If both sides acted upon their current bloodthirsty threats, large parts of both populations would be annihilated. Other Arab states have expressed their will to join with Iraq in any war, so the destruction could be limitless.

Clearly the superpowers could not just stand by and wait for the war to end. The United States at least would get involved. The USSR maybe has enough problems of its own right now, although "saving the world" might be a heaven-sent diversion for its government.

These days the superpowers would probably act in concert, so their intervention would not mean World War Three. But that is little comfort for the thousands or millions of people who could die in a Middle East war.

Why the war-mongering? The statements of Arab leaders suggest desperation at the failure of negotiations to lead to a settlement of the Palestinian question.

They seem to be saying that with one more war they could sort it out once and for all.

But the calculation is absurd. It is possible that a substantial military defeat for Israel would force its government to make concessions on the occupied territories. "Land for peace" could be secured by force. That is what happened in 1973. The Arabs, after their

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx
Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823
London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first post Monday

Published by WL Publications Ltd
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Press Link
International (UK) Ltd (TU)
Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Socialist Organiser



humiliation in 1967, forced the USA to take notice of them. Eventually Egypt won Sinai back as a result.

But chemical or nuclear warfare will not lead to a harmonious or stable peace! And in any case, the Arab states have spent nearly two decades working towards a negotiated settlement. Some have worked harder at it, like Egypt; others, notably Libya, have opposed the project. But diplomacy has been the consensus.

The USA is more likely than ever before to opt for a settlement favourable to what the Arab governments see as their interest, that is, some sort of Palestinian state. A war costly both in dollars and lives would be an immense risk for the Arab governments as well as the people of the region.

For Iraq, you might think, that is even more true. It has just finished eight years of war with Iran, war which Saddam promised would be over swiftly, leaving Iraq as the region's dominant power, favoured by imperialism, raking in cash from its oil exports and the support of other rich Arab governments.

Why fight another war with even less prospect of success?

One theory has it that Saddam Hussein is mad. But there are rational explanations. Iraq became over the last decade a society geared completely to the pursuit of war. Contrary to expectations, Saddam's failure to secure a quick victory did not lead to his downfall. He survived the war. His regime, one of the mostly completely totalitarian in the world, is intact.

He needs wars. He needs the nationalist hysteria that war provides.

So long as he can combine war-mongering with an economy that is not in a state of collapse (and it isn't: peace was a lucrative number for both Iraq and Iran), and so long as he has no coherent opposition, Saddam can sustain himself.

Israel also needs war. The national consensus has broken up a little over recent years, as Labour has become a little more dovish, although that should not be exaggerated.

The right wing government of Yitzhak Shamir has no such

dovishness. Israel can't give anything to the Palestinians, it argues — except repression — because Israel's security depends on its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, especially the West Bank.

Without the West Bank, Arab armies could cut Israel in two in one quick movement. Give an inch, and you give a nation state.

Saddam's bloodcurdling threats are all Shamir needs to form a majority government. You might think they were planning it together.

Shamir's political tradition, it may be relevant to recall, thinks the Jewish state ought to extend to the river Euphrates, in Iraq (which is the ideological reason for hanging on to the occupied territories: they don't accept that the Palestinians have any right to them).

Thus the warmongering serves a valuable role as an internal political weapon. In reality, neither side can much afford a war, especially the Iraqis.

So is it all hype? Even if it is, hype can have its own logic. In 1967, Egypt's president Nasser provoked war with Israel, although almost certainly he didn't really want to go through with it, and he dramatically lost it.

If you yell from the rooftops your intention to crush the "Zionist entity" enough times, there comes a point when you can no longer retreat. Saddam also might find it hard to be the president who cried wolf.

Who are the "anti-imperialists"?

The Socialist Workers' Party should think about the implications of the Israeli-Iraqi war threat for their analysis.

In 1987, when the USA swung its support behind Iraq in the Gulf War, sending a fleet to police the Gulf, the SWP abandoned its previous opposition to both sides in the war, and backed Iran.

One speaker at the SWP conference, quoted approvingly in *Socialist Worker*, said that the decisive argument for supporting Iran was the news that Israel supported Iraq.

Similarly, if you make the military threat posed by Iraq central to your political calculations, you might have to do what Shamir's Likud predecessor, Menahem Begin, did, and bomb Iraqi military installations. Saddam might then be forced to do more than protest to the United Nations.

So the hype could become reality. The people who can stop that are, in the first place, the people of Iraq and Israel.

An Israel which recognised the rights of the Palestinian Arab people to their own state would cut the political ground from under Saddam Hussein: after all, there is no pretext for Iraq to go to war with Israel except the Palestinians. The less democratic Israel is in its treatment of the Palestinians, the more it is at risk.

Equally, if the Iraqi people manage to throw off the tyrant's yoke, Shamir won't have any excuse to blow them up.

Easier said than done. In the meantime, we have to apply all the pressure we can to stop a Middle East war. It would be a war from which no-one could gain, and everyone would lose. If it is an old-fashioned conventional conflict, the likely result will be Israeli occupation of Jordan. If it is the horrifying slaughter with chemical and nuclear weapons that the governments are threatening, who knows what the result could be?

Justice for the Palestinians! Israel out of the West Bank and Gaza! No war in the Middle East!

Provocateur... or moron?

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

My estimable colleague Clive Bradley dealt more than adequately with the Gary Bushell — 'poofers' business a couple of weeks ago and comment from me seemed superfluous. This week I had intended to discuss Mad Cow Disease, a subject I find marginally less stomach-churning than having to write (or even think) about Mr Bushell. But there have been further developments. I cannot shirk my duty

The story so far: Gary Bushell, neanderthal 'TV reviewer' on the *Sun* was reported to the Press Council over use of the word 'poofers'; reversing previous decisions, the council found in favour of the complainant; Mr Bushell announced that in future he would use different words... like 'shirt-lifters' and 'stoopers'; a *Sun* editorial dismissed the Press Council as "a bunch of loonies".

Since then, it has been Open Season on the Press Council and its Chairman Louis Blom Cooper. The *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunday* have been particularly vociferous in their attacks. This Sunday, for instance, Sir John Junor (who shares Bushell's homophobia but has the advantage of being at least semi-literate) denounced the "poofers" decision as "utter idiocy" and "only one of many recent examples of absolutely tacky adjudications". Junor went on the claim that Blom Cooper only got the job "by default" and called for him to be sacked and replaced by "someone of rather more calibre".

I suppose that its no use trying to warn the likes of Gary Bushell and John Junor. They have been warned many times before but still the message does not seem to have sunk in: they are slowly and surely making a noose for their own necks. The Press Council and the voluntary system of self-regulation that it represents is their only hope of warding off legislation to control the press. The demand for statutory controls has been gaining momentum for some time. Last year, Private Members Bills proposing a legal "right of reply" and a "protection of privacy" Act, commanded widespread public support and were only defeated after frantic lobbying by the industry. As a result Home Secretary Hurd warned the press that "it was on probation" and the committee under David Calcutt QC was sent off to look into the whole question of press standards and possible controls.

For a short while, towards the end of last year, it looked as though the press was really trying to clean up its act — papers appointed 'Ombudsmen' to investigate complaints, Rupert Murdoch announced that in future his papers would reflect his own new found spirituality, Robert Maxwell sacked Wendy Henry... but it couldn't last. Coverage of the Strangeways riot marked a new nadir in hysterical, lurid and inaccurate reporting. A *Daily Telegraph* leader last month warned that the tabloids' return to form virtually guaranteed that legislation was back on the agenda.

Meanwhile one of the less emphasised parts of the Labour Party's Policy Review Document is the proposal for a statutory body with powers to enforce a code covering harassment, invasion of privacy, offensive stereotyping of women and minorities and providing individuals with a right of reply.

If the entire press were to make a determined effort to start treating the press council with respect it might still be possible to fend off legislation. But Gary Bushell, John Junor, the *Sun* and the *Mail* may well have closed off that option once and for all.

My theory that Gary Bushell is in fact an agent provocateur for the Campaign to Introduce Statutory Controls has been given further credibility (in Private Eye) that he urged his editor to respond to the Press Council ruling with an article headlined 'Is Blom Cooper a stooper'? Even Kelvin MacKenzie drew the line at that.

4 LETTERS

Killed for his shoes

GRAFFITI

A growing trend in the USA is murdering people for their shoes.

In a recent case, a kid was on his way home in Philadelphia when he was stopped by a group of older youths, asked his shoe size, and then shot through the chest. He was wearing an expensive pair of Nike trainers.

Film director Spike Lee and basketball player Michael Jordan have been caught up in controversy around this, because they appear together in an advert for Nike. A sports journalist accused them of "selling out".

Lee and Jordan, not very surprisingly, thought this was a bit much. As Lee said, the journalist hadn't attacked white athletes who endorse sportswear.

And if kids kill each other for Nike trainers, there must be some deeper social problem. You can't just blame Nike's advertising.

Levels of motiveless violence, or violence for trivial motives, in American cities are terrifying. Kids kill each other out there for almost anything. In Los Angeles, if you wear the wrong sort of footwear, you could end up dead, because the streets are dominated by intricately signified gangs.

Terrible poverty, hopelessness, and frustration, leading to complete alienation which is often expressed through drug addiction, are the problem. In American cities, in the midst of the greatest prosperity in the world, you have Third World conditions, homeless people everywhere, and ghettos where young black men have almost no chance of a decent job and there is almost no economic order except for the trade in crack.

Bored with all those 0898 numbers where unprofessional idiots spend hours getting round to the fruity bits (oops, what a giveaway)?

Well, there are some new ones just starting, catering especially for Catholics with telephones.

You ring up to get top clerical advice on whether or not we should read horoscopes, what's happened to mortal sin, and what to do if you don't feel like confessing anything.

Unfortunately, all their 0898 numbers are followed by... 666. Who has the best tunes?

A new book, just published and aptly previewed in the *Sun*, provides endless amusement with sexual trivia.

How are these for rip-roaring hilarity? "A man who doesn't believe in birth control is called... (wait for it)... a daddy". Or (this is a good one, nudge nudge), "Astronauts do it in space".

Errol Flynn, it seems, was a real wag. He had a chair with trick model penises that shot out between the legs of the person who sat on it. Guffaw guffaw.

And... wait a minute, is the world ready for information like this? Oh, why not live dangerously? Marilyn Monroe used to bleach her pubic hair.

I've got one the *Sun* didn't publish. Its columnists have sex orgies with Rottweilers.

"We have lost the last three elections in our endeavour to engage in open and democratic debate. We shall certainly not engage in it again".

David Blunkett, Labour MP.

If you look hard at page 9 of this week's *News of the World*, under "Wicked Mum's Sex Show in Jail", you will find some interesting and, for them, embarrassing statistics.

The result of the *News of the World's* survey asking if its readers prefer to call homosexuals 'poofers', 'pansies', 'queers', 'shirtlifters', or 'gay', was that 'gay' was by far preferred.

This was true both among homosexuals themselves (nearly 70%), and among heterosexuals (27.8%, which put it top).

The Sunday tabloid's daily sister, the *Sun*, has of course just been done by the Press Council for insisting the use of the word 'poofers' was justified in the name of the public popularity of that word.

The survey was supposed to prove the *Sun's* point.

How to get out of that one? "This proves," the *News of the World* comments, "that you (ie, its readers) aren't all intolerant bigots, as suggested by last week's Oxford don (ie, the Press Council)".

Who said tabloids had to make sense?



Street gang in USA



Social conditions in eastern Europe are no advance on capitalism

Don't apologise for Stalinism

LETTERS

Sylvia Bolgar (letters, SO 449) says that capitalism needs foreign markets to survive, and would therefore not survive were it not for the new markets being opened up in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

She says that the October Socialist Revolution's chief significance, and that of later "socialist" revolutions, was in taking parts of the world outside the market. The forum for capitalist expansion was gradually decreased, and capitalism, presumably, pushed towards its final crisis.

This is a rather crude version of a theory rarely aired these days, namely Rosa Luxemburg's theory of imperialism.

It's wrong on several counts. First, capitalism experienced its

greatest ever expansion after World War Two — precisely at the time when, according to Sylvia Bolgar, one third of the world had been rescued from the capitalist market. If her theory were right, instead of expanding, capitalism should have been collapsing.

Capitalist expansion does not depend, in the crude way defined by Bolgar (or even in the way defined by Luxemburg) on foreign markets (Luxemburg specified that they had to be non-capitalist markets, hence the drive to colonial conquest).

Second, Eastern Europe has never been simply cut off from the world market. Nor is it especially desirable that it should be. International capitalist integration needs to be replaced not by lots of countries splitting away from the world market to build up their own economies, but by international socialist integration.

Finally, the collapse of capitalism does not depend on the mechanical contraction of the world market, even if this were the result of socialist or Stalinist revolutions.

Socialist revolution depends on the organisation and consciousness of the working class. Our benchmark should be not whether or not the market is expanding, but whether or not the conditions are improved for the independent action of the working class.

The opening up of the Stalinist states to Western capital (and domestic private capital) is not something we support. But the crisis of Stalinism and the class struggle which is accompanying and will accompany the changes in the East provide fresh chances for building independent working-class, socialist movements.

That is the real significance of what is happening.

Socialists will get nowhere if we pretend that the system which is being destroyed was in some way preferable to capitalism, or appear to the workers of Eastern Europe as apologists for that system.

We have to be the champions of a new alternative to both.

Gerry Bates,
Southwark.

Oppose the market!

I agree with Tony Dale (Letters, SO449) that socialists should be for workers' control rather than capitalist or Stalinist exploitation in the Eastern Bloc.

But how will workers take that power?

Both the capitalists and the Stalinists are against the plan and for the market. This is because the market is a more efficient way for them to cream profits from the labour of the workers. Introducing the market will involve introducing 'real' market prices.

Last week, for instance, Gorbachev announced plans for the doubling and tripling of food prices. As we have seen in Poland and Hungary the market brings with it massive attacks on the living

standards of ordinary people.

While supporting democracy's development in the Eastern Bloc, socialists should oppose the re-introduction of the market. Instead we should argue for the workers to defend the nationalised economies against the imperialist profiteers. We should argue for the workers to replace the economic plan of the corrupt bureaucrats with their own plan of production.

Tony Dale hinted in his letter that 'command economies' can't 'gear production to human need', but that 'market mechanisms' can. I think he's mistaken. The lack of democratic control over the planned economies has meant that we haven't seen all their potential.

A real workers' economy would not be rigid or suffocating. It could produce foods, clothes, records,

and other goods. But the workers' conscious control of the economy would and should dominate over any market mechanisms that are used.

All the world has seen how bad market control is. Any system which allocates labour and resources just according to prices and profits is useless to us. A socialist economy would not necessarily use market mechanisms. But wherever market mechanisms exist, we must struggle to place them under workers control.

That means that we must oppose the introduction of the market into the East — and the new lifeline for capitalism it may represent. Instead workers should defend and control the planned economy.

Duncan Chapple,
Nottingham

United campaign can save reselection

Martin Thomas reports on the Labour Left Liaison conference

Labour Left Liaison's conference last Saturday, 26 May, ended with a call for a united campaign with 'Labour Party Socialists'.

"We appeal to comrades in Labour Party Socialists", said Vladimir Derer, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), "that they should cooperate with us where we can agree". Pete Willsman of CLPD added: "We will work with Labour Party Socialists on all issues where we have agreement. That is a commitment".

They mentioned mandatory reselection of MPs as a specific

'Many trade unions have conference policy for mandatory reselection, and will be obliged to cast their block votes for it whatever their leaders want'

issue where cooperation should be possible.

Labour Party Socialists, launched at a conference in Sheffield on 19-20 May, is an offshoot of the Socialist Conference called under the auspices of Tony Benn. Labour Left Liaison is grouped round CLPD, the Women's Action Committee, and the Labour Party Black Sections committee.

There has been much conflict between these two sections of the Labour Left. LLL has accused the Socialist Conference wing of 'going off to Chesterfield to indulge in rhetoric' and evading the necessary detailed work of securing resolutions and delegates in the Labour Party; the Socialist Conference wing complains that LLL tries to confine the Labour left to very narrow routine, rather than reaching out to fresh struggles and fresh ideas.

Ideally, the different emphases of the two wings should complement each other; in fact, conflict has been bitter. Both LLL and Labour Party Socialists conference aimed to be broad gatherings of the Labour left, but there was almost no overlap between them. *Socialist Organiser* was the only grouping present at both events. About 320 attended in Sheffield, and 150 last Saturday at the LLL event.

Pete Willsman argued that the left can win at Labour Party conference this October on mandatory reselection. Neil Kinnock wants to

change the rules so that sitting MPs need not face a contest unless a majority of local party members vote by postal ballot for it. In other words, a vote of no confidence in the sitting MP by the whole membership, including those who don't attend meetings and don't know how the MP responds to the local party committee trying to call him or her to account, would be necessary before alternative candidates can even be considered.

It's all part of Kinnock's plan to make the Labour Party safe for capitalism, insulating the MPs from rank and file pressure. But many trade unions have conference policy for mandatory reselection, and will be obliged to cast their block votes for it whatever their leaders want. And those campaigning for more women Labour MPs and more black Labour MPs also have strong reasons for backing mandatory reselection: while sitting MPs have a job for life, their chances of progress are small.

Even the Labour Coordinating Committee, which usually backs Kinnock 101 per cent, supports mandatory reselection.

The Labour Left Liaison conference also discussed other attacks by the leadership on Labour democracy, notably the plan to shift decision-making from annual conference to a 'policy council'.

Earlier sessions at the LLL conference discussed economic policy, women's rights, and black rights. The women's and black sessions concentrated entirely on getting more women and black MPs and on getting Black Sections recognised in the Labour Party. Some people spoke as if such measures were really the key to improving the position of women and black people.

Ken Livingstone opened the discussion on economic policy with his programme of cutting war spending and forcing capitalists to bring money invested abroad back to Britain. The discussion was warped by the notion that the left must propose only policies which can command a broad consensus in the Labour Party. On economic issues, today, that means that the left automatically debar itself from proposing authentically socialist ideas. We end up with half-measures like Livingstone's, which are adequate neither as advice to John Smith nor as a programme for a working class alternative to John Smith.

A side-feature of the conference was the virtual extinction of *Socialist Action* as a political force. Over recent years they have slipped from producing a weekly paper to publishing a flimsy magazine once every few months. They seem to have made a full mobilisation of their forces for the LLL conference — and it amounted to about two dozen people, and no political contribution other than a couple of whacky speeches from *Socialist Action* editor John Ross.



Photo John Harris.

Defend mandatory reselection!

By Vladimir Derer and Pete Willsman

Mandatory reselection was born of a long and bitter struggle.

Its demise may be short and sweet. Proposals for its abolition will shortly be circulated.

CLPs and affiliated organisations are to be 'consulted' but irrespective of the results the NEC plans to present this rule change to 1990 Annual Conference.

As things stand, every Labour MP must go through a reselection process once during the lifetime of a parliament. This alone ensures the MP's accountability to the party which selected him or her. Without it MPs will be under no obligation to carry out the policies decided by the Party.

Mandatory reselection was introduced after the experiences of the 1964-70 and 1974-70 Labour governments. These governments ignored the interests of organised labour and the policies of Party Conference. This led to the 1979 winter of discontent, the Labour government's downfall and more than a decade of Tory rule.

We understand that under the NEC proposals, a sitting MP would automatically be adopted unless a fifty per cent majority of individual members of the CLP, in a postal ballot, demand that a reselection procedure be invoked. If this is true it would mean no reselections at all. The turn-outs in contested reselections in Labour-held seats have been about twenty per cent: to get fifty per cent in favour of a reselection would be highly unlikely.

Before mandatory reselection was introduced in 1979 any attempt by a CLP to change its MP resulted in protracted infighting and damaging media coverage. The 1970s

reselections in Lincoln, Newham North East, Hammersmith and Sheffield Brightside CLPs all testify to this.

But the NEC proposals go much further than the pre-1979 rules. Under the old rules, the General Committee of a CLP by a majority vote, could ask the NEC to invoke the reselection procedure. This hardly ever occurred and when it did, it took at least six months of

'Now the NEC wants to return to the situation where MPs were the only office-holders in the party without accountability'

massive aggro to deselect. Nevertheless under the NEC's present proposals even MPs like Reg Prentice — later a Tory minister — would still be Labour MP for Newham North East.

The NEC suggest mandatory reselection should be dropped because: "Significant difficulties are anticipated in ensuring necessary voting attendance by MPs in the House of Commons whilst the reselection procedure is taking place in their constituencies, and they need to be frequently absent on week nights" (Is this why TV viewers so often see an empty chamber?)

When Labour is in government mandatory reselection becomes essential. For it is then that the gap between the Parliamentary Labour

Party and rank and file Party and-trade union members widens. The last Labour government made Party members realise that unless the PLP is accountable to the Party, it will move away from the people it claims to represent. Mandatory reselection is the only safeguard against this. It preserves a measure of unity between Labour MPs and those who sent them to Parliament.

Whatever the NEC's motives, the effect of its 'reform' would be to cut off 'sitting' MPs from rank and file opinion and allow the next Labour government to adopt measures which — as in 1978-79 — would lead to a revolt by organised labour and would bring the government down.

Mandatory reselection has run smoothly for 10 years. Now the NEC wants to return to the situation where MPs were the only office-holders in the Party without accountability. The leadership lectures CLPs on 'One Member One Vote', but under the new proposals the only 'vote' that will count will be that of the 'sitting' MP, on whether he wishes to continue as MP or not.

Abandoning mandatory reselection would also perpetuate the present white male middle class domination of the PLP. The tiny progress made in getting more women and black MPs was largely thanks to it.

Most trade unions remain bound by their conference decisions to support mandatory reselection.

Every individual and affiliated Party member should be made aware that what is at stake is the PLP's accountability to the Party, the Party's links with the trade unions and the fate of the next Labour Government. CLPs should choose this issue for their Conference Resolution.

Reprinted from the CLPD Newsletter, May 1990.

CLPD Model Motion

This Conference reaffirms its own decision that 'the need for accountability at all levels' be met by 'mandatory reselection for sitting Labour members of Parliament' and supports the provisions embodied in the Party Constitution for a mandatory selection procedure once in the life-time of parliament, in which ward branches, affiliated trade union branches and other affiliated organisations have the automatic right to nominate the candidates of their choice.

Conference is therefore extremely disturbed by proposals that this important right should in future be withdrawn in Labour-held seats unless the Constituency Labour Party first decides by a ballot to proceed with

normal selection procedure. Any time this happens it will inevitably be portrayed by the mass media as a vote of no confidence in the sitting MP.

Conference believes that this practice would be seriously and needlessly divisive. It would effectively free Labour MPs from the obligation to carry out Party policy as decided by Conference. It would also further retard the legitimate aspirations of Labour women who would lose their present right to be included in the parliamentary shortlist if nominated.

In the interests of party unity Conference therefore resolves to uphold the principle of the automatic right to branches to make a nominations for parliamentary candidates once in a lifetime of every parliament.

What's happening in the USSR?

By Clive Bradley

Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to modernise and revive the Soviet economy have entered their third phase.

The first phase, when he came to office in 1985, was an attempt simply to clean up the sluggish and bureaucratic system. When that failed due to bureaucratic resistance, he launched phase two: *glasnost* and *perestroika*, 'openness' and 'restructuring', an attempt to shake up the system through a controlled political mobilisation, combined with market-oriented reforms.

Glasnost has been a failure from Gorbachev's point of view. Its most tangible result has been the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe; the emergence of apparently unstoppable opposition forces within the USSR, especially in the national minorities, almost all of which now want some degree of independence; and the break-up of the Communist Party.

Glasnost has meant the end of the one-party state, in effect, as the Communist Party has haemorrhaged along both national and political lines. Within the central Party, there are those who openly reject "socialism" in favour of capitalism.

The Party no longer functions as the machine to control society. It will never be able to do so again. Thus Gorbachev needs to find alternative mechanisms for holding society together.

So far the best he has come up with is to award himself dictatorial personal powers as president, and push through extremely repressive laws against strikes (all strikes in important industries are technically banned, although that hasn't stop-

ped them), and against people who "insult" the president.

In his dealings with Lithuania, also, Gorbachev has moved from an initial attempt to be "reasonable", walking around Vilnius chatting with people, to a policy of hard-line bullying. He could yet be a lot heavier, but his refusal to accept Lithuania's right to self-determination except at the most abstract level is a sign of the times.

Moreover, the bullying has not worked. If the issue were only Lithuania's independence, then probably Gorbachev would let the Lithuanians have

have long been used to. And the goods, be they food or consumer durables, are of a low quality. Better things can be bought on the black market, but those are much more expensive.

In the big cities, there are critical shortages of food. In the smaller towns and the countryside, it is already much worse.

A return to the old Brezhnev system is scarcely possible, even if anyone wanted it. The bureaucratic inertia of that system has been broken, and the Party is no longer an effective tool for economic mobilisation and enforcement.

So, phase three. Gorbachev has little option now but to move the USSR swiftly to a western-style capitalist economy. That means removing subsidies, allowing commodities to find their own prices on the market, and letting the appalling inefficient public industries sink or swim.

But with a restless population, tired of the huff and puff of economic reform when all it has meant is worse conditions for them, massive price rises are a big political risk. Gorbachev's plan was to sweeten the pill with wage rises and welfare benefits, including dole for the jobless.

In a disastrous move, perhaps suggesting he's lost his touch so admired in the West, he initially proposed a referendum on the new economic package. Once it became clear that the package would probably be defeated, he declared the referendum impossible to organise.

Now there will be the reforms — price rises plus wage rises and welfare payments — without the attempt at democratic legitimisation. Gorbachev is in for big, big trouble.

The only ray of sunshine he had had in recent weeks was the failure of Boris Yeltsin to win election as the President of the Russian Federation. Yeltsin, former Moscow Party boss, sacked from the Politburo in 1987 for criticism of Gorbachev, in fact failed to be elected twice in 24 hours. Then he won the re-run.

The *Independent on Sunday* (27 May) accompanied two Russian housewives around the shops in Moscow. In three hours, queuing in thirteen different shops, spending a third of the average Russian's weekly income, they managed to buy some basics — but no meat, no rice, no eggs, no cheese, and no fruit, either because there was none to buy, or because the queues were too long. They had bought hardly enough for their evening meal!

'A return to the old Brezhnev system is scarcely possible... The Party is no longer an effective tool for economic mobilisation and enforcement'

their way. But a successful breakaway by Lithuania would encourage every other national minority in the USSR. The bullying was meant to stop Lithuania's example spreading. Instead Lithuania has now been joined by Latvia and Estonia.

Glasnost has not been a success. *Perestroika* has been a disaster. Change was an urgent necessity for Gorbachev when he came to power because of the dire state of the Soviet economy. Now it is much worse.

Basic goods are not available, or available only after waiting in queues that are even longer than those the Soviet people



Siberian oil workers threaten strike.

Sugar, soap and detergent are rationed almost everywhere in the USSR. In some cities so are meat, sausage and butter. Of 1200 basic commodities, only 56 can be found on a regular basis.

According to unofficial figures (accepted by Abel Aganbegyan, one of Gorbachev's advisers), the non-military economy in the USSR has been shrinking since the 1970s. No-one knows exactly what the USSR's income per head is. According to some estimates it's about the same as Portugal's. Lower estimates would make it the poorest country in Eastern Europe, *per capita*, except Romania. Agricultural output has been stagnant since the mid 1970s, and the Soviet Union depends on imports for ten per cent of its food supplies.

Despite the efforts to shake up industrial production, nothing much has changed positively. The only change is a lurch from the old bureaucratic routines into sheer chaos. Soviet labour is notoriously unproductive. And bureaucratic planning creates immense problems. Production targets are set with no rational basis, and production itself is chaotic.

Martin Walker, former *Guardian* correspondent in Moscow,

in his book *The Waking Giant* quotes a Lithuanian television factory worker, describing the practice of "storming", the rush at the end of each month to meet the plan target.

"We never use a screwdriver in the last week. We hammer the screws in. We slam solder on the connections, cannibalise

'The pieces are in place for a massive strike wave in opposition to price rises, and the formation of a sort of Soviet Solidarnosc'

parts from other televisions we have run out of the right ones, use glue or hammers to fix switches that were never meant for that model. And all the time the management is pressing us to work harder".

Soviet TVs aren't much good. Indeed there is a new word in Russian, *televzryv*, which means exploding television because that's what so many of them do.

Perestroika hasn't manage



May Day protest. Gorbachev doesn't like "insults".

FOR WORKERS' UNITY EAST AND WEST

HEAR THE

VOICE OF

SOVIET

WAR

WAVEERS!

Public meeting



"In June a party of rank and file Soviet miners will visit Britain to call for solidarity and material support. We want assistance in the difficult work of creating an independent trade union in the USSR. We urge you to give this campaign your full support so the voice of Soviet workers can be heard".

Viktor Yakovlev, Vorkuta miner,
People's Deputy of the USSR

Contact the Tour Cttee at the Campaign
for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern

Bloc (CSWEB), 56 Kevan House,
Wyndham Rd, London SE5.

Soviet colonel discusses military coup

No force other than the army can keep the Soviet Union together, according to Colonel Vladimir Krivolapov.

The colonel, speaking to Christopher Bobinski of the *Financial Times* in Riga, Latvia, confirmed that many army officers in the USSR are thinking about the option of a military coup.

"The Red Army must play a more open political role if the unity of the Soviet Union is to be preserv-

ed" — that, so the colonel told Bobinski, is the "general mood" in the military.

He would prefer to "avoid using this tool, if other means could be found". But "some people are attempting to depoliticise" the army, and "We are becoming more active as the hostility towards the army grows".

Things might get so bad, he indicated, that the army had to take over or else "there will be no Soviet Union — a state for which a lot of blood has been shed in the last war".



age all that. Exiled satirist der Zinoviev has dubbed "astroika", and you can y.

e has been resistance. f the impetus for Baltic alism is that these coun- eeing richer than Russia, want to be dragged down sian levels. On the streets ow and Leningrad there so been huge demonstra- demanding democratic onomic change.

e are now no less than so-called "informal", that is, discussion in which 70 million peo- rticipate. *Glasnost* has a rebirth of public discus- nch can no longer easily rolled.

there have been strikes. ars, if there were strikes USSR, they were not d. Now there are strikes time.

summer the USSR was by a huge strike of coal , from Ukraine to . Their demands ranged soap (not commonly le) to, in some areas, free unions, a new constitu- multi-party system, and olitical demands.

rike in Vorkuta later in went even further. Now widespread speculation

about an oil strike. Oil workers, like miners, live in appalling conditions, in northern towns with freezing temperatures and few hours of daylight, living in caravans because the bureaucracy can't get round to building flats.

The *Guardian* (23 May) quotes an oil worker from Nefteyugansk in Siberia: "I've been on the housing list for five years. Now they say it could be three to four years more". He lives in a long cylinder on stilts called a *vagonchik*. He says, "I'm lucky. This *vagonchik* has an indoor lavatory".

Glasnost has meant visits from Kuwaitis. Siberian oil workers know that conditions are much better in other countries.

The potential explosiveness of an oil strike and a coal strike must be too much for Gorbachev to dare think about. The traditional mechanisms for control have broken down. They used to deal with strikes by isolating them, granting their economic demands, and then putting their leaders in mental hospitals. Nowadays, thanks to *glasnost*, strikes hit the TV news (one time when Gorbachev must wish the televisions *would* explode!)

The state trade unions are los-

ing their grip. In the coal fields, a new independent union is being formed. According to Russian socialist Boris Kagarlitsky, the big problem with the 1989 strike wave was the absence of a union to knit everything together.

Even then, the government got the strikes called off only

'Glasnost has been a failure from Gorbachev's point of view'

after tense negotiations, and with promises of improved conditions which they couldn't deliver and haven't delivered.

The pieces are in place for a massive strike wave in opposition to price rises, and the formation of a sort of Russian *Solidarnosc*. Gorbachev knows that if the Soviet working class moves, it will be difficult indeed to stop it. And what will he do then?

Others in the bureaucratic hierarchy are asking themselves the same question. Can Gor-

bachev control what he has unleashed? The obvious answer is that he can't, and the only force which might be able to is the army. Soviet colonels are now openly saying that they might have to take charge.

But the army too would be very stretched. Strikes, demonstrations, and nationalist revolts all stem from very deep-rooted discontent. That's a discontent which affects soldiers, too. The USSR has huge numbers of conscript soldiers, and even more people who work in military-related sectors of the economy.

Radical officers have already formed a union, *Shield*, which has called for opposition to military intervention against either demonstrators in Russia or minority nationalists. If the army were to be used to hold the centrifugally disintegrating Union together, as a surrogate for the Communist Party, would it be able to do it? Or would the army fall apart like everything else?

One of Gorbachev's strongest assets is that the West loves him; rather more than Soviet citizens do. But he certainly can't count on being bailed out financially by the West. If things went according to plan, he wouldn't need to. The USSR

is an enormous economy, rich in raw materials, even up to a point self-sufficient (or it could be made to be relatively so, given an efficient system). Unlike Eastern Europe, it has no big foreign debt crisis, and with its capacity to export raw materials it need not develop one.

Things will not go according to plan. A peaceful transition from the bureaucratic structures established in the late 1920s and the 1930s to Western market capitalism is unlikely. The transition entails conflict with the Soviet working class — not, as many on the left still believe, against all the evidence, because the Soviet workers want the "workers' state" rather than reform, but because the contradictions of reform are so overwhelming.

The workers' struggles to come will need our solidarity. The odds must be that the army will attempt to take over at some point. A military coup could go together with a crackdown on militant workers on the model of Chile in 1973.

Our task is to make sure that doesn't happen, and that instead the Soviet workers impose their own solution, through their own revolution and their own rule.

Workers' Liberty 1990

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate

Friday-Saturday-Sunday
29-30 June, 1 July 1990

University of
London Union
Malet Street
London WC1

SPEAKERS INCLUDE

Harry Barnes MP
Robin Blackburn
Robert Fine
Sue Himmelweit
Moshe Machover
Alice Mahon MP
Simon Mohun
Adam Novak
John O'Mahony
Mark Perryman
Jozef Pinior
Hillel Ticktin

Speakers from the opposition movements in Czechoslovakia and East Germany

Sessions include

THE END OF THATCHERISM

REVOLUTIONS IN EAST EUROPE

Creche provided, accommodation provided, food available, socials Friday and Saturday evenings.

Tickets

	Unwaged	Student/ low waged	Waged
Before			
27 June	£8/£7	£15/£13	£22/20
On the door	£9/£8	£18/£15	£25/£22

The first price is for 3 days, the second in each category is for 2 days.

To book, send a cheque payable to Socialist Organiser with this form to WL90, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name _____

Address _____

Enclose £_____ for Friday/Saturday/Sunday at unwaged/student-low wage/waged rate. (Delete as appropriate).

Stalinists into liberals

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

Some of the best people I have ever encountered in the labour movement — or anywhere else, for that matter — were CPers, that is, Stalinists, in one degree or another.

These were people who had dedicated themselves mind and limb to a cause which in its broad points of reference and ultimate goals is our own cause, the cause of socialism, and who had given everything they had to it.

They were not "selfless" in any narrow ascetic sense, but people who rejected the values and concerns of the bourgeois world around them with disdain, and who had organised their own lives around the working-class struggle for socialism. Or so they thought.

In fact they were people — they, and millions like them throughout the world — who had been utterly fooled and misled, whose work and dedication, whose very lives, did not at all serve the goals they wanted to serve. Served, in fact, other goals, opposite goals.

They were people so miseducated and corrupted by Stalinism that they would in certain circumstances — because of their ideas, the model of "socialism" they took as their guide from Stalin's Soviet Union, and because of the military discipline of their organisation — have played the role their counterparts played in Eastern Europe, that is, help set up and staff an anti-working-class Stalinist tyranny.

Erich Honecker, the East German dictator, was also once a "good militant", an activist from early youth who spent 12 years in Hitler's jails and camps; so were most of the others who staffed the East European tyrannies at various levels for 40 years.

It is a tragic story — the British chapter of 'The Great Betrayal' of the hopes and sacrifices of God knows how many tens of millions of would-be revolutionary socialists by the agents of the rulers of the Soviet Union.

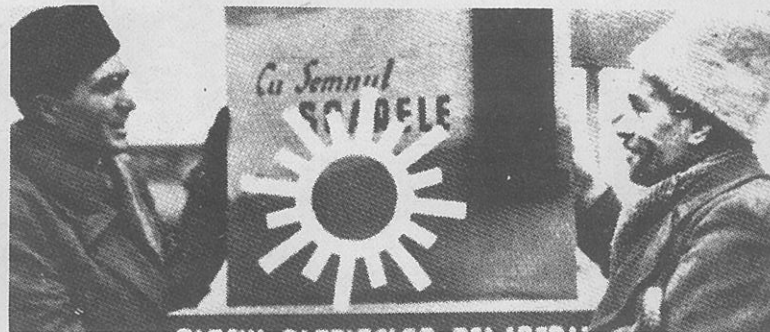
It is also the story of the self-betrayal, the semi-religious self-hypnosis, of people who should have known better, and who with some part of their minds, at least some of the time, must have known better. It changed, corrupted, and destroyed them, in almost all cases, completely.

People who set out to fight for socialism found themselves instead serving Russian foreign policy. People who set out to be revolutionaries found themselves instead far to the right of the right wing of the Labour Party. In the 1930s, the Communist Party's Popular Front meant Liberal-Labour coalition, and, as Trotsky pointed out, even the Labour Party right wing were not as right wing as that. In the '40s the Popular Front was broadened to include "Progressive Tories".

People ignited by injustice to fight capitalism found themselves defending injustice all across the world wherever Stalinists ruled.

People who were propelled to fight capitalism because they could see the grotesque capitalist authoritarianism at the core of formal parliamentary democracy were trained to call black white, totalitarian dictatorship democracy, and the fight for democracy in the Soviet Union a "petty bourgeois deviation" or "Trotsky fascism".

People who revolted against the hypocrisy and mental compartment-



Campaigning for the 'Democratic Bloc' (the Stalinist front) in Romania in 1946. Stalinists who thought they were fighting for democracy and socialism were to get the Ceausescu regime.

talisation which is so prominent a part of capitalism learned to live by an all-pervading set of double standards which allowed them to condemn wholeheartedly and sincerely in Chile or South Africa what they justified and endorsed wholeheartedly and sincerely wherever the CP ruled.

In Britain for 60 years their "central organ" in this work has been the daily paper started on 1 January 1930, known as the *Daily Worker* until 1966, and as the *Morning Star* since. It is a paper that has always depended on Russian subsidies, open or disguised. And it has usually been the voice of those who paid the subsidies.

Even when it condemned the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and later, in 1979-80, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan (which is more than most Trotskyists did, come to think of it), the *Morning Star* has always, in a thousand ways, day in and day out, promoted the interests of the rulers of the Soviet Union, lying and misrepresenting things to the labour movement, doing public relations work for those who savagely exploited and oppressed the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

But now the Russians have pulled the plug on the *Morning Star*. In the '70s and '80s it used to sell more copies to East European governments than to people in Britain. Today, there are different governments in Eastern Europe, and the Russians have cancelled most of their quota of *Morning Stars*.

Gorbachev has all the friendly press coverage he needs, thank you, Mr Chater, from the *Sun* to the *Financial Times*; he doesn't need your wretched little paper any more.

A surprisingly large number of respect-worthy labour movement people have given their support to the *Morning Star's* appeal for money to put itself on a new and independent basis. Are they right? Should socialists try to rescue the *Morning Star*?

Last Friday's *Arena* (BBC2), surveyed the *Morning Star's* 60 year history. The reporter was Beatrix Campbell of the *Marxism Today* faction, which split with the *Morning Star* some years ago and is venomously hostile to it.

Campbell — whose politics are more SDP than anything else — presented a sloppily dishonest and ignorant survey of the last 60 years. It included a characteristically dishonest, but surprisingly romanticised, account of the CP of the '30s, and a tendentious and one-sided account of the faction fight — in which she was prominent — which split the CP in the '80s.

The worst of *Arena's* account of the CP and the *Daily Worker* was the selectiveness and fuzziness of the general history. Campbell talked about the Bolsheviks establishing "People's Power" in 1917. And then they formed the Communist International under that grand old slogan, "People of the World Unite!", didn't they, Ms Campbell?

The left wing mobilisation to stop the fascists marching into the East

End that led to the Battle of Cable Street in 1936 was presented as the CP's work. In fact the decisive role was played by the local Independent Labour Party and others, and the *Daily Worker* initially called on its readers not to try to stop the fascist march!

You'd think that the '30s was all "anti-fascist". Not only was the fact omitted that the German CP, in its ultra-left period of the early '30s, sometimes collaborated with the Hitlerites against the Social Democrats (the "social fascists"), but also the fact that the CPs, and the British among them, made pro-Hitler propaganda during the Hitler-Stalin pact (1939-41), presenting Hitler as the peace-loving victim of Anglo-French imperialism.

Both Tony Chater (*Morning Star* editor/CPB) and *Arena's* "reporter" Campbell (*Marxism Today*/CPGB) called each other Stalinist when it came to discussing the split in the early '80s. Both are right.

You could see it in Campbell perhaps most clearly, despite her SDP politics. There was a great deal of sloppy ignorance, but also a pervasive desire to prettify the awful history. One reason why so many of these people — all over the world — have become liberals, or worse, is that they can't confront the real past of their own movement and critically re-evaluate it.

Stalinism was, to them, something working-class, a sort of party sectarianism, a "classist" narrowness. Campbell defined the 1980s debates and split in the CP as a matter of devotees of class struggle versus people who wanted to base themselves on "all human life"!

Like millions in Eastern Europe, but with no comparable good reason, they see liberalism as the alternative to Stalinism — to themselves. Stalinism was socialism. They were "socialists", now socialism is utopian nonsense! They move away from their history, rejecting it, while continuing to prettify it.

So should socialists help, and maybe rescue, the *Morning Star*? Tempting as it may be to side with the *Morning Star* faction, which has at least a pretence of some sort of working-class concerns, it would be a mistake.

There was a Russian revolutionary called Helphand, known as Parvus, who worked with the Bolsheviks, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky before 1914. Then he became a shameless war profiteer, accumulating vast wealth.

After 1917 he wanted to help the Russian Revolution, and approached Lenin and his one-time close friend Trotsky. Hard pressed, they still refused to accept his "help". "Clean hands are necessary", they told him.

The British labour movement needs a daily paper — but a clean paper, not a paper that has swum in filth and, yes, blood, for over half a century. There is no way to wash the *Daily Worker/Morning Star* clean. The best contribution the *Morning Star* can make to the renewal of socialism is to stop publishing and disappear.

Perestroika in Northern Ireland?

By Patrick Murphy

The Reverend Ian Paisley first made his name in politics when he denounced the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O'Neill, for meeting his southern Irish counterpart Sean Lemass in 1965.

The O'Neill-Lemass talks were portrayed very effectively as the prelude to an auction of the Protestant heritage to the agents of Rome. In fact, O'Neill was aware that the whole basis of the Northern Protestant state was fast disappearing.

Numerically, the Protestant majority was in decline. Economically, the North's industries were suffering most from Britain's fading world position. Politically, the sectarian discrimination which sustained the state was no longer really tenable.

Terence O'Neill proposed to deal with this crisis by encouraging slow internal reform and a limited rapprochement with the southern Irish government. He was swept aside partly by a radical civil rights movement which demanded more thorough-going reform, but largely by a popular Protestant revolt against reform led by the fiery and

fiercely anti-Catholic Paisley.

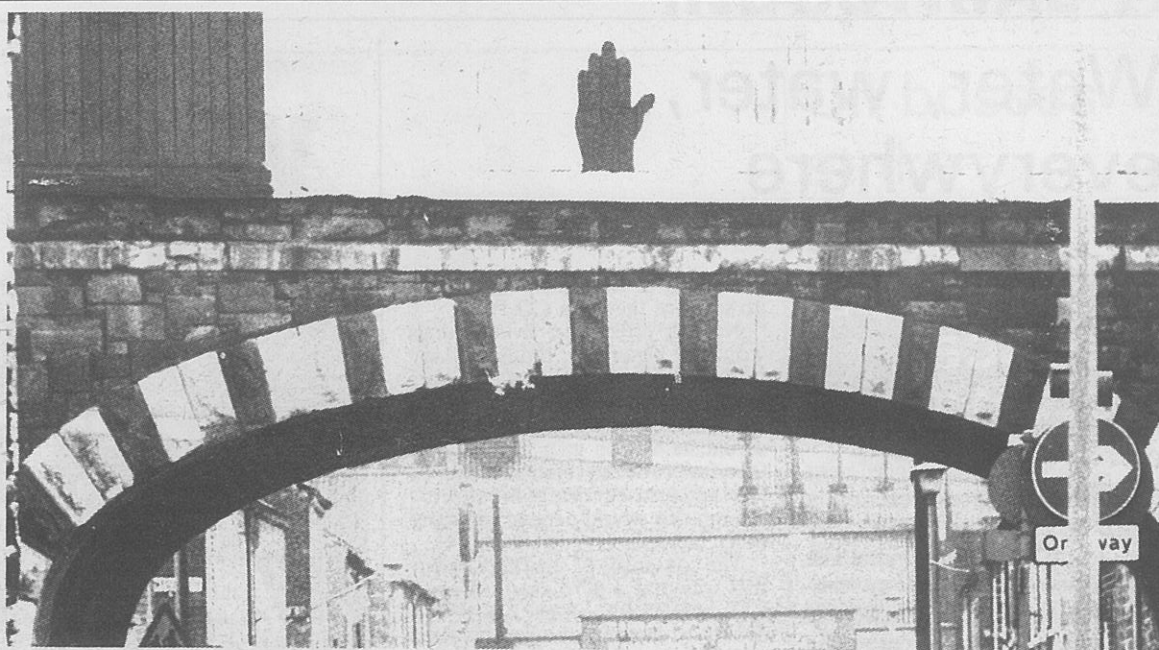
O'Neill was not the last to suffer Paisley's denunciations. In 1974 he saw off another Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, for the same crime of supping with the Papish devil and agreeing to a small role for the Republic in Northern Ireland's government.

Paisley's hatred of Irish nationalism is so powerful that by 1985 no major Unionist figure could ignore the mass Protestant hostility to the Hillsborough Agreement, which again gave the Irish Republic a consultative role in Northern Ireland's affairs.

Two weeks ago, when Charles Haughey visited Belfast, Ian Paisley organised a hostile "welcoming party".

All that background makes it a little surprising to read that the same Ian Paisley has this week agreed to enter direct talks with representatives of the Irish government on the future of Northern Ireland. His party, the DUP, will participate in negotiations from September, and they will be joined by the biggest Unionist party, the OUP, led by James Molyneux.

Peter Brooke, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, has held separate talks with the Unionist leaders, the SDLP and the Irish government in the last few months to find a way to proceed to a constitutional agreement. He couldn't get direct negotiations going,



'Keep Ulster Protestant - Remember 1690' is the slogan printed on the bridge. But the Unionists are being pushed into a deal with Dublin

because the Unionists' precondition is the suspension of the Hillsborough Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that is unacceptable to Irish nationalists.

What has now been agreed is a carefully planned series of talks. First, the main Unionist parties will negotiate with the leading nationalist party, the SDLP, with a view to agreeing on an internal settlement, a devolved government with considerable guarantees for nationalists, possibly power-sharing. They will also discuss relations with the South.

Secondly, the Northern Ireland representatives will enter talks with the Irish government to consider the relationship between any new Northern Ireland government and the Irish Republic. It is at this stage that Paisley and Molyneux will negotiate directly with Haughey, hence acknowledging the legitimacy of the southern interest.

Finally, the British and Irish governments will decide whether any of the new proposals or agreements is sufficient to justify replacing the 1985 agreement. That agreement is an international treaty, and cannot be ended without the consent of both governments.

These developments are not all that surprising. We have been predicting them more or less accurately in *SO* since 1985, though we expected to see a bigger hardline Protestant opposition to those prepared to do deals than is manifest at present.

Unionist politics faced a major test in 1985-6. The old position of mass resistance to reform from above was repeated, but failed. Since then Protestant politics has been changing, including on the role of the Republic.

Peter Brooke's talks have been a matter of finding the right form of words to make the shifting Unionist politicians seem as resolute as ever.

1985 represented a shift in British policy, too, though a shift that was germinating long before. The government needed to undermine the support abroad and in Northern Ireland for the Provisional IRA. They did it by shifting the emphasis of their policy on to constitutional nationalism.

The importance of doing deals with moderate nationalism had been recognised much earlier, above all in the power-sharing agreement of 1973-4. But that, and every other attempt to appease nationalists, was pushed aside by the likes of Paisley.

What was new in 1985 was the determination to prevent any repeat. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was set up without consulting the Northern Ireland Protestants and without relying on their consent. The Protestants could rebel as much as they liked, and the Agreement would hold as long as the nerves of the two governments held.

This week's developments confirm that strategy. If no *real* talks with *real* agreement result, then London and Dublin will continue to consult each other about Northern Ireland's government and possibly move towards joint sovereignty. If the Unionists want to avoid that, then they must agree to a form of settlement acceptable to the SDLP.

With Sinn Fein at their backs, and the Accord to fall back on, the SDLP will want a serious, substantial settlement.

Success for such a strategy could further marginalise Sinn Fein. Serious reform has always commanded widespread support among

Northern Catholics, and the IRA has been sustained by the total failure of Britain to deliver such reform. The Provisionals' military campaign, however, is increasingly desperate and vulnerable.

They have, and will retain, a hard core of electoral support, but if they lost the West Belfast parliamentary seat in the aftermath of an agreed settlement with Dublin and the Unionists, that would be a heavy body blow.

Of course, the talks may well fail, and certainly the Provisionals will be relying on failure to keep their base. Their weakness, as ever, is that they rely on negative support coming from failed reform, alienation, and oppression, and they offer nothing positive as an alternative except the idea of resistance.

Terence O'Neill was, in a way, a Gorbachev for his time. In attempting to impose reform from above which would stabilise Unionist power, he unleashed forces much too strong for him. He became an ineffectual outsider, swept away by reactionaries and radicals.

Now, however, some of the forces unleashed then may just be leashed together again, to agree upon and advocate the sort of perestroika a more competent O'Neill might have planned.

When Terence O'Neill fell from power, John Hume was in Derry articulating long-felt nationalist grievances, while Ian Paisley was in Belfast offering to defend the Protestant faith to the end. Even the vague possibility that they could combine with the British and Irish government to put a constitutional settlement to the voters of Northern Ireland shows that the underlying problem of the 1960s was indeed the legitimacy and viability of the state.

Fight the witch-hunt!

"We believe that the right for Labour Party members to associate to publish and distribute journals such as *Socialist Organiser* is an essential part of the democratic life of the Labour Party".

Signatories so far include:

Ray Carrick	Shop steward NUPE ambulances
Dave Cliff	Stoke Central CLP Secretary
Emma Colyer	National Secretary NUS
Jeremy Corbyn	MP
Sam Darby	Labour councillor Manchester
Ray Davison	Secretary Honiton CLP
John Farrar	Treasurer Stoke Central CLP
Andrew Y Gordon	Labour Party Black Section
Steve Hall	Secr Atherton Trades Council
Tony Jain	Chair Brentwater Labour Party
Hilda Kean	Former leader, Hackney council
Alan Kenworthy	Wakefield CLP
Derek Cooper King	Vauxhall CLP
Steve King	Former leader Haringey council MP
Ken Livingston	
Christine Mallaband	Stoke Central CLP women's officer
Gurdev Manku	Labour councillor Birmingham
Anni Marjoram	Secr. Women's Action C'tee
Steve Mitchell	Vice-President FEUD, NUS
Paul Montero	Convener Humber Area NUS
Eddie Newman	MEP Greater Manchester Central
Martha Osamor	Former deputy leader Haringey
Ann Poulter	Secretary Stoke on Trent DLP
David Poulter	Chair Stoke Central CLP
Ernie Roberts	Former Asst Gen Secr, AEU

Add your signature!

Name.....
Org/position (for identification only)

Send to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Sam Semoff	Secretary Granby Ward LP
Owen Sloss	Chair Stoke on Trent DLP
Mark Strong	SERA
Margaret Tacho	CLP secretary, Okehampton
Pam Tatlow	Chair Women's Action C'tee
Valerie Veness	Former dep leader Islington
Pete Willsman	Woolwich CLP
Walter Wolfgang	Labour CND
(Organisations listed for identification only)	

"For your shopping pleasure..."

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

In Britain, shopping is a 'leisure activity'. It is also a dreary necessity.

In Russia, it consists mainly of standing in queues for 2 hours or more per day, with no guarantees of being able to buy what you want or need at the end. In both countries women are the principal shoppers.

There is no wonder that Russian women look to countries like Britain with desire. The overabundance of goods in the shops is in startling contrast to Russian empty shelves. But the Russians do not want the introduction of the 'market' either. They are (rightly) terrified that the market will bring massive price rises.

The new, private sector in Russia always has goods for sale, and

unusually high quality goods at that — but such goods are many times the price of state shops and quite out of the reach of most Russians.

It is by no means certain that a market economy will be introduced in Russia. It was the partial removal of state food subsidies in Poland which sparked Solidarity in 1980.

Appallingly low wages make those subsidies vital in Russia. At the same time Russian workers do of course want to be able to buy things as and when they need them.

Unfortunately capitalism cannot and will not provide the goods people want at a price they can afford. Western shops are no paradise, despite their colour and light.

For a start who says there are no food queues in the West? I have seen women queuing for hours for cheap meat when a new butcher opened in Gateshead.

The butcher offered bacon and other meats at a very low price and the queue stretched for several blocks. The same happened when part of the 'butter mountain' was sold cheaply to OAP's and poor families — and you could only have

a certain allowance.

Queues in our local Tesco are so long that it is possible to forget that you are paying them and not the other way around! The shelves of this paradise are filled with poison, to a greater or lesser extent.

Food is adulterated with sugar to addict children to the taste or injected with water to make it weigh more. With many products the packaging costs as much as the food.

Obviously things are very much worse for Russian women. The basics are available here and most people (though by no means all) can afford them. Much more poisoned food (eg from areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster) is on sale — but there is as yet no public debate about it.

Russian women also complain about the non-availability of decent affordable clothing. Even in the Outer Hebrides you can buy clothes from a catalogue! Clothes are available everywhere in Britain (unless you want a size 18 extra long that is...) The same is true of other consumer goods like furniture, elec-

trical items or cars. All these goods are of better quality than those on sale in Russia. But not that much better.

One of capitalism's most appalling refinements is the idea of 'built in obsolescence'. The idea of deliberately building a car so that it will fall to bits after 3 or 4 years is sick. So is the fashion industry's drive to make women spend and spend to 'keep up with fashion' or out of terror that they don't fit the impossible ideal.

Teenage girls diet until they are ill or have their posture permanently deformed by ill-fitting high-heeled shoes.

Capitalism does not sell us the goods we want. It produces profitable lines and then psychologically manipulates us into buying them. We are forced to buy more and more because no matter how beautiful the items look they are made not to last.

A pair of women's shoes for example is made to last for four weeks continuous wear. I can't believe the technology does not exist to make them last longer.

10 REVIEWS

Water, water, everywhere

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Unprecedented agreement on the prospects of a 'greenhouse' effect by the world's climate scientists has forced Western governments to agree to take action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from industry, power stations and vehicles.

The recent conference of environment ministers from Europe and North America, held in Norway, accepted the arguments of an international working group of 300 climatologists who are producing a report for the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They are now committed to action of some sort to cut CO₂ levels, as well as action to reduce emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) which damage the stratospheric ozone layer, allowing more dangerous ultra-violet rays to reach the Earth's surface.

They are even committed to helping Third World countries introduce environment-friendly technologies which they would otherwise be unable to afford. However, the sums pledged are relatively tiny.

What is unique about this following of scientists' advice by governments is that there is still no immediate evidence of global warming. It is the logic of the arguments that has persuaded these governments. Whether logic alone will be enough, once actual cash has to be found is another matter. Mrs Thatcher's utterances do not inspire confidence.

There has been intensive research into the climate over the last ten years but, despite such facts as that the 1980s have contained several of the hottest years of the century, there is no convincing evidence of global warming. Indeed, satellite measurements of the atmospheric temperatures, accurate to 1/100th of a degree Celsius, have shown no statistically significant warming trend.

But according to the various models for climate change with increasing CO₂ levels, this is what would be expected for quite a while. All models agree that, in the long term there will be a rise in average temperatures and sea levels. They differ on the size of the rises and on what will happen in the short and medium term. Most would agree on a rise a couple of degrees Celsius and of about a foot or so in sea-levels.

In Britain, this could result in a considerable loss of low-lying land around the coasts, together with increased erosion of cliffs. The alternative would be introducing or uprating dikes and seawalls. In East Anglia, for instance, this would entail increasing the height of some one thousand miles of sea barriers. The National Rivers Authority has already agreed to a 1 foot increase to these walls to allow for global warming. Total costs around the country will be measured in billions of pounds.

Weather patterns would probably become more changeable with more violent storms and droughts. The former would themselves necessitate strengthening of sea defences. The latter will make forest fires more common as well as counteracting the beneficial effects of increased warmth to agriculture.

These effects include an increased growing season; allowing crops to be grown further north; allowing growth of more tropical plants such as vines; allowing increased growth

and range of trees (helping to mop up some of the extra CO₂!)

Not all effects on living things would be beneficial, though. Many indigenous plants and animals would find it hard to adapt to the new conditions while various pests would be able to gain a foot-hold. One fear is of the reintroduction of the malaria-carrying mosquito, though this would depend on many other factors.

The consensus of the IPCC scientists was that a 60% cut in present CO₂ emissions was necessary merely to stabilise the current level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. EC governments are likely to agree a programme to freeze emissions at current levels by 2000 and cut them by up to 50% by 2010. Readers will note that this is a modest aim, with any drastic action postponed for 20 years.

Mrs Thatcher has been able to pose as being more radical by openly accepting and praising the IPCC findings. In her 'Thatcher saves the world' mode, she has described the IPCC report as of "historical significance... an authoritative early-warning system". She told UK climatologists coordinating the IPCC working group, "Your task is no less a one than to help us safeguard the future of the planet" (my incredulous emphasis).

She then announced the government's commitment to a 30% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2005. True, this is only half that recommended by the experts just to stabilise present CO₂ levels, but it sounds more than the EC proposal... until you read the rest of the declaration.

It is 30% less than projected emissions. Since these are estimated at 25% above present levels by 2005, her grand gesture amounts to just 5% in real terms. And that only if other nations do likewise!

It is essential that the failure of governments to act adequately in the face of global warming be attacked and condemned by socialists. This means tackling the questions of energy production and use of transport both in the Western countries, where the vast majority of CO₂ emissions originate, and in the Third World and Eastern Europe where much more CO₂ will be released if they continue to industrialise on the Western pattern.

The danger is that, without a socialist approach, workers will carry the can, as miners in Yorkshire and Nottingham seem likely to do soon, for the polluting technologies of the boss class.



Julia Roberts (right) as Cinderella

Cinderella and the good capitalist

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Pretty Woman'

'Pretty Woman' seems like a classic Cinderella story; Vivian, a prostitute, meets a handsome billionaire who sweeps her off her feet.

But the magic works both ways in this fairy tale. The billionaire's heart is frozen solid, and he's insensitive, and it takes all of Vivian's warmth, love and honesty to turn him from a toad into a prince.

We're back in rags-to-riches American Dream territory. Vivian (Julia Roberts) takes an elevator ride to the top, but she's shown as deserving, so the books are balanced. Yes, she's a prostitute, but deep down she's really an innocent, sweet, unspoiled, slightly daffy and unsure of herself.

The plot is pretty mouldy, even for Hollywood. As ever, Vivian proves her true womanly worth by

caring only for the man, and not for his money. Love is all she wants.

But can she get it? Richard Gere's billionaire looks the ideal man, but he's hardboiled, and his heart seems armour plated. He's presented as the epitome of the tough capitalist.

In the old days, the mean capitalist was the one who exploited his workers relentlessly, who never gave a thought for their welfare. The kindly capitalist on the other hand was paternalistic and concerned about his workforce. Both were exploiters, of course, but one had a conscience about it.

But in 'Pretty Woman', the old roles not longer fit. The bad capitalist is one who builds nothing, who creates nothing but wealth. He is an asset stripper, a corporate raider, someone who breaks up and sells off the corporations other capitalists have taken years to build up (on the backs of their workforces).

In 'Pretty Woman' the good capitalist, on the other hand, what Gere becomes when transformed by love, is the one who builds something — cars, bridges, houses, anything, as long as it's more than a bank balance. (The fact that the bank balance grows too is never mentioned).

The junk bond scandals and the insider dealing scams of the past few years have given American finance a bad name. The ire against the gospel of greed and against the truly obscene amounts of money dealers were making out of speculation has made Hollywood sit up and take notice. Hence 'Pretty Woman' and its presentation of the new style American capitalist — caring, concerned, a man of physical rather than (purely) monetary substance.

Most American films, beneath the romantic or comedic froth, have a sub-text. On the top, we get the sugar coating, underneath the bitter pill. In 'Pretty Woman', the sub-text is that American capitalism is reformable. All it takes it a little more humanity on the part of the money men, and all will be well again in Wall Street.

But again, they've put their foot in it. Gere becomes a builder all right, but of Navy war ships! Hardly the mark of humanity!

The film is fluff, but it's remarkably enjoyable. Even the men in the audience seemed entranced by it, which goes to show that, with enough sugar sprinkled on, audiences will swallow anything.

Clean heir act

TV

By Jim Denham

The very affable fellow who seems to be the manager of my local left-wing bookshop doubles as the Midlands Organiser of the Communist Party.

I suspect running the bookshop is a more time-consuming job for him these days. Anyway, he doesn't appear to have realised that a River of Blood separates us, and always greets me with a hearty "Good to see you!" as I trundle in with a roll of SO's under my arm.

Last week, however, it was different. He was deep in conversation with a colleague, describing an apparently inspirational experience: "His grasp of the essentials of the contemporary socio-economic situation... a whole new critique of the underlying bankruptcy of both capitalism and Stalinism... he explained that both are, or course, fundamentally the same... an entirely new perspective... brilliant!"

I naturally assumed that the man had been to a particularly stimulating meeting addressed by a New Times thinker: Andre Gorz, perhaps, or even Martin Jacques in top form. But no, it turned out that he was talking about the previous evening's BBC programme 'The Earth in Balance' by HRH The Prince of Wales.

I don't mind telling you I was more than a little gob-smacked by this, and as I sheepishly admitted to having missed HRH's *tour de force* I desperately tried to think up some jolly riposte along the lines of "So Charles is part of the New Post-Fordist Democratic Alliance, eh!" But words failed me.

As I said, I didn't actually witness the Heir Apparent's latest foray into Socially Responsible Broadcasting but I was able to pick up the general drift from Old Reliable Mark Steyn in *The Independent*: central to the Prince's thesis is, apparently, the need to counter materialist values by recovering "the ancient sense of kinship with nature which not so long ago was instinctive to us. That resulting imbalance has led, I believe, to a crisis of the spirit — or perhaps a loss of soul".

"A nice idea", comments Steyn,

"but fundamentally feudal, not to say monarchical, in its concept of the bond between man and his land".

The Prince didn't actually name Marconi and Ford as the villains of modern history, but there can be no doubt that his hankering after 'stewardship' and geographical communities rather cuts against developments in communications, production, finance and social mobility that have taken place (at least in the West) over the past 200 years. This may account for his rather diffident closing remarks: "I've certainly reached the conclusion that there are no easy answers". How true. How very true.

I must admit that from what little I've seen and heard of Charles, I rather like him. He seems a decent sort of cove. He thinks and worries about the Big Questions — the environment, the Third World, inner city deprivation, unemployment, that sort of thing.

Apparently, as a student he toyed with the idea of joining the Labour Club and had to be talked out of it by the likes of Ian Gilmour, specially bussed in to keep him on the straight and narrow. He still can't stand 'That Dreadful Woman', by all accounts.

Compared to his boorish father and most of his worthless, parasitic family and in-laws, Charles certainly seems a Good Egg. But then I've always had quite a soft spot for his auntie Margaret, whom the National Union of Royal Operatives and Allied Trades should long ago have disciplined under their 'Bringing into Disrepute' rules.

And what about the last 'People's Prince', Edward VIII, who made a point of identifying with the unemployed and made occasional 'anti-capitalist' noises? He was chummy with Oswald Moseley and Hitler had him lined up as the tame royal for Nazi Britain. At a time of crisis, who knows what manner of reaction could rally round Charles' mystical populism?

I don't propose machine-gunning him. After the revolution he should be sent out to do a proper day's work — maybe, like the last Emperor of China, he could be set to work as a gardener in the grounds of his own former palace. That would help him commune with nature.

I still think he's a Good Egg, mind you. But when a leading Communist raves about a member of the royal family... well, it really is appalling.

Strikes the only answer to poll tax cuts

By Liam Conway

A survey in, of all places, 'The Mail on Sunday' reveals that education is so underfunded that many schools are raising voluntary contributions to pay teachers wages.

Not surprisingly few schools can raise enough for what the Tories would call 'those little extras'. In Oldham, Barnsley, Notts, Surrey, Bradford, Calderdale and many other areas teachers are now threatened with dismissal. An NAS/UWT survey of 13 Local Education Authorities predicts that 756 teachers' jobs are at risk.

In Barnsley 24 music teachers are likely to be given their notices next week. This will save the authority £181,000. But because of poll tax capping, Barnsley needs to cut education by £5.5 million. You cannot save £5.5 million by cutting back on 'those little extras' like books and equipment. Clearly more staff cuts are planned.

Can we rely on Labour Councils to protect us? Sadly not. In Bradford, the newly elected Labour Council has made no promises that it will reverse the planned cuts by the previous Thatcherite Tory administration.

In Barnsley, after claiming, in the middle of an NUT strike ballot, that the redundancy scare was an exaggeration, a spokesperson for the council said, 'We have no soft option'. Regrettably the 'hard option' in this case means sacking teachers, not fighting the government

for more funds.

And the response of the national leadership in the National Union of Teachers has been much the same. With 756 jobs threatened, you might expect to see general secretary Doug McAvoy in the media everyday, threatening the government with mass teacher action against these sackings. Unfortunately, their silence is deafening.

Only left national executive members,



Doug McAvoy

like Andy Dixon of Greater Manchester, have made any attempt to stir some action through the national press. The truth is the national union does not want to fight these job cuts. Only last week, they 'postponed' (read called off) the one day strike in Barnsley, where the redundancy threat is at its most intense.

The union leaders would prefer to do some sort of deal with the Tories, whilst waiting for Kinnock's knights in shining armour to gallop to the rescue of education. But even if the gallant Kinnock arrives, he will only bring the Policy Review with him, which has nothing in it for education or any other public service, especially when it comes to money.

What about deals with the Tories? Have the leadership learned nothing from years of Tory attacks on education?

The only answer to these job cuts is strike action. Firstly in those areas affected, but, as soon as possible, and in line with NUT policy, national action in defence of jobs. The left must help to build for solidarity action in those areas unaffected by redundancies this year.

And we will not be alone. This summer NALGO could well be in action over their flat-rate pay claim of £1,500. After last year's successful strikes confidence amongst NALGO workers must be pretty high. But there could also be widespread action around the poll tax. And again NALGO workers could be in the forefront of this fight.

At their June Conference NALGO will be discussing a call to refuse to process fines or deductions from earnings arising out of non-payment.

With the campaign of non-payment already heating up, with some areas well in excess of 50% non-payment, the possibility of a 'summer of discontent' at local government level grows stronger by the day.

The left in the NUT must seek links with NALGO in particular as soon as possible, so that, as well as defending teachers' jobs, we can help to influence that broader fight over the poll tax and cuts in local services.

Supported by Nottinghamshire Division NUT

An open conference on the Campaign to Defend Jobs and Salaries

Saturday 7 July

11.00am - 4.00pm

Forest Comprehensive School,

Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham

Individuals £3 (donations invited)

For more information contact: Liam Conway, 34 Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham

Full-employment strike

Almost 200 staff in Full-employment training centres nationwide staged a 24 hour strike on Tuesday 24 May against redundancies and for union recognition.

Full-employment staff, members of the MSF voted 4-1 for strike action in a national

ballot held on 24 April after management proceeded with closures of training centres and redundancies of staff. Previous agreements for staff redeployment were broken and MSF were denied consultation.

One Full-employment striker told SO: "One thing we are saying today is that we are prepared to take further action if we continue to be denied other channels."

Rank and file control

By Sarah Cotterill, Manchester NALGO

Town Hall workers look set to be on strike this summer over our pay claim.

The claim is for a £1,500 flat rate increase for all workers. This is the first year that a flat rate claim has been submitted, and follows years of campaigning by the left against percentage claims. The unions are also demanding a 35 hour week and increased holidays.

The prospects of success look good. Elsewhere, many groups of workers have won over 10% in-

cluding workers in Fords, the electricity supply industry, retail, electrical contracting and the building industry. The BBC has offered 9.4% and NALGO members in Gas have won 9.75%.

With inflation at over 10% and everyone receiving massive poll tax bills, we clearly need a decent pay settlement this year. The employer's derisory 8% offer has rightly been thrown out by the negotiators. This would be lower than inflation and would do nothing to alleviate low pay amongst Council workers. We must stick out for an across-the-board settlement.

Plans for a ballot on industrial action are already being set in motion. But so far there has been no discussion on what form the industrial action will take.

Last year we had one, two and three day national all-out strikes. These were followed by indefinite selective action by 5% of the workforce. The one, two and three-day strikes created a real head of steam amongst the membership and could have been used to build towards all-out indefinite action. Instead, we all went back to work (except for the 5% who were sent home to do their gardens). It seemed that the action was over; or at least we had no say in it, or control over it.

There is another aspect of last year's strike which should not be repeated. News of the pay settlement reached NALGO members via the Nine O'Clock News. It was not until several weeks later that delegates met at the National Local Government Committee to ratify the decision. This year we need regular meetings of the NLGC so branches can direct the dispute and decide the final settlement.

Strike at unemployed centre

"On strike against management organised violence", "Support our picket against management intimidation, harassment, abuse and violence", "Only scabs cross picket lines", read the placards outside Merseyside Trade Union, Community, and Unemployed Resources Centre in Liverpool last week.

The strike at the centre had begun the previous Wednesday, 16 May. Cleaners walked out after one of them was suspended for allegedly using abusive language to a member of the centre's management.

Complaints about the running of the centre go back a long time, and not long before the strike an inquiry into the centre's running had been demanded... by the suspended cleaner.

When the cleaners walked out, the centre's management and TGWU officials declared that it was not a "proper" strike. The spurious arguments used ranged from claiming that the

cleaners were not really in the TGWU (they were behind with their dues) to declaring that they had not followed the grievance procedure.

Among those who crossed the picket line were Kevin Coyne (a leading figure at the centre), Pat Harvey (an office-bearer of Liverpool District Labour Party), and Alex McFadden (a member of the Communist Party of Britain/Morning Star). Eurocommunists also crossed the picket line.

Trades Council employees, welfare rights workers, and Women's Technology Scheme teachers based in the centre, and Labour Party members due to have meetings in the centre, refused to cross.

The strike ended last Tuesday, 22 May, when management agreed to bring forward the date of the disciplinary hearing of the suspended cleaner. The hearing adjourned without reaching a verdict, and is being resumed as we go to press. Meanwhile, a member of management was suspended on the day of the return to work for allegedly punching another worker at the centre.

The dispute has heightened concern in the Merseyside labour movement about how the centre is run.

Treat him as a traitor

WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary

There's speculation in the press about whether or not Dr Owen would be welcome back in the Labour Party.

It shows that people haven't remembered their history, or haven't learned their lessons from it. That man is a traitor and should be treated as a traitor.

However, Dr Owen has not altered his ground. Rather, that Labour Party has moved toward Owen. That is a tragedy.

It's a tragedy for the labour movement and its a tragedy for this country. It means that we are ditching all the old socialist principles that we fought for for so long and we're offering the SDP under the

flag of the Labour Party.

In the next general election, if Kinnock and Co fail, all it'll mean to them is that they spend another 5 years on the opposition benches. To us it means we spend another five years having our noses rubbed in the shit.

I would ask people to campaign for a return to democratic and socialist principles.

When I hear people talking about the sort of trade union legislation that the future Labour government would have I get the feeling: "Here we go again".

Here we go through the long painful process of having learned lessons in the past, forgotten them and having to relive them.

We can change things if people get together and organise.

I remember an old saying of my grandfather: 'Never, never resign,

always make the bastards kick you out'.

I have accepted quite a lot in this party, but I stayed in and fought, just the same as I stayed in my union and fought under the leadership of Gormley and Co.

But I'm afraid many rank and file Labour supporters are already asking themselves can we go on like this?

We need to try and galvanise support and show them that it is possible to win the Labour Party round, the same way that we turned round the NUM under the right wing leadership.

We got a left-wing leadership, and became one of the most dominant and driving trade unions that this country has ever seen.

The same can be done for the Labour Party. But the effort needs to be organised, and it needs to be organised by the rank and file.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

Oil bosses strike unionism

Over the last year one of the most important organising drives in the history of the British trade union movement has been taking place.

A rank and file body, the Oil Industry Liaison Committee, has been fighting a long guerrilla war to unionise the North Sea oil rights and win decent health and safety provision.

A series of strikes last summer won some gains on pay and helped build organisation. This year rig workers plan to really hammer the bosses.

An overtime ban is spreading across the oil fields. Over 20 installations are affected so far, involving 4000 workers, union and non-union alike. The overtime ban is set to escalate into a series of strikes.

The rig workers are fighting to cut the terribly long hours they are forced to work. At present they are expected to work 15 hour shifts and compulsory overtime.

The total for rig workers often goes above 3000 hours a year. Onshore industrial workers do an average of 1840 hours per year.

The TGWU and the National Union of Seamen are demanding:

- Restriction of the basic hours of daily work to 12.
- Time and a half for all hours worked after 12 and for public holidays.

Safety is another key issue. Despite the tragic death of 167 workers in the Piper Alpha disaster in 1988, little has changed in the North Sea. The unions are demanding health and safety committees, with elected health and safety reps at all drilling units.

Another element in the rig workers' campaign is a push for decent wages to compensate for the isolation and privations of life on the rigs.

The backbone of the rig workers' campaign has been provided by the rank and file activists of the Liaison Committee.

They produce a newspaper, *Blow Out*, written by and for rig workers themselves. The paper helps keep workers informed of the committee's activities and to forge bonds of solidarity.

Union organisation, which was strongest among construction and engineering workers, has now spread to include most workers. Advances have been won in the catering sector, where an 18 per cent wage deal was won earlier this year.

The weakest spot on the union side is among the crews of the support vessels, where the National Union of Seamen was decimated as a consequence of the P&O strike in 1988.

Overall, though, the rig workers look to be in a strong position. The bosses look vulnerable and divided.

Clem Cook, chair of the oil contractors, has been quoted as saying that the oil companies will face a lot of trouble this summer unless there is an agreement with the liaison committee.

Now is the time to fight.

IN BRIEF

Iveco Ford truck assembly workers voted last week to continue their strike after rejecting a pay offer of 10.5%

4,000 General Motors component workers have voted to accept a 11.7% pay deal combined with a reduction in the working week to 37 hours.

7,000 British Airways engineering and maintenance workers are out on indefinite unofficial strike at Heathrow in protest at management's attempts to impose new working patterns including 12 hour shifts.

3,000 workers at Swan Hunter the Tyneside shipyard have won an immediate cut in the working week to 37 hours.

After threats of redundancy to **teachers** in Barnsley and Nottingham as a result of poll tax cuts and local management of schools more job losses are on the cards. 10 teachers in Oldham could face the sack.

Polytechnic and college lecturers look likely to ballot on strike action in September. At the union's conference this week a series of one day strikes leading up to indefinite action was accepted as the best way to win a decent pay deal.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Defend the right to picket!

Labour will not allow mass pickets, according to the Party's employment spokesperson, Tony Blair, speaking on BBC's *On the Record* on Sunday.

He said that pickets like the one at Orgreave, during the 1984-5 miners' strike, would be outlawed. "The numbers will be limited, there will be no mass pickets, there will be no flying pickets."

So-called 'secondary' picketing — outside a workplace other than that directly affected by the dispute (again, like Orgreave), would be curbed. Blair said that he did not support the restoration of the rights trade unions have lost since the Tories came to office in 1979.

Later, a Labour spokesperson said that Labour would probably maintain the current legal maximum of six pickets.

The Party's new policy document says that secondary picketing would be allowed only where the second employer was directly assisting the first in frustrating the dispute.

Ron Todd, leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union, said he would be happy to accept a limitation of picketing to six people.

The message, in short, to trade unionists, is: don't expect much from Labour.

Labour should repeal all the anti-



union laws. Tony Blair's quest for 'fair' legislation on the unions will be fruitless.

If Labour accepts, as it says it does, that workers have a right to

strike, it should also accept their right to take the action that will make strikes effective. You need effective picketing too in strikes. Often you need 'secondary' and solidarity action.

With the law as Labour would leave it, the kind of action that led to the formation of Solidarnosc in

Poland in 1980 would still be illegal.

A fight is needed through the trade unions and Labour Parties to commit Labour's October conference to a Workers' Charter of trade union rights as advocated by Wallasey CLP and the recently formed 'Campaign for Free Trade Unions'.

A revamped 'In Place of Strife'

By Eric Heffer MP

Michael Howard is totally wrong to argue that Labour's policy document is a striker's charter.

In fact, it is a revived version of 'In Place of Strife', the document proposed by Barbara Castle, which opened the way for Tory anti-trade union legislation under Ted Heath, (which Labour abolished in 1974-79) but which was creatively restored and further developed under Margaret Thatcher, making it almost impossible for workers through their unions, to take

and win strike action.

The idea that trade unions are as powerful as the employers — two powerful giants balancing each other — is a myth, but one that is used by employers and Tory governments to weaken and destroy trade unions, which too often are the only defence workers have against bad conditions of employment.

The law regarding individual rights now advocated by Labour, without collective backing by unions is, therefore, largely a deception. Workers acting on their own would have little chance of getting their lawful rights.

From a letter to the Independent, 28 May.

Remember Tienanmen Square!

Marches to commemorate the martyrs
Sunday 3 June, assemble 12 noon in
Chinatown, London and Manchester

Polish workers start fight back against free market policies

Spectacular last-minute intervention by Lech Walesa forestalled a national rail strike in Poland this week.

Strikes had been spreading from

the north west for some days, and an all-out national freight strike had been called from 29 May. Poland's road freight capacity is very limited, and the all-out rail strike would quickly have paralysed the entire economy.

According to the *Independent*, Walesa "promised that the government would talk to [the railworkers] about their demands for a pay increase and that he would come back for another meeting on 13 June..."

"If they were not satisfied with the results achieved by then, he would join them in a hunger strike".

50 railworkers have been on hunger strike in the northern city of Slupsk to support their demands.

The railworkers' main demand was for a 20 per cent wage rise. Workers' living standards in Poland have been halved, or worse, since the beginning of this year by the government's drastic free-market programme, and some 400,000 are now jobless.

The press has reported that the railworkers have 12 demands in all, but we do not know the other 11. Apparently one of the sparks for the strike was the withdrawal of the railworkers' entitlement to cheap rail travel.

The railworkers had elected strike committees entirely outside the structures of Solidarnosc. They received support from the OPZZ, the former Stalinist government-controlled union, which generally has its base more among petty bureaucrats and retired people who need membership in order to get their pensions than among workers; and from "Solidarnosc '80", a breakaway from Solidarnosc based in Szczecin. "Solidarnosc '80" is for militant defence of workers' interests, but also nationalist, clericalist, anti-semitic, and self-defined as 'right wing'.

The scope of the movement shows the strike cannot just have been a political gambit by Stalinists and right-wingers opposed to the Solidarnosc government. It was a genuine expression of workers' discontent. It was the beginning of the coming workers' revolt against free-market, private-profit economics all across Eastern Europe.

It was only the beginning, however. Most of the Polish working class remains demoralised, confused, in a waiting mood. Last weekend Poland held its first free elections for over sixty years, for local councils. In a result unprecedented for a country getting its first taste of democracy after so long, only 42 per cent voted.

Generally, the candidates of the Solidarnosc Civic Committees won, defeating opposition which came mostly from the nationalist and clericalist right wing. There were also some challengers from the left, notably candidates from the Socialist Political Centre in Wroclaw, but we do not yet know their results.

Stand up and fight

By Paul Whetton

The threat of pit closures by the Coal Board still rolls on. People should not be surprised that every week new measures will be taken against the miners in order to carry out the Coal Board's and the Government's diktat.

It's up to the rank and file miners to stand up and fight. They've got a very simple choice. Yes, there's a lot of low morale in the pits, but when faced with the stark reality of what the Coal Board is saying then we have no option. We have to stand up and fight.

Constituency Labour Parties Conference Fighting the Poll Tax and the witch-hunt

Saturday 16 June
11.30—4.30

Red Rose Labour Club, 129
Seven Sisters Road, London
N7 (tube: Finsbury Park)

Credentials for delegates and observers £5
from CLPs Conference, c/o 11 Egremont
Promenade, Wallasey, Merseyside L44
8BG