

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**Labour
women's
conference**

**Women's Fightback
pull-out inside**

Yeltsin has no answers!

It used to be customary to refer to a Left and Right in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin was supposed to represent the Left.

Well-known left-wing writer Tariq Ali, in his book 'Revolution From Above', devotes a whole chapter to praising Yeltsin's populist style. When Yeltsin was sacked as Moscow Party boss in 1987, it was because he was too radical for Gorbachev's taste.

Now Yeltsin has emerged clearly as one of the most outspokenly pro-capitalist of Russian politicians, fervently enthusiastic about the United States, Stock Markets and so on, and the chief advocate of Russian nationalism.

As head of the Moscow Party, Yeltsin won himself widespread support for his outgoing campaign against corruption. Moscow was run by dyed-in-the-wool old bureaucrats notorious for their corrupt administration. Yeltsin would, for example, queue along with ordinary Muscovites to buy meat, and ask for veal when he got to the front of the line.

When told that there was no veal, he would reveal his identity and tell them that he knew for a fact that a consignment of veal had been delivered for the exclusive use of the Party hierarchy.

So, sacking him didn't prove enough for Gorbachev to get rid of him. Yeltsin came back to win elections. Now he is president of the Russian federation, the largest republic in the Union.

That makes him a major rival to Gorbachev himself. His election is

one of Gorbachev's biggest headaches.

Yeltsin calls for more extensive democratic reform, and more of the Western-style market.

He combines this with an odd kind of Russian nationalism. Where Gorbachev stands by the traditional Great Russian empire, determined to resist the separatism of the national minorities, Yeltsin calls for Russia to 'go it alone'. In his version, Russian chauvinism means the idea that Russians shouldn't have to carry the can for the whole USSR.

Russia should be sovereign; the little nations shouldn't have any say in the affairs of Russia, which they do in theory via the Union (although in reality the USSR is completely dominated by Russians anyway).

Yeltsin says that Russia should follow the Lithuanian example, by declaring itself independent. Russian laws should not be subordinate to Soviet ones.

It's a sort of "Little Russianism", rather like the Little Englandism of those who want a capitalist Britain outside the EEC.

Many militants in the emerging independent workers' movement in the USSR currently look to Yeltsin for political direction. Disillusioned with Gorbachev, they are turning to his most radical critic.

But it is only a matter of time before they are disillusioned with Yeltsin, too.

Generally Yeltsin has not been associated with the virulent anti-semitic strains of Russian nationalism. (Some reports suggest otherwise, and even that he has some relationship with the quasi-fascist group Pamyat: but publicly

Yeltsin has led demonstrations against Pamyat.)

His "Russia for the Russians" approach also means in practice a far more liberal attitude to the demands of the Baltic states.

He is a classical populist, opportunist operator. When he failed, twice, to get elected as Russian president, he offered to make a coalition with all political forces in the Congress.

He says he is for market reforms, but against the price rises Gorbachev is forcing through. As many of his critics have pointed out, it's hard to see how he can honour both commitments.

Over the past few months, the Left in the West has lost a lot of its illusions in Yeltsin. But there is a lesson to be learned.

Any ruling class has its more and less popular factions. We should be fore the complete independence of the workers' movement from all of them. Allowing ourselves to be taken in by their populist gestures will not help the workers of the East rebuild genuine socialism.

**Hear the voice of
the Soviet workers!**

**Yuri Budchenko from the
new Kuzbass workers'
union is touring Britain
this month.**

**For details of the tour,
contact CSWEB, 56 Kevan
House, Wyndham Rd,
London SE5 or phone
071-639 7967**



Is Yeltsin a left winger?

Support the independent workers' movement!

Labour left plans union rights campaign

By Martin Thomas

The recently-launched 'Labour Party Socialists' movement has agreed to campaign strongly to win a commitment to trade union rights at Labour Party conference this October.

Speaking at the first meeting of the LPS committee elected at the movement's launch conference last month, Mike Marqusee said: "The trade union debate will be one of those at conference where we have the best chance of getting somewhere."

Labour's leaders have promised to keep most of the Tory restrictions on solidarity strikes and pickets, and all the Tory law on pre-strike ballots. But a number of CLPs have been campaigning on the issue.

Wallasey CLP's composite calling for a Workers' Charter of union rights won two and a quarter million votes at last year's Labour Party conference. And this year 33 trade union leaders have signed the appeal of the Campaign for Free Trade Unions. The unions whose general secretaries have signed the 'Free Trade Unions' appeal command between them 2.5 million of the 5.5 million union votes at Labour conference.

Labour Party Socialists will push a model motion; circulate a broadsheet sponsored by Wallasey CLP; seek to organise LPS fringe meetings at union conferences; and, with the CLPs Conference Network, approach the Campaign for Free Trade Unions for cooperation.

The committee meeting also agreed to support the speaking tour by Soviet miners this month organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc, and CSWEB's "Support the Socialists" appeal.

It decided to approach the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy to explore joint action in defence of mandatory reselection.

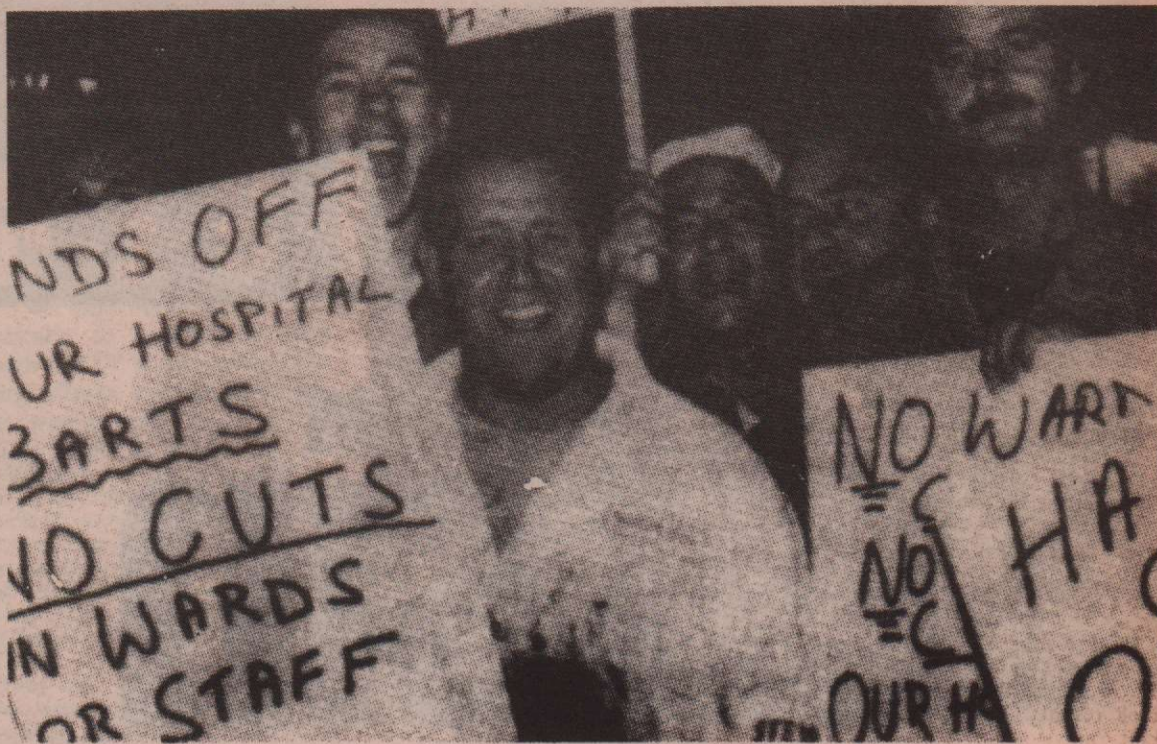
It was reported that a local Labour Party Socialists group was being set up in Wakefield and a preparatory meeting for LPS coordination in the North West is scheduled in Liverpool. LPS groups will be organised in other regions and areas.

LPS has 800 members already through its arrangement for dual membership with the Socialist Movement.

Activities were planned for the Labour conference in October, soon after which LPS will hold its first AGM. The committee agreed to hold a series of conferences in 1990 to debate the left's ideas and campaigns on various issues.

The meeting heard that the Socialist Movement plans to launch its own newspaper this autumn, and asked for a report at its next meeting so that it can discuss LPS input to that newspaper.

Officers were elected — Dorothy Macedo (co-chair and press officer), John Nicholson (co-chair and regions officer), Ruth Clarke (secretary), Mandy Moore (treasurer), Paul McGarry (minutes secretary), and Reg Race (Socialist Movement link person). The next committee meeting is on 14 July in London.



Smithfield meat porters strike for the NHS. Such action will stay illegal if Kinnock gets his way.

Model motions

For Labour Party Conference 1990, Socialist Organiser calls on its readers to back the model motions circulated by Labour Party Socialists and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and, especially, the following two motions.

When putting one of these motions in your Labour Party, you should change the wording slightly, because identically worded resolutions from different CLPs are not counted as separate for the purposes of conference compositing.

Please, however, avoid changing the four points of the Workers' Charter, since it is that exact wording which has won the backing of 33 trade union leaders in the "Campaign for Free Trade Unions".

Conference condemns the "Field dossier" and the NEC inquiry into Wirral Labour Parties and into Socialist Organiser launched in response to it as a diversion from the central task of fighting the Tories.

We further condemn the release of the dossier to the capitalist media, the unwarranted intrusion into people's personal lives contained in the document and the proven factual inaccuracies contained therein.

We oppose: any suspension of the Labour Party bodies in the course of, or as a result of, the inquiry; any imposition of Parliamentary candidates by the NEC on CLPs where the selection procedure has been properly carried out.

We oppose expulsions of Labour Party members for their political views. 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.

Conference calls on the NEC to pledge the next Labour government to the immediate repeal of all Tory anti-union laws and legislation for a Workers' Charter of positive trade union rights including:

- The right to belong to a trade union, to recruit fellow workers into unions and to have your union recognised by the employer for collective bargaining;
- The right to be active in your union and to take industrial action without the fear of the sack;
- The right to strike, to picket effectively, and to take industrial action in support of other groups of workers, without fear of losing your job or legal attacks on your union;
- The right of union members to determine their own rules, in line with the ILO Convention of Freedom of Association.

Tories' HATs knocked off

Tenants are on their way to victory over a major plank of Tory housing policy.

After their 1987 election victory the Tories legislated for Housing Action Trusts to take over council estates. The government-appointed "HATs" would take over estates, do them up, and then sell them off to owner-occupiers, Housing Associations or private landlords.

But tenants organised strongly on many of the estates earmarked for

HATs. The Tories' first setback came when they were forced to accept that tenants on each estate should have a vote before a HAT was imposed.

"In March last year," so the *Sunday Correspondent* reported (3 June), "the proposals were trimmed to cover only nine estates (there were to be 17 originally), and every ballot held has resulted in a decisive vote against a HAT."

Further estate ballots are due later this year.

East Germany: organising the rank and file

As East Germany moves towards unification with West Germany, the old government-controlled trade unions of East Germany are being taken over by the West German trade unions. Free trade union activists in East Germany, represented by the Initiative for Independent Trade Unions (IFUG), are continuing their struggle. The following article is translated from the latest IFUG newsletter

We are rid of it — the FDGB [official East German union] federation with its parasitic apparatus, which right to the end was unable to look after the interests of its members.

Only a few days ago we received a letter from a colleague who is active as a technical worker in the FDGB, has founded an Independent Association of technical workers there, and was well informed on the "death throes" of the apparatus.

He writes: "The FDGB federation is trying to eke out its survival through the formation of enterprises like CCM-GmbH, ACE, etc. Not only is the FDGB federation coming forward as an employer, it is also influencing the staff in the direction of the idea that only collaboration in its capital enterprises contributes to the safeguarding of their jobs.

"Thus all the drivers were persuaded that Autoclub Europa, ACE, would guarantee their future...and now there is frantic thought about how elegantly the drivers were made redundant"

The IUG could dissolve itself now; its goal of stimulating and promoting activities outside the FDGB has become redundant. We believe, however, that there is still a function for such trade union and workplace activity which orients itself consistently to the interests and needs of the people at the grass roots.

For it will become clear whether the leaders of the industrial unions are really representatives of the interests of their members, or only new "little princes" disputing over the money and property of the defunct federation.

We don't want to presume that, but we know from many discussions with West German colleagues how often they run up against a cumbersome trade union apparatus, and that in all the industrial unions — not to speak of the whole DGB [West German TUC] — bureaucracy continually has to be overcome.

We are spared nothing, colleagues; in the DGB, too, the motto is: trade union opposition there must be.

Contact: IFUG, H. Ansorg, Ehrlichstrasse 58, Berlin Karlshorst 1157, GDR.

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**

Socialism is still our agenda

EDITORIAL

The world has changed so much since June 4 last year, when the Chinese regime launched its massacre in Tiananmen Square, that the immensity of it is often hard to grasp.

Tiananmen was what we had come to expect; the bureaucratic regimes of the East, despite all their inefficiencies, seemed able to do one thing well: suppress revolutions. So the abrupt crumbling of the regimes of Eastern Europe was even more surprising, and more heartening.

The crisis of the USSR, its empire, and its imitators, like China, was predictable, however. Socialist Organiser had been expecting it. We had been arguing for socialists in the west to build solidarity with workers in the East to prepare for this massive crisis.

1989-90 has not been like 1968, the last year of such significance. 1968 resulted in a big growth of Left movements. Now we are witnessing a big propaganda coup for the Western ruling class. The failure of communism, they say, proves that capitalism works.

The failure of communism does, of course, show that 'communism' as it was understood in the East, doesn't work. But that's no surprise for genuine socialists. And it hardly proves that capitalism works.

Ask the people of the Third World. Or ask the appalling numbers of destitute and homeless in the big metropolitan cities of the West, like London or New York.

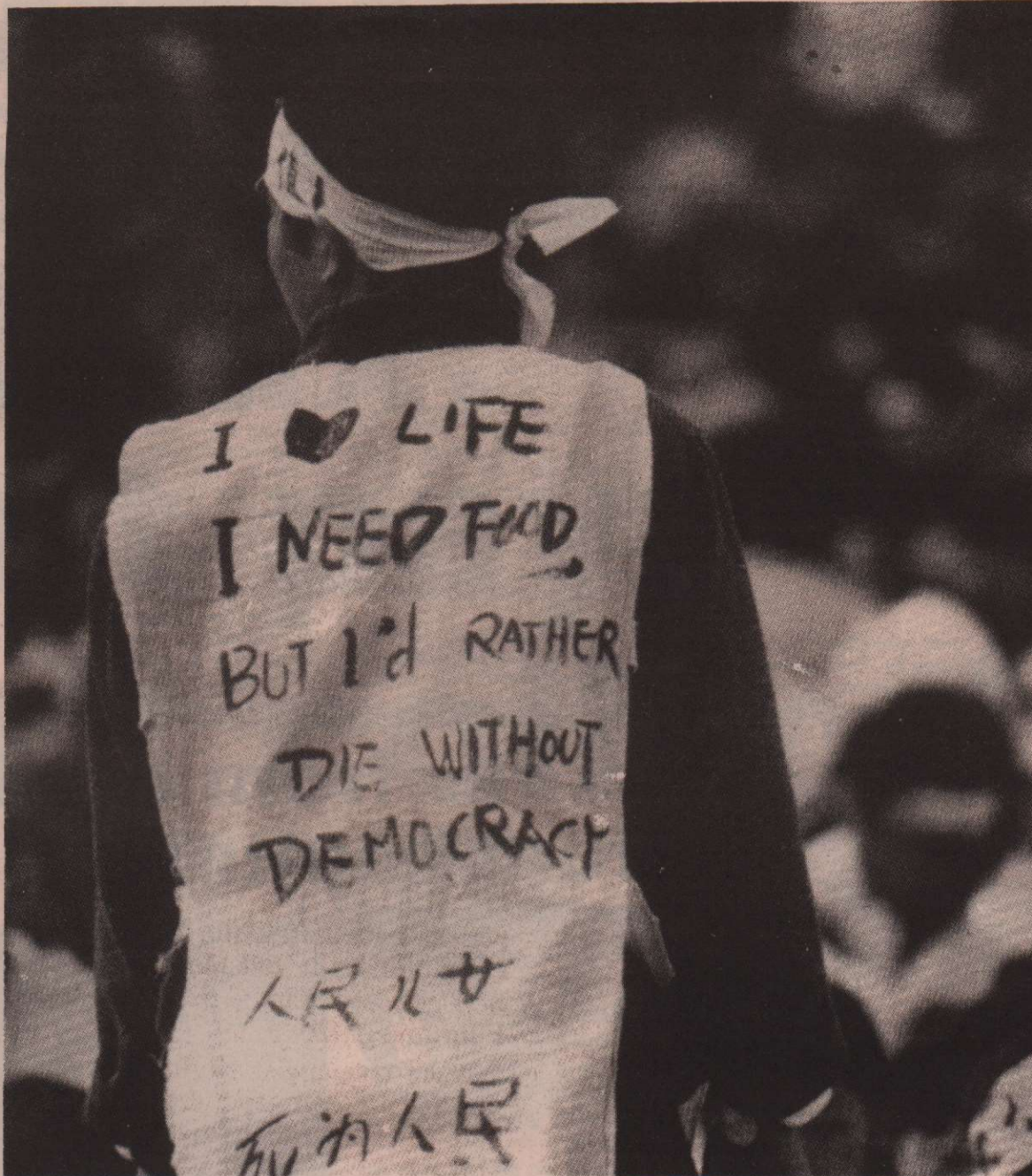
Capitalism works — for the rich. It is a system based on profits. It never has met the needs of the whole population. It meets those needs less and less, as the gap between the richest and the poorest gets wider and wider.

One little example sums up the absurdity of capitalism. The Tories are talking about introducing water meters, and have already started to do it in some areas. It is an outrageous idea, that people should have to worry about the cost of being clean or keeping their dishes washed.

But is it any less outrageous that we should have to worry about the cost of being clothed, warm, and fed?

Surely, we need to replace the crazy profit system with one in which old people don't die of hypothermia, or young people walk the streets begging.

Socialism remains the urgent need of humanity. It would be a system where through the greatest extension of popular democracy possible, the resources and production of the world would be planned, across national borders, to give people what they want and need.



One year after Tiananmen Square

Using the resources and technology we already have, we could do away with poverty and homelessness, enormously improve education and health care, and shorten the working week.

How? By taking wealth and control of production away from the top few per cent of the population, who own and control it now.

With international socialism, doing away with war, we could use the huge amounts wasted on weapons production to improve our world.

By breaking the power of the monopolies and the top civil servants, we could radically extend effective democracy, at the local, national, and ultimately international level.

Socialism would mean, not the state tyranny of the East, but as much decentralised local government possible within the context of wider democratic decisions.

Instead of parliamentary elections every now and then, we could have frequent elections to a national parliament, combined with a structure of local councils which ran each workplace, street, town, city or larger area. We would be able to change our representatives on these councils whenever we felt they were not doing a good job.

In every workplace, committees of the workers would control, taking the important decisions.

Unlike the bureaucratic systems of eastern Europe, a socialist economy would include, at first, quite a lot of market mechanisms. Not every thing can be efficiently planned. But the market would be strictly limited, so that health, housing, education and transport were cheap or free for all, and major investments were decided democratically.

Liberating ourselves from the control of the bureaucracies and wealthy classes of the world will enable humanity to start liberating itself from the dross of centuries: bigotry, inequality between the sexes, national hostilities.

Capitalism will always be a system of rich and poor. It will bring new extremes of rich and poor to the East. And the workers of the East will learn as much.

Western capitalism's current gloating won't last.

We have to build a movement

able to fight for the interests of working class people, for women's equality, the abolition of racism and prejudice against homosexuals, for decent homes for all, a proper health service and good education.

So the turmoil of Stalinism's collapse should be cause for celebration on the Left. It is our chance. We could make a mess of it, as the Left has so often done in the past. But the last year has shown how dramatically the world can change. It hasn't stopped changing yet.

ERM: in or out the fight goes on

What should socialists say about the European Monetary System and its Exchange Rate Mechanism?

Neil Kinnock and John Smith argue that the Exchange Rate Mechanism would enable a Labour government to control inflation and secure prosperity. Some people on the Labour left argue that the Exchange Rate Mechanism means big attacks on the working class, and we must keep Britain out.

The argument repeats the debate between the Labour right and most of the Labour left in the early '70s over Britain joining the Common Market. The right wanted in, the left wanted out.

Neither alternative deserves support. The Exchange Rate Mechanism is an agreement to link the values of different European currencies as a step towards

creating a common Euro-money.

Socialists are not concerned about whether we use pounds or francs or deutschmarks or ecus. We are concerned about the fact that most of the pounds or francs or deutschmarks or ecus go to a small exploiting minority leaving the majority with small change.

West European central banks want to get their act together. We neither support the bankers nor demand that Britain's central bank stays out of the act. Our answer to capitalist integration is not to try to keep Britain out of it, but to build workers' international links.

If Britain joins the ERM, sometime it may mean higher interest rates and bigger cuts, sometimes lower interest rates and smaller cuts. No-one can predict exactly. We need to build a working class, not nationalist, opposition to all capitalist cuts and austerity plans.

IRA should stop military campaign

Supporters of the IRA say that it is fighting a necessary war for Irish freedom, and mistakes and death or injury for innocent people are tragic inevitabilities in war.

Maybe. But is this war necessary, or useful, to win justice and freedom for the people of Ireland? Are these mistakes no more than the inevitable overheads of a necessary conflict?

In principle the oppressed Catholics of Northern Ireland have the right to take up arms against the British Army. There are times when it would be criminal not to take up arms.

But after 20 years the IRA's military campaign is spluttering along in a series of attacks on 'soft' military targets, many of those attacks so constructed as to make civilian casualties very likely. Some of the 'mistakes' like the shooting of two young Australian tourists in Holland on 24 May, show criminal recklessness.

And worse. The IRA's current campaign is not just an ineffective, expensive, brutal way of putting pressure on Britain. It makes the main obstacle to a free united Ireland worse.

The military campaign now does much more to sharpen tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland than to advance freedom in any way.

To bomb the Protestants of Northern Ireland into a united Ireland is impossible and anyway undesirable. Should the IRA campaign suddenly gain strength, its only 'success' could be to push Ireland into all-out civil war and bloody repartition — the opposite of the free united Ireland which the Republicans want.

They who would unite Ireland must first unite the Irish people, Catholic and Protestant, North and South — and, in the first place, the Irish workers. By that measure must all tactics be judged.

Socialists and friends of Irish freedom should call on the IRA to stop its military campaign.

Next week

This week's SO is a special issue, with *Women's Fightback* as a four-page pull-out and also four pages for the conference next week of the Town Hall workers' union NALGO. Some of our regular features have been squeezed out. Sorry.

Next week our staff are taking a break to work on the new issue of *Workers' Liberty* magazine. SO452 will be dated 21 June.

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

Karl Marx

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Racism still thriving

GRAFFITI

One in three bosses is racially prejudiced when offering interviews, according to a new report, Race Inequality in the British Labour Market.

Racism is as rife among employers as it was 15 years ago, despite the Race Relations Act.

Unemployment is twice as high among blacks, and whites get twice as many managerial jobs.

West Indians and Asians are still concentrated in unskilled jobs.

Employers don't need to be 'blatantly' racist to discriminate. They simply tell black applicants that the job has gone, or give no reason for not offering an interview.

Occasionally, employers are caught out by job centres (because they are too stupid not to state explicitly their unwillingness to employ blacks), and prosecuted.

But discrimination in employment is often very difficult to prove. So it continues to thrive.

Landscape gardeners, disguised as council employees, have been ripping up the paving stones of Islington, which apparently are worth a fortune.

Probably not all the pavements of this fair north London borough are landscapable, so I wouldn't suggest you run out this minute to cash in on the craze.

The Brazilian bourgeoisie has found a novel answer to the problem of burglary. It could also be, it occurs to me, the answer to Rottweilers.

Keep lions. Can't you just imagine the look on the Rottweiler's face?

What I wouldn't give to come home from a boring day to find Lenny the lion sitting on my balcony with a well-chewed Rott leg dangling from its mouth.

The *Daily Mirror* is, on the whole, noticeably less awful than its tabloid

rivals, and its agony auntie, Marge Proops, less given to the wanton suggestion of suicide as a solution to all ills.

But today she takes the biscuit.

Asked for advice by a young woman with a boss who might be a lesbian (because she's 'butch'), and who goes on to wonder about her own sexuality, Marge insists she need not worry.

"If you were a lesbian, you'd be in love with her," she soothes, meaning in love with the butch boss.

Oh, obviously.

So we can happily conclude, I suppose, that Marge is simply weak at the knees about Robert Maxwell. He's a man, isn't he?

And if you're not, Marge, send me an SAE and I'll put a little pamphlet in the post to you. It's called "How to cope with growing up not being in love with repulsive fat egotists".

A man, described by a judge as "mild mannered", yesterday walked free from court despite admitting that he had beaten up his wife to such a degree that she received 94 stitches.

He had lived through years of "married hell", the judge decided, being "nagged", so it was hardly surprising that after 30 years he should "snap", which is to say he attacked her with a decanter and a fork, so that "the floors and walls were splattered with blood".

Well that's all right, then. I mean we can't let women get the idea that they can get cross with their husbands just because after thirty years of marriage he's not yet managed to learn how to cook an egg. Women just have to learn that if they raise their voices they'll be stabbed with a fork...or a kitchen knife, even better, hung upside down and left for dead.

The judge in this case, a Mr William Taylor, deserves and award. Suggestions, please, to Graffiti, c/o Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

"The SDP is a permanent structural feature of British politics." *Socialist Action, 1984*



One in three bosses are still racially prejudiced

Prophets and loss

TV

By Vicki Morris

Do you remember that happy generation of multi-cultural youth avowing their desire to teach the world to sing, and exhorting us to drink the Real Thing and boost the fortunes of the orthodontic profession worldwide?

They return now with children of their own and, probably, a burning desire to save the rainforest. They probably know that, while the world faces environmental crisis, the Chinese word for 'crisis' comprises two characters, one meaning 'danger' and the second 'opportunity'.

Possibly, even, the opportunity to spend a weekend at Robert Redford's resource managed estate in Utah.

Robert Redford hosts international conferences of environmental experts and of generally wise people

like Red Indian chiefs, to discuss what pressure to put on world leaders to respond to growing public concern about the fate of the world. One such weekend was the subject of a BBC2 programme called 'Prophets and Loss'.

BBC, trying to break new ground as they lose the ratings war, are featuring a series of programmes about the environment under the heading 'One World'. It provides a number of angles on the problems and solutions, as varied as those of Prince Charles and of Robert Redford's guests.

And also of methods of making programmes. I don't want to be too scathing about 'Prophets and Loss'. It was an enjoyable programme with interesting speeches by conference delegates, interviews, attractive film of environmental havens, and depressing views of environmental disasters.

But the programme was naively and unrelentingly optimistic, trying to find ways to endorse all views put forward at the symposium.

In fact the scientists, not even yet the politicians are fumbling for different ways to advance awareness and trigger action.

Overall they still arrive at the vain hope that 'leaders' — political and even industrial — can be persuaded to cut down on their degradation of the environment and unscrupulous 'dumping' of sub-standard, even damaging produce and technology on the developing world. If they don't lead in this area as in others people won't vote for them, says Robert Redford none too dangerously.

I'm sure very few people put much faith in leaders to save the world. They try to do their bit instead and buy rather expensive environment-friendly products. They hope to influence their neighbours and produce a green revolution from below with the same old leaders still intact on top.

I too am getting better at turning off unneeded lights and writing all over a piece of paper before throwing it away. But I regard these not as the acts of a desperate woman, but as a sort of deposit account: every penny saved now is a penny we can spend when we no longer have to rely on political and industrial leaders to let us do what we all want and need to do, save our planet and each other.

As far from Stalinism as from capitalism

LETTERS

Duncan Chapple (letters, SO 450) sees a 'hint' in Tony Dale's letter (SO 449) that we should favour market mechanisms in Eastern Europe as the means to gear production to human need.

I didn't see that hint, but Tony can answer for himself. What I did see clearly in Duncan's letter was the statement that "we must oppose the introduction of the market into the East... Instead workers should defend and control the planned economy".

It is impossible for workers to control 'the' planned economy, i.e. the Stalinist command economy typical of Eastern Europe before 1989. That economy is one organised for the exploitation of workers by a totalitarian or semi-totalitarian bureaucracy which cannot permit the workers even to organise freely in trade unions, let alone 'control' the economy.

Certainly workers need a planned economy. But that workers' planned economy will be as different from Stalinism as it is from Western capitalism. We can only discredit ourselves in East European workers' eyes if we tell them that our alternative is a cleaned-up and democratised version of the system they have suffered under for so long — and that in the meantime, until they are strong enough to win workers' control, they should 'defend' that collapsing old system.

We should certainly not slide over in-



Soviet miners

to the opposite mistake of suggesting that the answer is a version of Western market capitalism likewise mystically 'controlled'.

Nonetheless, a workers' planned economy, in the foreseeable future, would also be a market economy.

Just to take over the planning offices and put democratically-elected people there in place of the Stalinists would solve little. Socialist planning presup-

poses accurate accounting and comprehensive information. Stalinist accounting is a mass of lies. Even the most revolutionary workers' government would need to use market mechanisms to get information about real costs and about what consumers want.

A socialist revolution cannot 'abolish' the market by decree any more than it can 'abolish' money, the State, or the family.

An attempt to 'abolish' the market prematurely would only be counter-productive, leading to black markets, corruption, and bureaucratic bungling. That happened not only under Stalinism but also under workers' rule, in the period of 'war communism' in the Soviet Union.

What a workers' government could do would be to have the basic strategic decisions made by democratic planning instead of the gyrations of the Stock Exchange and the law of the devil take the hindmost.

Maybe that is what Duncan means when he writes: "Wherever market mechanisms exist, we must struggle to place them under workers' control". His way of putting it, however, misses the point.

We will need market mechanisms to the extent that we are not able to control consciously — to the extent that we lack information, we lack technology, and shortages block the spirit of cooperation.

Alan Gillman
London

Will the SWP vote Green?

Will the Socialist Workers' Party start voting Green or Scottish Nationalist?

At a recent Canterbury SWP public meeting, a local SWP member told us that in a local council by-election in the Thanet area, he had canvassed for an anti-poll tax candidate against the Labour candidate.

He went on to say that in future elections the SWP should support

candidates who were calling for non-payment against Labour candidates.

Was it just his personal opinion? Apparently not. The speaker at the meeting was Chris Harman, editor of *Socialist Worker* and neither Harman nor any one else registered disagreement. They even refused to answer my question as to whether the SWP would vote for a Green Party candidate.

Mark Sandell,
Canterbury CLP

NALGO Conference special

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Poll tax: don't pay, don't collect!

By Nof Ttofias,
Sheffield NALGO

The poll tax was meant to be the Tory flagship, but it seems more likely that it might be what finally sinks them.

The poll tax is a massive attack on working class people, taking from the poor and giving to the rich. The poll tax was designed to 'expose' the so-called 'overspending' Labour councils; it's intended to totally wreck local government services and democracy.

All of this puts local government workers at the sharp end of the effects of the Tory poll tax.

Labour authorities are making big cuts in an attempt to reduce poll tax levels. The cost will be thousands of local authority jobs. NALGO must turn its opposition to the poll tax into concrete action before it's too late.

Conference policy commits NALGO to 'support mass non-payment and other forms of civil disobedience if and when they become viable options as a result of the raising of public consciousness through campaigning against the government's imposition of the tax.' Now is the time to act.

Opposition to the tax and the Tories has never been higher — across the country one in three people have yet to pay the poll tax. Thousands of people have lobbied council meetings against the setting of a poll tax rate. The demonstration in London on 31 March showed the massive anger the poll tax has created.

To cap all of this, the Tories are flagging miserably in all opinion polls, and the poll tax is the main reason why.

The non-payment campaign has recently been boosted by events in the Isle of Wight. Attempts by the local council to take 1844 non-payers to court were stopped because they failed to give the necessary two weeks notice of court hearings. The letters arrived late due to their penny-pinching use of 2nd class stamps.

If the courts are unable to deal with fewer than 2000 non-payers in the Isle of Wight, what hope for the larger authorities?

Many NALGO members have been involved in disputes over implementation of the poll tax. In Sheffield a dispute over the in-



The protest spreads. Photo: John Harris.

roduction of poll tax work into the Housing Department lasted for a number of months.

Management sought to impose the extra burden of poll tax work for nothing. NALGO members demanded regradings for staff, adequate staffing levels, decent office accommodation and guarantees of confidentiality of claimants' details. In the end, people were intimidated back to work by management tactics that Ian McGregor would have been proud of.

In Greenwich a dispute about the collection of poll tax is still going on, and in Manchester, Housing Benefit counter staff won a

regrading claim just with the threat of industrial action. Benefits staff in St Helens have also won regrading following strike action.

NALGO should link all these isolated battles over pay and conditions and the effects of the implementation of the poll tax together into a national strategy. NALGO must also commit itself to fight all redundancies that come about as a result of the poll tax.

Recently, at their annual conferences, both the NUT and the NUJ voted for strike action to defend members' jobs threatened by the implementation of the poll tax. As the campaign against the poll

Vote no to the 9.3% offer!

By Tony Dale

NALGO's Local Government Group meeting on 11 June should reject the

pay offer of 9.3% and vote for a ballot on industrial action to back the full claim of £1500.

The employers have ignored NALGO's insistence on a flat rate increase. The offer does little to eradicate low pay. For the average NALGO member, 9.3% translates into an offer of £834 per year. This comes nowhere near the claim of £1500.

The offer would leave all NALGO members earning Scale 1 below the Council of Europe Decency Threshold.

In the briefing pack circulated to branches the following section appeared:

"Q: Won't the negotiators abandon the flat rate as soon as the employers start looking at percentages?"

"A: No. The employers will undoubtedly respond to the claim in terms of a percentage figure...The staff side is deeply committed to radical measures to eliminate low pay this year and will continue to negotiate for a flat rate increase in accordance with the claim." What happened to that commitment?

The offer is below inflation and in real terms means a wage cut. The government estimates inflation is running at 9.5%. For most members the claim will result in a 9.25% rise. Mortgage interest rates are running at 15.5%, and across the country rents are rising. On top of this council workers are facing hefty poll tax bills.

Just to maintain living standards, NALGO members need a pay award above the official rate of inflation.

The employers have offered nothing on the claim for a 35-hour week or on the claim for increased holidays.

Are we in a position where the unwillingness of the membership to take action forces us to accept the offer? No, "members are in a confident mood after the success of the 1989 industrial action, and we approach negotiations from a position of strength". (1990 NALGO pay briefing pack).

At the start of last summer's action many had doubts as to whether NALGO could pull it off and shut the town halls. The action was a success and up and down the country the strike was solid.

A sign of our strength is the fact that the employers have not even tried to reintroduce the strings aimed at eroding national agreements. Without any action the employers raised the offer from 8% to 9.3%. Imagine what the employers might offer if we reiterate our demands and back them with industrial action.

The rolling programme of one, two and three day national strikes proved very successful last summer. The launching of a similar wave of action, backed by the threat of all-out action, is needed.

Jim White, NALGO's chief negotiator, stated: "it is a long way from the claim we submitted". That's right, and the offer should be rejected.

A ballot should be organised with a recommendation to reject the offer and vote yes to a rolling programme of strike action.

NALGO Action fringe meeting

Tuesday 12 June
6.00pm
Westcliffe Hotel
12 Priory Road

tax develops, industrial action against the arrestment of wages will become an important issue.

Trade union action against the collection of the poll tax and any other punitive measures councils choose to employ in order to recover unpaid poll tax bills will have to be mounted. NALGO will have to be at the forefront of such a campaign.

The Tory poll tax can be beaten. NALGO must support the thousands of people who are not or cannot pay. It must defend its own members' jobs. It must refuse to go along with local councils that are implementing the poll tax.

Don't pay! Don't collect!

NALGO Conference special

Strikers' fury as councillors duck the issue

Striking housing workers in Greenwich stormed out of a meeting with councillors at the end of May. The councillors had voted not to lift suspensions on Housing Cashiers and Assistants — a move which looks certain to prolong the 'Poll Tax strike' in Greenwich.

Lorraine Douglas, Secretary of the unions' joint committee, said after the meeting:

"The Council has refused the opportunity to settle this dispute by local negotiation, and chosen instead to drag it through the London-wide machinery. As far as we're concerned, they're just passing the buck."

Earlier, 80 strikers, most of them women with young families, had packed into Woolwich Town Hall to lobby the Council Staff Joint Committee. Both union and council management presented their side on the strike, which has caused the disruption of services in the borough's 15 local housing offices since 1 May. Strikers were angry that councillors seemed to be taking their lead from senior officers, rather than taking responsibility for

solving the dispute themselves.

David Norwood, NALGO's Branch Secretary, said:

"What the Council has offered, and what we're demanding in terms of pay and conditions for Housing Cashiers and Assistants, aren't that far apart — especially now they've agreed to a health and safety review in cash offices. The only reason this dispute is still a strike is because of the Council's continuing refusal to lift the suspensions."

The strike, made official on 9 May after a 6-1 vote in a huge ballot turn-out, is still strong, with almost all 13 housing offices closed.

Support from the public and other trade unionists has already resulted in almost £10,000 being raised. The agreement of the National Emergency Committee on 31 May to pay strike pay at full take-home pay rates has given the morale even more of a boost.

This dispute is a test-case — to ensure that workers involved in work on the poll tax get the pay and conditions they deserve. It needs our full backing.

Donations and messages of support to Steve Crimp, Treasurer, Greenwich NALGO, Love Lane, Woolwich, London SE18

Labour councils: managing the crisis

By Dion D'Silva,
Wandsworth
NALGO

What have Hammersmith, Sheffield and Greenwich have in common? All have recently seen NALGO strikes and all have strong Labour councils.

For some people this creates a problem. After all, the Labour Party is the party of trade unions, so striking against Labour councils surely damages the labour movement?

True, Labour is the party of the trade unions. However, councils do not operate on 'islands of socialism' in a sea of capitalism. Socialism involves supporting the struggle of trade unionists to defend their conditions.

Over the '60s and '70s, Labour councils improved services and recruited thousands of workers. In most inner city areas local government is the biggest single employer. From the mid-1970s, NALGO tentatively supported the establishment of stewards and grew massively. Localised disputes were commonplace.

When central government pulled the plug, stealing millions of pounds from local government, Labour councils had to make a choice — either manage the crisis or organise resistance. In the end even the most left-wing councils backed down, sometimes after big struggles in the local labour movement.

Now Labour councils are cutting services, implementing the poll tax and attacking union organisation.

Socialist Organiser supporters consistently argued for Labour councils to use their position of leadership to mobilise people — rather like the London borough of Poplar in the 1920s. We argued that inside the Labour Party, not just gripping on the sidelines.

The councils' climbdown has demoralised many activists, so that they have given up on politics and turned instead to building their individual union branches to fight locally on services and conditions.

Often these battles are successful,

but there is very little coordination or collective, organised resistance. The formation of NALGO Action is a step in the right direction.

Individual branches, no matter how strong, are insufficient when tackling all the problems that confront workers. Moving beyond basic workplace organisation means confronting politics directly.

Flat rate pay claims, the poll tax, local democracy, are all questions about the way society is run.

The political expression of the labour movement is the Labour Party. Work in the trade unions and the Labour Party cannot be separated.

The massive 'yes' votes in the political fund ballots, including NALGO's, were a slap in the face for the Tory government. We can go further. NALGO, or a new merged union, should ballot for Labour Party affiliation.

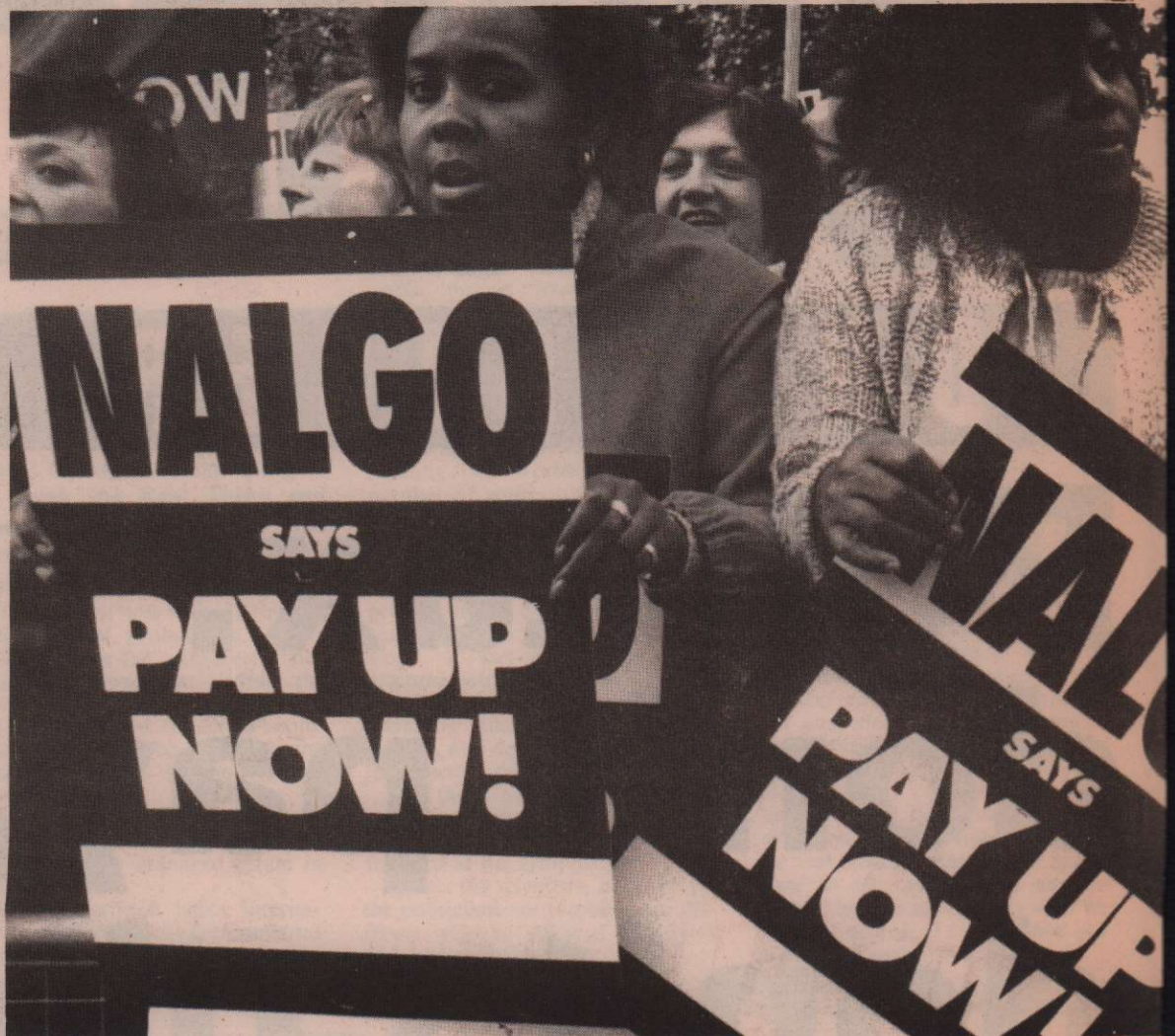
There is a tremendous feeling that the next Labour government should repeal all the anti-trade union laws and replace them with a workers' charter of rights. An affiliated NALGO, made accountable, could add decisive weight to that argument.

The likes of Neil Kinnock and Tony 'Bland' Blair (architect of Labour's new policy on trade unions) would like nothing better than for socialists to drift out of the party. Socialist Organiser will not run away but will campaign vigorously for a Labour vote and for an active campaigning mass Labour Party.

We want a government that doesn't remain 'neutral' in industrial disputes, but takes sides with the workers!

In 1987 Lol Duffy, a Socialist Organiser supporter, stood as Labour candidate in Wallasey. The Tory minister Lynda Chalker had her majority slashed from 6,708 to 279. Labour's vote increased by 39% — many of them working class people who had never bothered voting before. The Constituency Labour Party simultaneously supported a local TGWU strike and action by school students.

The campaign demonstrated that the Labour Party can be changed. It won't be easy or quick, but it is a fight we can't avoid.



Solidarity action is vital to help those groups of workers with little industrial muscle: residential social workers

A workers' charter for free trade

By Tim Cooper,
Nottinghamshire
NALGO

A crucial issue which will be the focus of a major debate at NALGO conference is solidarity.

There are a whole host of motions by branches condemning the anti-trade union legislation which prevents solidarity, but the most likely to be discussed is the National Executive Council's one.

And a very worthy one it is. It "condemns the government's latest Employment Bill as yet another one-sided and vindictive attack on the rights of both trade unions and trade union members." Over the past 10 years the Tories have introduced law after law until we arrive at a situation where any action

is unlawful unless it is preceded by a ballot (which the courts can easily rule is unfair even if there is a majority vote in favour) and then you can only take action at your own workplace with no more than six pickets.

The NEC quite rightly "believes that the trade union and labour movement's defensive and low profile attitude...has served to encourage rather than placate its enemies. It believes that a positive campaign in defence of trade union independence and traditional values of solidarity and co-operation is overdue." So do we!

So in Notts we unanimously supported the Workers' Charter as an amendment.

It had already attracted over two million votes at Labour Party conference, including such unions as the T&G and NUM.

We felt it put flesh on the bone of the NEC's principle, and also took

on board other rights which we have won or are struggling for which help workers to give solidarity.

The demands the NEC put forward are correct and roughly the same as those of the 'Campaign for Free Trade Unions' which was recently launched by 33 trade union

"Solidarity is what trade unionism is all about. Without collective organisation and solidarity working people are only a collection of victims of exploitation, individuals at the mercy of market forces"

Socialist Organiser fringe meeting
**Labour and workers' rights:
Is Labour looking to the
future?**

Speakers:

Nik Barstow, Islington NALGO
Sarah Cotterill, Manchester NALGO
Westcliffe Towers Hotel
12 Priory Road
7.30pm
Wednesday 13 June

leaders (including Alan Jinkinson who was recently elected general secretary of NALGO).

But, unfortunately, the Labour Party leaders have clearly indicated that their interpretation of peaceful picketing is to limit pickets to six. Judges would still rule ballots, and it would be illegal to strike in



dispute 1983. Photo: John Harris

Charter e unions

solidarity with other groups of workers or, for example, refuse to handle imports from South Africa. In Notts, during last year's dispute, we had large pickets which were peaceful and effective. We needed lots, not just because of the huge number of workplaces and entrances, but to clearly show our solidarity. It was when numbers fell

below six that scabs felt confident to physically attack our members. Solidarity is what trade unionism is all about. Without collective organisation and solidarity working people are only a collection of victims of exploitation, individuals at the mercy of market forces. As Eric Heffer, former Chair of the Labour Party, recently wrote:

"Workers through their unions need more rights not less. Labour should repeal all Tory anti-trade union legislation, restoring and developing workers' rights, making Britain the envy of the civilised world."
Support the Workers' Charter!
Support the Campaign for Free Trade Unions!

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

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

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

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

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

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism. We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

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1992: Fortress Europe?

By Dion D'Silva

The Single European Act allows for free movement of people throughout Europe.

That's the theory. For 10 million immigrant workers living in the EC the result may be rather different.

European governments are getting together to 'harmonise' immigration laws and entry regulations. In a Europe of increasing racism and anti-semitism 'harmonisation' means levelling down to the strictest immigration controls. The intention is to exploit a cheap, unorganised black pool of workers and divide the working class.

The left in Europe should be uniting to fight all these restrictions. Migrant workers should have full rights of residence and citizenship. We should argue for the end of all immigration laws.

The labour movement's response to 1992 has been subdued. Partly this is due to many on the left being anti-EC.

Socialist Organiser considers the debate pro or anti-EC to be a dead-end for the labour movement. The EC is an example of the 'internationalisation' of capitalism. Many who were against the EC looked in-

stead to the Commonwealth (ex-Empire) or little-England 'seige economy' with import controls. But the socialist answer to the internationalisation of capital must be to build workers' international links.

British trade union leaders, however, valued their positions in Britain's corridors of power — their seats on quangos, their boardroom places in nationalised industries — and rallied to the national flag to defend those positions against the bogeyman bureaucrats of Brussels.

Things are changing, the TUC has now taken up the rather limp European Social Charter. We should go further. The labour movement should come out as the boldest campaigner for a united Europe. Leave 'little England' and national sovereignty to the Tories.

We want workers unity for:

- a 35 hour week throughout Europe.

- 'Levelling up' to generalise throughout the EC the best wages, conditions, services and rights won by workers in individual countries.

- Work-sharing at full pay, to create jobs for all.

The coming of the Single European market in 1992 presents the trade union movement with new threats but also with new opportunities.

NEC 'doublespeak' on Sotsprof

By Insider

Branches around the country have reacted angrily to NALGO headquarters' 'advice', in March, that "it is unwise and premature to give exclusive support to Sotsprof", the developing independent trade union federation in the USSR.

Members were angered by the complacent 'wait and see' attitude towards workers struggling, against the odds, to have their own voice, and the consciously misleading idea that branches supporting Sotsprof are ignoring other developments in Central and Eastern Europe, but even more by the fact that the union's Executive didn't even have a debate on the issue until six weeks after the circular was sent out.

At the 1 May Executive meeting Mike Tucker from the Southern District moved a motion of support for the Sotsprof Appeal — and only then did NALGO's leaders bother

to discuss the 'policy' they'd given such a high profile to.

The leadership won the vote 2:1, but in the process they showed even more confusion behind their already convoluted arguments.

Ralph Gayton, opposing support, reiterated the 'wait and see' view, making it clear that nothing was likely to be decided until a NALGO delegation visit to the USSR in December! He managed to add that Sotsprof is not clear if it is a trade union or a political party — surprising, since Mike Blick and the International Officer spoke to the same Sotsprof representatives who had spoken at meetings around the country stressing that Sotsprof is a trade union federation.

Even odder was the report of that meeting, stating that the Sotsprof representatives did not want financial assistance...when they were undertaking a tour for just that reason!

Branches who want to find out the facts for themselves would probably do better to contact the campaigns supporting Sotsprof than wait for a report in 'doublespeak'.

'Hear the voice of Soviet workers'

Speaker Yuri Budchenko, representative of the Kuzbass workers' union; Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc; Mike Tucker, NEC
Wednesday 13 June
5.30pm (or after conference)
Westcliffe Towers Hotel
12 Priory Road

Sponsored by Islington NALGO and CSWEB

Quite a lot going on

By Sarah Cotterill,
Manchester NALGO

Last year's pay strike was a major step forward for NALGO members. It was the first ever national strike of local government white collar workers.

The action killed off, once and for all, the old joke that NALGO stands for Not A Lot Going On.

From its formation in 1905 NALGO was far from a militant union. Until 1961 there was no provision in the constitution for calling strikes. And it wasn't until 1964 that the union finally agreed to affiliate to the TUC. There was no official recognition of shop stewards until 1978.

The first unofficial strike by NALGO members was in Glasgow in 1964. It wasn't until six years

later, in 1970, that NALGO sanctioned its first official strike, by cleaning workers in Leeds.

What brought about these changes? In part they can be explained by massive attacks on local government, driving down wages, conditions and morale amongst the workforce. Also, the make-up of NALGO's membership has changed.

The proportion of Chief Officers on the union executive has dropped from 31% in 1945 to 3% in the 1960s. Currently, 250,000 white collar council workers earn less than the Council of Europe Decency Threshold of £8476 per year. This means nearly half of NALGO's members are officially low-paid.

But NALGO's increased militancy is also part of changes within the working class as a whole. The proportion of manual workers has decreased from 75% of the workforce in 1911 to 40% today. The service industries — mainly

state service industries — have grown enormously. White collar workers (typists, cashiers, health workers, office workers, teachers,

"The working class is changing. [It] is being re-constituted, not withering away"

etc) are now over half the workforce.

Some on the left, like the Communist Party, have concluded from these changes that the working class has been vanishing since the late 1940s. As more people take up

white collar jobs, they achieve an affluence which is reflected in a decline of class consciousness.

When they say the working class is vanishing, what they mean is that the manual working class is decreasing. This is true. But for socialists being working class doesn't mean getting dirt under your fingernails.

The working class is made up of all those who have to sell their labour power to live, regardless of what work they do or how much they are paid. If that is the definition of working class, the working class is thriving, not vanishing. But it is changing.

The number of white collar workers has expanded — in health, local government, shops, catering, office work, etc. In the past many of these were high-status, better paid jobs, linked to management. Today they are often worse paid than skilled manual workers.

Most white collar workers have no control over their work or the

resources they work with and do not manage other workers. Many now work in large workplaces — hospitals, DSS offices, town halls, office blocks — are, or potentially could be, as strongly unionised as factory workers.

Yes, the working class is changing, and these are real, permanent changes. But they are changes within the class — the working class is being reconstituted, not withering away.

This type of change has been continuous under capitalism, from the early days when most people were agricultural labourers, domestic servants, craft workers, and through the times of factories and mines. As production changes, so does the working class.

The 1990s town hall worker may look a lot different from the 19th century mill worker, but the class struggle is still alive and kicking. We still have nothing to lose but our chains. We still have a world to win.

Build NALGO Action, shake up the Broad Left!

By Tony Dale,
Manchester NALGO

NALGO's General Secretary election gave the Broad Left candidate, Roger Bannister, 23% of the vote.

It was a good result considering that Bannister was standing against two 'establishment' candidates, Alan Jinkinson and Sid Platt.

Alan Jinkinson was such an unattractive prospect as General Secretary that many on the left may have been tempted to vote for Sid Platt just to stop Jinkinson. In reality, despite attempts by Sid Platt to suggest otherwise, there were few fundamental differences between him and Alan Jinkinson.

According to *Militant*, "The result also firmly establishes the Broad Left as the main alternative to the current leadership of the union". In fact the Broad Left is very far from being a powerful left opposition to the present union leadership.

There is a growing constituency in NALGO for class-struggle left ideas. Roger Bannister's campaign for General Secretary tapped into it.

But that support for left ideas has not translated into the building of a powerful, effective Broad Left organisation.

During the pay dispute last year the Broad Left held a conference in Manchester. About 80 people attended. Given the fact that 500,000 members were taking action, the turnout was disappointing — and almost all the 80 were supporters of organised socialist tendencies.

The conference was dominated by attempts by the SWP to prove that *Militant* did not really believe in all-out action.

October saw the Broad Left AGM. 120 activists attended. Again the conference was dominated by a battle between *Militant* and the SWP.

The factional battles resulted in a Broad Left Steering Committee totally composed of the SWP and *Militant*. Nick Hay, the Birm-

ingham Branch Secretary, fell foul of both groups and got only 5 votes. Nik Barstow, a supporter of *Socialist Organiser*, and previously a member of the Steering Committee, met with a similar fate.

Militant and the SWP keep putting their short-term factional interests above the task of building a health organisation inhabitable for activists.

At the summer Broad Left conference, SO supporters proposed that the Broad Left sponsor the newly launched 'NALGO Action' journal. At the time the journal was sponsored by 9 branches. The conference voted down the suggestion, with speakers denouncing 'NALGO Action' as splitters and wreckers.

Up to now the Broad Left has not been very broad and has failed to organise the left.

'NALGO Action' is now sponsored by 28 branches. As the first issue of 'NALGO Action' in June 1989 stated: "More than ever NALGO members need to unite by drawing the activists and branches together in campaigns and action... to defend our jobs, defend our services, defend our union and to win."

'NALGO Action' has been launched to help do that job — to provide a forum where branches and activists can exchange information and ideas.

Is a left journal sufficient? No. But a journal is more than a collection of articles. As Lenin wrote: "A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organiser."

There have so far been four issues of 'NALGO Action'. Its existence is a qualitative step forward for the left.

Should the Broad Left be abandoned? No, but it could do with a good shaking up.

The Broad Left needs to turn its back on the sterile debate which dominates its conferences. The left needs to turn out to organise the broad layers of militants who want to fight.

'NALGO Action' can play a crucial role in building a real 'broad left'.

No poll tax, no cuts!

By Nik Barstow,
Islington NALGO

Almost every branch in the capped areas sent representatives to the na-

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tional meeting called by NALGO in April. In many ways it was overdue — nothing seemed to have been done to build or prepare for a campaign against the cuts until the crunch was almost on us.

The lack of preparation showed — the proposals for campaigning weren't coming from the national officials, they just provided information and advice. It was branches who had to give the lead, the national strategy against the cuts needed reviving, badly.

The threat was clear — while a few of the 'capped' councils could probably muddle through, many were being told to make enormous cuts — £40 million in Derbyshire, where even if balances were used up their would be £5 million of 'very bloody' cuts. Avon faced £26 million cuts with a major attack in the structure of the education service. Smaller councils with smaller workforces, like Basildon, face cuts of the same scale — their NALGO branch wanted a national campaign jointly with other unions.

Despite some heated debate it was clear that no-one wanted NALGO to be campaigning for higher poll tax levels and that 'No poll tax, no cuts' was the type of slogan that could win public support if we built a real campaign. It was stressed too, that it wasn't just the 'capped' councils under threat but many others who had 'kept the poll tax down' and planned cuts.

The branches involved supported calls for a campaign amongst the whole membership on the issues, plans to be made for regular publicity, rallies and demonstrations and a joint union conference. They agreed to the need for supportive action from other branches and to build up for "a commitment to ballot all NALGO members in local government for industrial action where compulsory redundancies are planned in any local authority".

All this agreed to, enthusiastically endorsed, by NLGC representatives and full-time officials... agreement to report on progress to the Annual group Meeting on June 11th. The only problem? Has anything been done to report back on since April?

NALGO Health: Yes to action

Health Service NALGO members are balloting over strike action to back their claim for 12% or £18 per week pay rise.

In response to this claim the employers only offered 7.7%. The employers did not address other parts of the claim, such as the deletion of grade one.

A national delegate meeting voted by three to one to ballot for

industrial action. "We are determined to make a stand for our members. They can't accept rises below the rate of inflation. Our members want action, and they want it now," stated a Portsmouth delegate.

The proposed national action will involve a series of one, two and three day strikes combined with indefinite action by targeted elected groups of workers.

Reject the 7.7% offer. Vote yes to action!

'Solidarity has lost its direction'

The recent railworkers' strike in Poland was the first big workers' revolt against the new free-market policies in Eastern Europe. Jerzy Sadko, spokesperson of the Railwayworkers' Inter-Depot Strike Committee, was interviewed by Maciej Guz, a car worker from the FSO plant in Warsaw, in Slupsk, Poland on 24 May. The interview has been translated by David Holland

Can you tell us about the wages structure and work conditions that have existed up until now?

The railway workers get some of the lowest wages. Earnings range from 250,000 to 350,000 zloties monthly (about £15-£21 per month — translator).

And work, well, as everyone knows, it's irregular, with 12 hour shifts and quite complicated. The workshops operate for 8 hours and drivers and guards cannot work more than 12 hours, but this does not take into account that after 5-6 hours they may have to come to work again. That's the rule and a worker is simply tied to the workplace. He doesn't have much free time to himself.

They can't get younger workers, because our work goes on holiday or no holiday, Sunday or no Sunday, night and day. And we get such low wages for this.

So the railway workers have to fight for their living, to get wages that are a little bit better.

And what's more, we are not asking for anything new. We are fighting for what was agreed and signed a year ago and is now being ignored. The National Railway Workers Section couldn't do anything about it, they were obviously too weak — and discontent has mounted up. That's the way it's been.

It seems as if neither the Department nor the General Management are at all interested. Because it could be sorted out in a couple of days.

In the mass media they only talk about the wages demands, putting it across to people that everyone will

have to pay for these railway workers who are striking in such a determined way.

This is the normal manipulation of opinion. None of the ticket price increases have been passed on in our wages. So people are being misinformed. I state categorically that no increase in ticket prices has been passed on in higher wages for the rail workers.

The Strike Committee wants the Railway Industry restructured...

Absolutely — we are for restructuring, but this should be a sensible, real restructuring and it should not be all introduced in one year, but systematically, step by step over 5-10 years. That way it won't be harmful — it will be done for the benefit of the railways.

The restructuring should win over the rank and file. People should be consulted. Otherwise it's an imposition by the hierarchy, because someone thinks they are dealing with a monopoly.

Can you outline the history of the strike up until now.

It started in October. Official discussions were being conducted. Everything was going so sluggishly that we started displaying flags as a protest.

The discussions continued and as usual, nothing came out of them. As a result of this we organised a 'warning action', which we informed the Department and the General Management about in good time.

There was a date set for a joint investigation into the matters at issue. Both the Department and the General Management paid no attention at all. Then we started a hunger strike. This went on and after 10 days still nothing had happened.

On the 10th day a representative of General Management, Mr Jagodzinski, came. His visit was some kind of 'survey'. He didn't offer us anything. We were even prepared to make certain concessions, but the other side offered us nothing. And everything fizzled out.

After a couple of days, a second commission came, which had absolutely no mandate to conduct negotiations — it was concerned with speeding up traffic around the station. Well, discussions stopped at one o'clock. We waited till eight for a telephone call to tell us whether this commission was empowered to negotiate. But there was no call.

So then we appealed to all the union centres and to their leaders for a joint meeting and to undertake common action. Lech Walesa was invited, Alfred Miodowicz (leader of the pre-Solidarity OPZZ unions — translator), and Marian Jurczyk (leader of Solidarity '80, a split from Walesa's Solidarity — translator).

Alfred Miodowicz responded and Jurczyk, the representative of



Mazowiecki's government has brought in massive price rises that have hit Polish workers hard.

Solidarity '80, but not Lech Walesa. What did you think about this? This, after all, was the man who in the 'eighties contributed quite a bit to the movement, to the establishment of Solidarity.

Lech Walesa was and remains the idol of the workers. But we were stupefied and shocked by him not turning up.

As the leader of our Solidarity, he carried with him the aspirations of all our members. He should have been here a long time ago. Why didn't he come? Better to ask him.

If you're asking my personal opinion, I was very disappointed and so were my mates who are on hunger strike. It seems to us that he's got big headed. He should be a worker, like he was in '80. He is losing not only popularity, but credibility too.

Because the head of a union like that, like Solidarity, should be with us and look after the interests of the working people and not be against us and telling us off!

Does it seem to you that in the present situation, when Solidarity is supporting restrictions on incomes, especially the poorest, that Solidarity is losing popularity?

Yes on account of this: Solidarity has lost its direction. Unions are to defend working people and not for playing politics.

And now Solidarity is taken up with politics, thinking only about arm chairs and comfy positions. And that's why the union is losing popularity and may lose a lot more.

Because it doesn't know how to wake up at the right moment and set itself to defend working people.

Even the most democratically elected government must have competition from unions, which will properly defend the workers' interests. And the present government, partly elected in democratic elections, absolutely will not negotiate and make agreements with the unions.

It amazes me that Solidarity and its leader practically terrorise us. You just can't treat people like that, and I am afraid that one *nomenklatura* is being replaced by another one (the *nomenklatura* is the system of appointing officials through Party patronage — transl).

Solidarity has no monopoly. Only the whole lot of us can have a monopoly. It is already being said that Solidarity has already replaced the PUWP monopoly, only under another emblem (PUWP — Polish United Workers' Party; the old Communist Party in Poland — transl).

A hunger strike is the ultimate weapon. It should never have to be used.

Yes. It is very painful for us. Putting your health at risk — we had to think about it, but we didn't want to ruin our economy, even though it is so ruined...It appeared to us that life in society is dying.

But there was nothing else we could do. Why? Because this government, which was partly elected — we went to vote ourselves

— is taking no notice of us at all.

A lot of people think that its their work that provides the railway workers with a living.

The increase in ticket prices doesn't mean that we railway workers get an increase in wages. This is the usual manipulation. And it is drastic at the moment. Prices are rising, including freight charges.

For example, take the Slupsk-Gdansk line. From Monday to Friday there are no freight trains — there's nothing to carry: this is the normal state of bankruptcy.

The Balcerowicz Plan is good, but not for the situation today. It's too drastic — making us tighten our belts — and people who don't eat, get ill and a sickly people makes a sickly nation.

The Balcerowicz Plan comes from the dictates of the IMF. That is what is deciding things in Poland and determining the conditions in which Poland has to act. What do you think about this?

There is an answer in the question. The Balcerowicz Plan without preparation of the basis, will produce bankruptcy. And we are very much afraid that it will get even worse than it is at the moment.

Even if we wanted only partially to adopt the Balcerowicz Plan, we would have to prepare this base. And that hasn't been done. So we see clearly that the West is dictating the tempo and that is why Balcerowicz is carrying out this plan.

In my opinion, the IMF's dictates will not, as we have been promised, lead to Poland becoming a highly developed Western country, it will only make Poland politically and economically dependent on the West. Poland will be a second Bolivia, or Argentina, for Western Europe.

To be quite frank, we're part way there already.

Finally, would you like to say anything to the people who will read this?

Victory will only be won by speaking the truth and being as close as possible to the people, by presenting the situation as it is.

Thank you and I wish the railway workers success and the fulfillment of their just demands.

And I thank you warmly and send good wishes to your colleagues from the FSO (Warsaw Car Plant — transl).

The railworkers' demands

After intervention by Lech Walesa, the railworkers agreed to suspend their strike until 13 June.

Walesa promised that he himself would join them on hunger strike if the government had not responded adequately by that date.

The railworkers have raised 12 demands. Most are to do with a wage rise of 20 per cent, to compensate for the huge rise in prices in

Poland this year.

The workers also called for:

- The Transport Ministry to draw up a programme of restructuring of the railways, with workers' representatives to be involved in working out that programme.

- The dismissal of the director-general of the railways and of the railways maritime sections.

- Suspension of increases in fares and freight charges.

- Access to the mass media for the railworkers.

Preventing genetic tragedies

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

In vitro fertilisation (IVF) has allowed thousands of babies to be born, benefiting many hitherto childless couples.

I recently attended a talk given by IVF pioneer Professor Robert Winston on how IVF techniques can benefit another group of people. These are carriers of severe genetic diseases such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy, Tay-Sachs disease, Lesch-Nyhan syndrome and the most common genetic disease in Britain, cystic fibrosis.

Where two carriers have children, there is a 1 in 4 chance that each child will suffer the disease. If the disease is sex-linked, as with DMD, there will be a 1 in 2 chance of male children being affected. The parents then have the tragic prospect of watching their child suffer and die. In addition, they know that any further children may be similarly affected.

Research first into animal embryo development and then into human embryo development has made it possible to identify many of these diseases and affected embryos can then be selectively aborted. For the sex-linked diseases, the process is even simpler — all male embryos

“Rather than risking the development of a ‘super race’, PID was likely to remove much worry and heartache from a group of unfortunate people.”

are aborted. This of course is only when requested by the parents. The whole process is extremely distressing, particularly when pregnancy after pregnancy has to be terminated. This had led researchers like Professor Winston to look into diagnosis of genetic diseases before a pregnancy has become established. Since this point is when an embryo implants into the wall of the womb, this is known as pre-implantation diagnosis (PID).

PID depends on extracting some DNA from the embryo and analysing it to see if a faulty gene is present. The process requires quite a lot of DNA and has only become possible for small embryos recently with the use of the polymerase chain reaction (PCR).

This involves an enzyme which makes copies of a DNA molecule. Each cycle of this reaction doubles the number of copies of the DNA so after 20 cycles there will be over a million copies, plenty for analysis.

There are three routes for PID. One is to collect an egg from the woman and carefully remove the tiny companion cell called the polar body. This contains the half of the woman's chromosomes that won't be passed on in that egg. PCR is performed on the polar body DNA and if the faulty gene is present the egg can be presumed healthy. It can then undergo IVF.

The advantage of this would be that the embryo would not have been interfered with in any way. However, it is quite a delicate operation and it is possible to damage the egg so that it won't subsequently develop. So far there have been no pregnancies resulting from this technique.

The second method involves IVF of the egg, waiting until the cell has divided three times (about 48 hours) and removing one of the eight cells then present. This is done by suck-

ing it into a very thin tube or pipette. PCR is then performed on the removed cell's DNA. The advantage is that the development of the embryo need not be interfered with in any way. At this stage, all the cells are capable of developing into any part of the foetus so removal of one should not affect future development.

However, precise timing is called for, the small amount of DNA leaves little margin for error and it is possible to damage the other cells of the embryo. The success rate with such embryos is quite low but that is a problem with IVF in general, not with this particular technique. So far, Professor Winston's group had worked with five women, three of whom had become pregnant and had had five children.

The third method might appear to avoid some of the above drawbacks. It is to analyse the DNA from the blastocyst stage. This is when the embryo is 5 to 6 days old. It is no bigger than a fertilisation but has divided into up to 2000 cells (and hence has much more DNA).

However, it is difficult to get embryos to develop to this stage in vitro (let alone to the proposed legal limit of 14 days).

An alternative is to wash out a blastocyst from the woman's Fallopian tubes for examination. The advantage is that IVF would not have been necessary. However, there is a risk of causing an ectopic pregnancy (where the embryo implants outside the womb with great risk to the woman's health). Also, the womb will lose its link to the development of the blastocyst. The latter will have to be frozen for transfer into the womb during the woman's next monthly cycle.

If some of these problems could be overcome, this might be the preferred method of PID since transferred blastocysts have a greater rate of implantation in the womb. Professor Winston said that in one programme of blastocyst PID there had been only a 1 in 5 success rate and that in his opinion it would be unethical to continue with this technique at present.

Professor Winston identified several areas where further research was required. Other ways of diagnosing genetic disorders were being investigated, such as observing how the embryo metabolised its food or seeing if it produced unusual compounds when it was carrying a faulty gene. These would not involve the removal of any material at all. Seeing how the normal embryo developed and finding ways of culturing it beyond the 5 or 6 days at present possible might help make IVF a more successful technique.

He stressed that his work was not aimed at reducing the levels of faulty genes in the population. Whether this was a legitimate aim, he did not offer an opinion. Some people think this smacks too much of the 'eugenics' programme of the Nazis, though I cannot immediately see the connection. I cannot see the objection to reducing the incidence of many of the worst genetic diseases though I question whether it would be possible to significantly affect the incident of any but the rarest ones.

Professor Winston also stressed that it was the people affected by these genetic tragedies who were asking for help, not the white-coated technocrats who were trying to play God, as caricatured by some 'pro-life' campaigners. As PID became more reliable, he foresaw it being offered perhaps to all those over 40, in view of the high risk of Down's syndrome babies.

Rather than risking the development of a 'super race', PID was likely to remove much worry and heartache from a group of unfortunate people.

The stuff of nightmares

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'The Vanishing' and 'Celia'

In whodunnits, we want to know who committed a crime; in 'The Vanishing', we know who, but not what he did, or why.

It's the story of Saskia and Rex, a young Dutch couple on holiday in France. They stop for petrol at a busy service station, and Saskia disappears. For good.

Rex is distraught, and moves heaven and earth to find her, but to no avail. She has vanished.

Tantalisingly, the camera has shown us her abductor; he's already been singled out for us. He's a family man, a maths teacher, obsessive about figures, but otherwise normal, slightly nondescript. As the film unfolds, we see his methodology — how he times the ploys and speeches he'll make to entice women into his car, how he tests the drugs he'll use to overpower his victims, and we also see how often his methods fail. The potential victims, sensing something odd, escape.

But not Saskia. No one saw her, no one has seen her again, and three years later, Rex is still searching, unable to let go, tormented by the need to know exactly what happen-



Celia (Rebecca Smart) from Anne Turner's 'Celia'

ed, even if it's the worst.

By the time the abductor contacts him, promising to tell everything, we're desperate to know too. But nothing comes out quite as it's planned. This is an ingenious thriller, a little slow in the plotting, but with an ending that is the stuff of nightmares.

Nightmares figure in 'Celia' too, but they're waking nightmares, the bad dreams of childhood where, even when we're awake, we're not sure what's real and what isn't.

It's set in the fifties in Australia, when the Australian government, copying its mighty neighbour, the United States, was enthusiastically waging the cold war. Communists

were denounced, and often witch-hunted out of their jobs. The Red plague was to be eradicated, along with the rabbit plague, another 'foreign' import that had to be stamped out at any cost.

Few films about the witch-hunts have dealt with the effect on children; the adults, caught up in persecution, betrayal and shattered hopes, have been the focus. But this film's focus is the child Celia. Her understanding of what is happening is limited, but it threatens the very basis of her world.

Her adored Gran was a leftist, and her neighbour, Alice, whom she idolises, is also a sympathiser; suddenly, they're both beyond the pale. Also at risk from the fervour of the government snoopers is her adored pet rabbit.

Celia is also haunted by fear of the Hobyahs, nightmare creatures from a story book. Night after night, she waits for them to creep up to the window and steal her away.

Soon she no longer feels safe or secure. Everywhere she looks, she sees danger or threats. Adults, themselves torn by conflicting emotions, only confuse and mislead her.

The film is slightly over long, but manages to convey rather well the muddled terrain of childhood, the passions and terrors, the solemn allegiances, and the grievances that grow and fester. It also shows how children struggle, and often fail, to grasp adult concerns, and how the decisions they make about things only imperfectly understood can be drastically wrong.

What if Garry Bushell were gay?

OUT AND PROUD

By Clive Bradley

Do people have the right to stay in the closet? Much discussed at the moment is the question of 'outing', the practice of forcing famous people who are lesbian or gay to admit it publicly.

An American gay magazine, *Outweek*, has a regular column where it spills the beans on the rich and powerful — like film stars and senators. Could this catch on in Britain? It formed the subject for the last episode of the recent series of Channel Four's 'Out on Tuesday', and I've found myself discussing it quite a lot.

There are really two categories of 'outing'. At its most extreme, the argument runs that all people who pretend to be heterosexual thereby maintain some privileges the rest of us don't have. They deserve to be exposed: no one needs to stay in the closet, and those who try to should be dragged out screaming.

Second, there are the closet cases whose actions positively harm lesbians and gay men, who write or say vile anti-gay things, who for example vote in Parliament for Section 28. 'Outing' such people severely damages the reactionary cause they have lent themselves to.

I'm sure a lot of people would find the idea of any kind of outing simply the most monstrous invasion of people's privacy which should be stopped before it gets out of hand. It wouldn't be a nice way for your mum to find out.

This indeed was the background to this country's first real case of outing. Jimmy Somerville grassed up the Pet Shop Boys, who apparently were terrified of their

parents knowing. He was sick of being the Gay Pop Star when everyone in the business knows that half the twelve year old girls in the country have screaming queens pinned on their walls. So why should he take all the rap?

Whatever the rights and wrongs here, you can't construct a general policy from it. People choose to remain in the closet for all sorts of reasons, from fear of parental discovery to personal self-doubt. Force in such cases is not usually the best policy.

Equally, all sorts of factors, by no means the chief of which is necessarily courage, and still less political principle, make it easier for other people to come out.

We should be against outing as a form of terrorism.

But isn't any form of it just gutter journalism? Why is it any better for a gay magazine to make a public issue out of someone's sexuality than for the *Daily Mail*?

Recently, right-on people everywhere were annoyed by tabloid attempts to suggest that Prince Andrew was having it away with Michael Ball. If *Outweek* made the same claim, wouldn't it be just the same?

Let's pretend, for the sake of getting to the point of this issue, that someone had proof that Garry Bushell was gay. Nothing pornographic (heaven forbid), just a photo of him lying on the beach in Sitges with a sylph-like Spanish boy draped over his arm and a copy of *Zipper* laid out on the sand in front of him.

What would you do with that photograph?

Publishing it would hardly put a stop to tabloid gay bashing. But face it, it would be brilliant.

I think in such cases, outing has a point. Take MPs. When we talk about gay MPs who voted for Section 28, it is not a matter of some quiet old Tory who's ridden with angst and spends every evening in church asking God for forgiveness.

We are talking rampant hypocrisy.

There are MPs whose homosexuality is known to a significant number of people, who make no attempt to keep it secret (except from the general public and, of course, their constituents), who are known, for example, to swan around from one public lavatory to the next, yet who act in such a way that ordinary lesbians and gay men suffer. Those on the receiving end both of reactionary legislation and more general worsening social attitudes do not share these MPs' privileges, or their power, which includes the power to have docile gossip columnists happily playing along with the charade.

The outing of such people would surely make the job of the anti-gay propagandists harder. Exposing people as hypocrites has a powerful effect. And it is surely improbable that such action would be counter-productive. According to the editor of *Outweek*, 'outed' US senators have started to speak out for lesbian and gay rights; the threat of it has stopped others doing harm.

Coming out is an essential aspect of the modern 'gay experience'. It is not just something you do, and then it's over with. Every day, for most lesbians and gay men, even well-adjusted out-and-proud ones, decisions have to be made about it. Every time you meet a new person.

In some jobs, for example, it is a big decision indeed. It could cost you the job.

That should make us sympathetic to the millions of lesbians and gay men who still haven't managed to come out even to themselves, and to the thousands more who are only out in certain spheres of their lives and firmly closeted in the rest.

But if Garry Bushell were gay, I would have no sympathy for his closet at all. If then someone wanted to use his sexuality against him, that would be a different matter. But watching him squirm would be more fun than the Market Tavern last Friday. And take it from me, that's fun.

Rank and fileism — Tory style

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

One of the more infuriating aspects of the Tories' anti-union offensive has been the way they like to dress it all up with rhetoric about "handing the unions back to the members", defending "the rank and file" against "unrepresentative leaders" etc etc.

Parts of some speeches by the likes of Tebbit and Fowler could have been written by... well, me, for instance.

The idea of Tebbit or Fowler as a champion of the rights of the rank and file should have been laughed out of court. But it wasn't. Even quite solid trade unionists were at least partly taken in for a while — the reason being, of course, that on the whole British trade unions are bureaucratic and unresponsive to the wishes of the rank and file.

This is an important part of the explanation for the lack of resistance to the Tories' anti-union legislation and something that tends to be overlooked by those who prefer to explain away everything in terms of simple betrayal and cowardice by the officials.

The evidence is that the provisions of the 1988 Employment Act, making postal ballots for general secretary and executive elections compulsory, were actually quite popular among rank and file trade unionists. The Tories knew this was a vulnerable area for the bureaucracy and clearly expected the legislation to result in a decisive shift to the right throughout the trade union movement — as did most union activists.

The funny thing is that the predicted stampede towards 'moderation' doesn't seem to have happened. In fact, the legislation has not produced any very decisive changes at all, according to a

Labour Research survey of the 50 largest TUC-affiliated unions. For a start only 27 unions out of the 50 had to make any rule changes in order to comply with the new legislation, either because they already held postal ballots (or were in the process of introducing them irrespective of the legislation) or because they don't have full time officers on their executive.

32 of the unions surveyed have held general secretary elections since 1988; in 18 cases the existing general secretary was a candidate (sometimes, indeed, the only candidate) and in all but one case (NATFHE) the sitting candidate was re-elected. In the 14 unions where the general secretary did not stand, someone with remarkably similar politics took over in every case.

What has changed quite noticeably, however, is the level of membership participation in the election process... it's gone down. Last year, for instance, just 30.9% of the members of the tax workers' union IRSF took part in their executive committee elections — the first to be held by postal ballot. Under the previous system of workplace

ballots the average turnout had been 56%.

In this year's TGWU executive elections, the turnout was a mere 17%, compared to 39% in the 1988 elections held under the union's old rules. Much the same has happened with NALGO, CoHSE, NATFHE and Tass/MSF.

The Labour Research survey explodes the favourite myths of both left and right: secret ballots do not increase rank and file participation in union elections (the right-wing myth); and they do not inevitably favour 'moderate' candidates (the left's traditional explanation for the right-wing domination of a union like the AEU, which had postal ballots long before the Tory legislation).

However, in one respect the survey's findings should be taken with a pinch of salt: it ignores the fact that many unions' pre-'88 election procedures were notoriously slack and in some cases downright corrupt. The TGWU's old system of 'block voting', for instance often meant that in practice ballot papers never reached the membership but were filled in 'on their behalf' by an unseen hand....

The conclusions for the left in the unions would seem to be:

1. Tory legislation has not enhanced union democracy even to the extent of improving rank and file participation in elections.

2. Ballots for union elections should take place after maximum information has been made available to the members. Rules outlawing 'campaigning' should be abolished. Ideally, ballots should take place at the workplace, after properly convened meetings where all points of view can be properly aired.

3. While campaigning for the abolition of all Tory anti-union laws, we do not necessarily advocate a return to the old status quo — especially in unions where the pre-'88 system of elections was known to be corrupt.

Finally, it seems to me that the survey tends to back up the stand taken by those of us who've said all along that while we don't advocate postal ballots, we also don't recoil from them as though they were worse than no democracy at all...

Stalinists lose grip on NUCPS

By a conference delegate

The long Stalinist domination of the middle-grades civil service union NUCPS is now clearly at an end.

By the close of conference on Friday 25 May the Stalinists had suffered fur-

ther losses on the Executive and seen their grip on conference slip.

The Stalinists' attempts to stem the right-wing and Broad Left challenge by preventing the distribution of unofficial literature predictably backfired. With their factional leaders realising that they were opening the door to a right-wing witch-hunt, the Stalinists split on the issue.

There are now three openly declared factions within the union: the Broad Left (an alliance of independent socialists and left groups, including SO supporters); the Membership First faction (an electoral alliance of right

wingers and soft lefts without any shared policy objectives); and the gung-ho right wing 'Progressive Anti-Communist' faction whose single policy is to destroy the left.

The Stalinists continue to deny that their tightly organised secret faction is anything of the sort, but if they are not to be completely destroyed they will now have to argue their policies openly with the members.

All the factions except the Broad Left are represented on the union executive, and there will probably be at least some partial realignment over the coming year.

The breakdown of the Stalinist hold on conference (and the relative weakness of the right amongst the active members) was most surprisingly demonstrated by the decision to vote for affiliation to CND. But it also found expression in the carrying of two completely contradictory motions on Eastern Europe.

One deplored the NUCPS's previous support for 'state run puppet unions' and called for maximum support for 'democratic and progressive free trade unions', and the other effectively called for continued relations with the 'official' East European unions only.

A big step forward was taken by the decision to vote for flat rate pay increases. But conference policies remain characterised more by what they deplore than by positive strategies to defend jobs, conditions and pay.

A significant number of delegates felt that the union is not confronting the attacks being made upon members. Conference voted to recommend merger with CPSA, but the most thoroughgoing and valuable unity will be that forged on the picket line in opposition to these attacks.

The Broad Left must relate to this task. It must build upon its successful interventions into conference by developing its policy alternatives to the other factions, constructing a real, active rank and file group which intervenes as a group into all the struggles that members are waging now.

Stop the CPSA/ NUCPS merger

By Steve Battlemuch, Acting Convenor, 'Stop the Merger' Campaign (personal capacity)

CPSA and NUCPS members will vote before the end of the year on a merger between the two unions.

NUCPS conference agreed to recommend a merger by 7:2, CPSA conference agreed to ballot without a recommendation, after a vote to recommend rejection in the ballot was lost by just 2,000 votes out of 140,000.

CPSA members have a lot to lose by a merger with NUCPS. CPSA is a clerical-based union, ie. very few supervisory or management grades in the union. NUCPS, on the other hand, is mainly a union of management grades.

An influx of management grades into CPSA would seriously weaken our ability as a fighting union. The presence of managers in union meetings would severely restrict what clerical members were prepared to say in union meetings about management decisions.

The prospect of having a manager as the union rep on local disciplinary cases would haunt union reps.

The merger is also opposed by some CPSA members who support the principle of a merger but reject the proposed terms. That is the position favoured by the Militant Tendency.

They object to the fact that the new union Executive will not be elected by all members but elected in parts by the

different sections involved in the merger. Other things which they oppose include extending the number of full-time officials who are unelected, and taking away from branches the right to control their own finances.

Socialist Organiser supporters oppose the merger on both counts. We therefore decided to launch a 'Stop the Merger' Campaign at CPSA Conference.

A successful meeting launched the campaign and it is open to all those who oppose the merger for whatever reason.

A steering committee elected at the meeting will be up for re-election at a meeting held later in the year for all CPSA members who oppose the merger.

The 'Stop the Merger' Campaign is seeking affiliation from CPSA branches at the cost of £10. Cheques should be made payable to the 'Stop the Merger' Campaign, and sent to 191 Burford Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham NG7 6AY.

IN BRIEF

6,000 engineering and maintenance workers are continuing their unofficial strike at Heathrow Airport.

The strike began as a walkout in protest at management's attempt to impose new 12-hour shifts. A ballot is taking place this week to make the strike official.

British Airways' management boast that the strike is having no effect, but they have already been forced to cancel shuttle services to Manchester.

Strikers believe that more flights will be grounded as the action bites.

The engineers' shorter working week campaign continues.

Last week 7 key companies were targeted for possible action: Plessey, Dowty, TI, Vickers Defence, GPT, Ruston and Gas Turbines.

The Confed claims to have won 442 reduced hours agreements.

The new phase of the campaign, 'Operation Cascade', is designed by engineers' leaders to 'mop up' those smaller companies who have not yet agreed to an hours cut.

Student leaders block poll tax fight

By Paul McGarry

The National Union of Students National Committee met recently to discuss next academic year's priority campaigns and work.

Unsurprisingly the Executive failed to commit itself to building on its policy of non-payment and non-collection of the poll tax. The Kinnockite faction drew back from endorsing a 'Don't Pay, Don't Collect' campaign, favouring a softer line more acceptable to Labour Party HQ.

Left Unity supporters proposed that NUS needed to organise occupation, pickets and sit-ins at the start of the autumn term when students face removal of housing benefit and housing shortages.

Emma Colyer (NUS National Secretary) proposed Left Unity's alternative strategy document. Our strategy includes an affiliation drive aimed at the FE sector and policies which tie together the need to build a fighting union with developing more membership participation inside NUS's structures.

New NUS President Stephen Twigg won support from the Communist Party and the SLD for a return of the lobby-style, wait-for-a-Labour-government strategy that has characterised Labour Student's 8 years of rule in NUS.

Interestingly, the SWP had nothing to argue, consoling themselves with the revolutionary activity of voting against everyone's proposals, including a Left Unity motion on Further Education Union Development.

The Executive meeting allotted individual work-responsibilities to Ex-

"New NUS president Stephen Twigg won support from the Communist Party and the SLD"

ecutive members. As in previous years, the left members received virtually no important work areas, while the Kinnockites and fellow travellers got up to 5 times as many responsibilities.

An index of the political culture on the Executive were the remarks of Steve Clamp and Mark Bloomfield in justifying why they should have responsibility for the poll tax. ("I can give a Welsh perspective" — Clamp) and Northern Ireland ("the problem in Ireland is an English problem, I'm Scottish" — Bloomfield!)

Student activists should ring or write to Stephen Twigg demanding that the NUS leadership implements its poll tax policy and asking why left wing members of the NEC have been refused any important responsibilities. They could also send Bloomfield an elementary introduction to Irish history.

SO readers may have been confused by an article that recently appeared in Militant.

According to Militant, it was a Militant motion that NUS organise a poll tax activist conference. In fact that was the position of Left Unity.

Militant had originally supported the idea that NUS organise a special full NUS Conference. That would have cost at least £70,000, taken place in July and probably have lost the left its Don't Pay, Don't Collect position.

Only under pressure from Left Unity did Militant fall in behind the proposal that was eventually passed.

Busworkers need unity

By a London busworker

London bus workers have been offered a derisory 7.5% pay deal by their managements.

Despite the break up of London Buses into 11 different companies (an attempt to make united industrial action across the fleet more difficult), the percentage offer is the same across the fleet.

The strings attached, however, vary widely. In one area they are offering a bonus of £300 per year if you have no more than one day off sick in each three-month period, a move forcing bus workers to come into work whilst ill, thereby putting the public's lives at risk. Such a cynical move puts the lie to

even the most mealy-mouthed pretence to commitments the government professes to have about improving public transport, or safety standards.

In other areas there are strings as long as your arm, chipping away at those working conditions which make the job almost half bearable.

So far the union negotiating teams across the 11 units have a commitment to demanding a minimum of 9.5% (inflation rate) before they will begin to consider strings.

They should not consider strings at all. The membership should be consulted at every stage of the negotiations and the unions in the units should stick together and fight together for at the very least a 10% pay rise.

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By Mick Ackersley

'That'll win the Nobel Prize for Literature', says one RUC cop cynically to another as they watch the TV news retailing the lying official version of events they were involved in.

They know — and so did we, having seen it on screen earlier — that in fact they had shot dead two unarmed men and nearly killed another, that they had not shouted any warning, and that some of them had stood over the wounded man and seriously discussed whether or not they should "finish this bastard off".

They also know that they had been watching the barn where it happened for days, and that they had it bugged for sound — that the RUC and its informers had set the whole thing up, in fact.

One of those killed was a 17 year old, with no political involvement, Michael Tighe.

ITV's "drama-documentary", *Shoot to Kill*, shown over four hours on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th, dealt with the RUC's policy in the early 1980s of hunting down IRA suspects and killing them on sight; and then told the story of what happened when the Deputy Chief Constable of Manchester, John Stalker, was sent to do a whitewash job and instead tried to do an honest investigation.

Stalker judged events and procedures in Northern Ireland by what are supposed to be the norms of British policing. His conclusion about what he discovered was portrayed with brutal starkness, when the actor representing him burst out to his police superintendent associate: "The police are completely out of control, running around shooting people. Death squads! It's like some banana republic here".

Exactly. Death squads organised and protected by the people running the RUC. And ultimately by the whole British and Northern Ireland establishment.

Lessons for left from SDP

Roy Hattersley was right. In 1981, when the left seemed triumphant in the Labour Party, he and Dennis Healey argued for Labour right-wingers to stay in the party, while David Owen, Bill Rodgers, Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins went off to form the SDP.

Now Hattersley and his friends call the tune in the Labour Party and the SDP has just been wound up after being reduced to less than half the votes of the Monster Raving Loony Party in the Bootle by-election.

The SDP had lots of money from supermarket millionaire David Sainsbury, lots of publicity, and favourable media coverage. It scored some spectacular successes.

But it lacked activists and roots. It took no solid body of activists, and not one affiliated trade union, from the Labour Party. Ruling-class irritation with the Tories, run-



TV tells the truth about 'shoot to kill'

Just as he was about to interview RUC chief constable Sir John Hermon and other senior policemen, "under caution" that what they said would be taken down and might be used in evidence in a further prosecution, Stalker was suspended and himself put under investigation for corruption.

He was in fact being investigated because he *wasn't* corrupt!

He believed the official British Government line that Northern Ireland is not a war but just a police operation. Therefore he believed the rules of policing rather than war should apply.

When he found the opposite to be true, he wanted to bring the

police murderers to book, and those who covered for them too.

His career was ruined. He was later exonerated of the charges of corruption, restored to office, and then frozen out. The establishment is not flouted with impunity!

Colin Sampson, the policeman who continued Stalker's inquiry, found against the RUC — given the furore over Stalker's removal from the case he could not do less — but the Director of Public Prosecutions decided not to prosecute. The cover-ups and lies of the RUC had been broken, and there was nothing they could do about that. But they could subsequently protect and exonerate the murderers.

Shoot to Kill was TV at its best. It did not clearly bring out the element of sectarianism in the RUC's actions — that the RUC are armed members of one community engaged in policing what it sees as the enemy community, a community towards which RUC members feel an ingrained chauvinist hostility — but you can't have everything.

Strictly based on the known facts, it was another blow at the credibility of the police and the Establishment which runs the police. TV viewers saw how Stalker met with evasion; with official lying and official orchestration of such lies so that all the police would tell the same story; with suppression, destruction and concoction of evidence; with a many-tentacled conspiracy to cover the truth.

Finally he fell victim to a conspiracy stretching from Belfast to Manchester, a conspiracy to destroy the credibility, the career, and if necessary the life of the honest freak copper who got involved in the Northern Ireland theatre of war as a result of a mistake at police central casting.

If that's what happened to a Deputy Chief Constable, it will confirm for a lot of people the truth: that the police, despite the John Stalkers in their ranks, are a crowd of semi-constrained, officially-licensed gangsters, or semi-gangsters at best.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

June 1990. 10 pence.

**INSIDE: Quotas, Poll Tax,
East German women's
movement, plus lots more!**

Our image for Labour



Labour now has a "feminine" image. That's official.

You can see it on the cover of the new policy document, 'Looking to the Future'. Well-groomed, prosperous-looking, white, young but motherly — that's Labour Woman 1990.

Only most of us aren't like that. And we know that Labour can't and shouldn't be sold like a cosmetic or a washing powder, with advertising artwork designed to suggest some association between the "product" and sleek middle-class success but not to communicate any actual information or ideas.

We've been insulted enough by capitalist advertisers. We can do well without the further insult of this sickly soft-sell from Labour's leaders.

What we want is policies which will enable working-class women to change things — to get decent jobs, decent childcare, decent housing, equal opportunities — and a way of running the Labour Party which gives us **power** in working out those policies.

Even the latest blue-tinted, soft-sell document has some good policies, won by long battles in the movement.

It promises to restore the value of child benefit; to introduce a national minimum wage, which will ease the poverty of millions of low-paid women; to restore the National Health Service; and to provide nursery education for every three and four year old.

But, apart from the child benefit increase, all those promises are hedged around. They are presented as "targets" to be reached "when resources allow" or "over time".

There is huge wealth in Britain, tremendous resources, vast amounts of unused labour and productive capacity.

"Resources" are such a problem only because the Labour leaders have restricted themselves in advance to such resources as they can wheedle and cajole out of the masters of wealth.

All ideas that a socialist government should **seize** the ill-gotten wealth of the millionaire elite and use it for the common good has gone. Instead there are humble, oh so humble, promises that public spending to deal with poverty, to provide services, and to create equality, will be increased only very slowly, very gradually, and very prudently.

The sting in the tail comes on the issue of trade union law. Labour's leaders have not only pledged themselves to respect the power and privileges of the top few per cent who have

doubled and tripled their wealth under Thatcherism. They have pledged to stop us challenging that power and privilege through trade union action, too.

Any trade union action beyond the most modest, respectable, sectional dispute over wages with a particular employer will still be at threat from the law.

Solidarity strikes and pickets will be unlawful except in the most limited cases of direct connection between two groups of workers. Labour front-benchers have already stated in so many words that they want to keep strikes in support of health workers, or boycotts of South African goods, unlawful. They have even said that a national teachers' strike over job cuts due to Poll Tax and 'Local Management of Schools' would be unlawful.

Only six pickets would be allowed. Judges would still be able to ban strikes because there had been no ballot, or no ballot satisfactory to the judges.

What working class women have won, and what the whole working class has won, we have won through struggle — through being organised, militant, raucous, disruptive. That's the approach we'll need to redress what we've lost in the Thatcher years. We're on our way — and we won't be fobbed off with advertising agency soft-sell.

FIGHT THE POLL

Sally Brown reports on the latest developments

The poll tax non-payers of Medina, on the Isle of Wight, have shown the way when they turned up at the courts in their hundreds and challenged the actions against them for not paying their bills.

I know that their cases were thrown out on a technicality — because the council used second class stamps on the summonses, so that the required two weeks notice could not have been given.

But what they have done is shown every other anti poll tax union and non-payer, and potential non-payer, how the whole system can so easily be snarled up, putting the collection of the tax even further into chaos.

Everyone should attend their court hearing and demand the right to speak, and be defended. In this way the courts will never be able to get through all the millions of cases of non-payers in the country, and a great feeling of solidarity and strength will develop as case after case falls.

It won't be too long before it will be a Labour council taking the working class people in their area to court. Medina is a Tory council, and you can expect if of them. But if Labour councils do it, as they surely will, we should really go to town on them: demonstrate outside the town halls, get the support of the local government unions (many of whose members are already taking strike action against the poll tax — like the Greenwich NALGO workers), and non-paying councillors, etc.

We should get non-payers to join the Labour Party in their thousands and change the policies of the councils so that they support working



class people instead of doing the Tories dirty work like they are doing at the moment.

The Labour leadership's attitude to the fight against the poll tax has been disgusting. Kinnock and Co have kept their heads down, limiting themselves to a few mealy-

moued words about how awful the poll tax is (as if working class people threatened with poverty don't know it already!), and telling everyone to pay!

Their anger and vitriol has been directed, not against the Tories, but against those campaigning against

the vicious Tory tax. After the 31 March demo you could hardly tell the difference between Kinnock and Thatcher. Not a word from the Labour leaders about the police violence — no, they attacked the "violence" of the demonstrators defending themselves against riot

cops. Now Kinnock wants to witch-hunt anti poll tax campaigners out of the party. No wonder David Owen thinks that he could quite happily re-join the Labour Party!

But we can't just ignore the Labour leaders, pretend they don't exist. We should fight within the

The latest accessory

By Jill Mountford

If you cast your mind back to about six months ago you'll remember that all the colour supplements (ie. the 'quality' supplements) were full of crap about how the '90s would see the advent of the caring-sharing, healthy living, environmentally friendly, spiritualist person who would replace the Yuppie; that self-seeking, me now, filofax carrying, cellular phone using,

power dressing upstart of the '80s.

Well it appears the media have christened the new model the Yappie — the Young Affluent Parent.

The fashion accessories of the '80s are very much passé. It's rather gauche to be seen with your cellular phone slung over your shoulder or your filofax down by your side. Now these old fashioned though functional items are to be discarded and replaced with the ultimate fashion accessory — the offspring. I say offspring because babies aren't particularly fashionable. Those tiny, wrinkly, messy at both ends bundles aren't quite 'in'.

It's the toddler. The cute cuddlesome kid in designer baseball cap (wearing it back to front of course!) that's the real addition to any woman's, or indeed man's, wardrobe. And whilst I'm on the subject of wardrobes, I imagine they feature quite high in the Yappie household as somewhere to put this fashion accessory before it reaches the cute, cuddlesome kid stage, and afterwards when it's all awkward and irritating, anything from the age of 10 onwards.

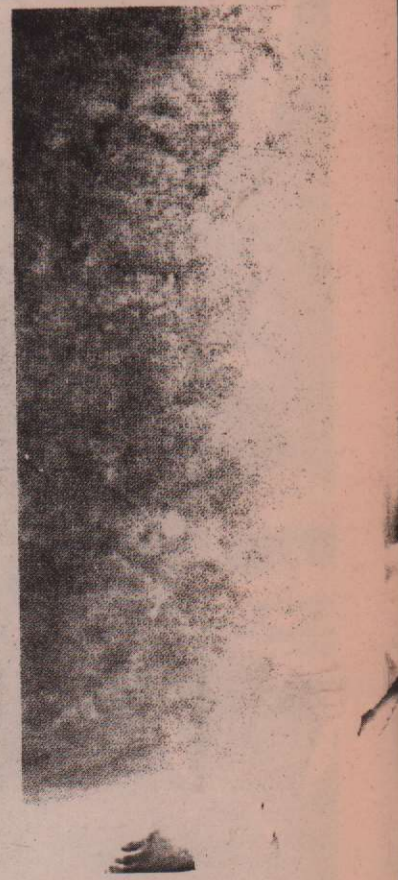
Of course the Yappie was being spawned during the late '80s. This can be seen in many aspects of the media from the revoltingly nauseating soap 'thirtysomething' to magazines like *Cosmo* and *She*. *She* was recently relaunched and for the last god knows how many issues has sported a well groomed, beautiful professional woman and offspring (also well groomed and beautiful) on its front cover. *She*'s subtitle and motto is 'She's a woman, She's a worker and She's a mother'. God knows she's likely to be very pissed off too, if she's one of the millions of women working for low pay or unemployed or living in poor accommodation with little if any childcare provision.

Basically the message is coming across loud and clear — you're none if you haven't got a toddler attached to your hip. Your life is empty, not to mention your car. Which takes me on to those new car adverts.

Did you ever see such a show? Gone are the days when a car advert was blatantly nothing more than willy waving. The selling of big shiny steel penis extensions. Now it's a warm and sensitive business. If he's not masterfully picking up the cute cuddlesome kid and making a dash in torrential rain to see the birth of his second child then he's wandering through a labyrinth of people, some even black! (tastefully shot in black and white somewhere in New York) holding the hand of an 'out of this world' three year old beauty searching for his designer wife and her designer mother in a black Volkswagen.

On top of this sales pitch of parenthood there's been a spate of baby films. These films tackle, just as 'thirtysomething' does, some of the emotional problems experienced by white straight middle class parents and would-be parents. I have to confess I've seen none of them. I gather most are meant to be comedies of sorts, but all seem to carry the same underlying message and that is just how fulfilling, satisfying and complete parenthood makes you — whether you're a man or a woman.

Well at the risk of being incomplete, dissatisfied and completely out of fashion, isn't it all a load of balls? And talking of balls, I can think of a few I'd like to kick — to begin with the entire male cast of 'thirtysomething'. Kitted out with designer papoose and designer emo-



tions the men in this show (along with the women come to think of it) are just so inane. I know they're not meant to be but does anyone anywhere care if any of the characters live or die? On second thoughts...I hope it's slow and painful.

This is no doubt a little dismissive of me. I believe the show has quite a

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Inside: Betty Heathfield: A new kind of women's movement

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TAX!



Quotas: not the be all and end all

By Cate Murphy

The issue of quotas looks set to dominate this year's Labour Party Women's Conference.

'Quotas', along with ditching all reference to socialism and socialist policies, are Kinnock's answer to falling Labour Party membership. In an attempt to banish that old-fashioned image of the Labour Party run by grey-suited men, Labour's leaders, at last year's annual conference, introduced the idea of 'quotas'.

At some (unspecified) date in the future, according to the proposals, 40% of position holders in the Party should be women.

Now, of course, any positive action to increase women's participation in the Labour Party is to be welcomed. For too long women have been pushed into the background of politics; particularly when it comes to positions of power — such as seats in Parliament or on the National Executive.

That the Labour Party recognised this, and attempted to redress the balance, is a step in the right direction.

But a closer look at the details of the proposals shows that the power still lies in male hands.

Alone of all the sections in the Labour Party who currently have representatives on the National Ex-

ecutive (trade unions, CLPs, youth, Socialist Societies) the women's organisation does not elect its own representatives. There is a 5-seat women's section on the Executive, but it is elected by annual conference as a whole. And we all know how male dominated those conferences are.

Last year's merging of the National Labour Women's Committee with the National Executive women's committee deprived the women's organisation of its right to elect a national committee accountable to the national women's organisation. We're now an organisation whose leadership is partly dictated by those men in the grey suits.

Nor can the changes be seen in isolation from the attempts to stifle democracy occurring in the party as a whole.

Proposing that 40% of prospective MPs are women sounds great — until you remember that the National Executive can overrule the CLP's choice and impose their own candidate, as they did in Vauxhall, refusing to shortlist Martha Osamor who had the greatest number of nominations, and imposing Kate Hoey.

As long as the men in the grey suits can ensure that the 40% of candidates are "trustworthy" (ie. Kinnockite loyalists) women, we'll be allowed our 'quotas'.

Not all the proposals are bad, of

course. Suggestions to ensure 50% of delegations are women; that half the constituency officers should be women, and that half the seats on regional executives should, likewise, be reserved for women are to be supported.

But women in the party also demand that, as women, we should be allowed to elect our own representatives, not have them 'selected' for us. The long-standing demand that the Labour women's conference should elect the women's section of the National Executive is still a central demand we must fight for.

Winning that would mean giving real power to women, not cosmetic changes that strengthen the Labour Party leadership and do little to encourage real participation by women.

More importantly, quotas, or any form of increasing women's participation, will not, of themselves, make the Labour Party more attractive to women. If Kinnock wants to attract more women then he should campaign around issues which affect working class women's lives: against the poll tax, increased funding for the NHS, for abortion rights and access to reproductive treatments for all women.

Winning democratic constitutional changes is important, but not at the expense of building a fighting Labour Party habitable for working class women.

Reproductive rights for all

By Julia Coulton

Women have won a massive victory over the Embryo Bill — the most serious threat to women's reproductive rights for many years.

Even though the time limit for legal abortions was reduced from 28 to 24 weeks, the separation of the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act from the abortion law now means that doctors are no longer under threat of prosecution for performing late abortions.

In reality, there has been no reduction in the time limit, and a removal of any upper time limit for abortions on the grounds of grave physical or mental injury to the woman, and in cases of foetal abnormality is a progressive measure.

It also looks like any attempt to restrict access to Donor Insemination, to explicitly bar single women and lesbians from DI, will fail.

However, as with the Fight the Alton Bill (FAB) campaign, the campaign which sprung up to defend a woman's right to choose was a very defensive, immediate reaction to these attacks. Our task is now to extend the efforts of groups like the Stop the Amendment Campaign and the Campaign for Access to Donor Insemination, and unite in a single campaign aimed both at defending a woman's right to choose and working for an extension of women's rights through positive gains.

We need a campaign which takes on all aspects of choice, ie. the lack of adequate contraception, the underfunding of the NHS, the lack of adequate childcare facilities. We need to fight for better rights at

work over maternity and paternity leave, health and safety — such as the use of VDUs. We also need to fight for the rights of all women: lesbians, single women, black women, to equal access to all abortion and reproductive rights treatments.

This campaign will need the support of the organised labour movement. We need to make sure that the next Labour government really does implement the kind of policies which will give real meaning to women's reproductive rights. We need to make sure that all MPs have to stick to democratically decided policies over abortion and reproductive rights and not exercise their own "consciences".

Labour women need to go on the offensive to fight for our reproductive rights in a broad-based campaign uniting all the issues involved in a woman's right to choose.

Labour Party to make our leaders fight on our side, stand with ordinary working class people, against the Tories.

We should put pressure on Kinnock and Willis to call a demonstration against the poll tax, and organise anti-poll tax meetings up

and down the country. That would really scare the Tories — and give a huge boost both to the anti-poll tax campaign and the Labour Party itself. Labour Party activists should link up with trade unionists and community groups fighting the tax — together we can beat the poll tax.



following, presumably amongst people as virtuous and clean living as Hope and co. Just who do the producers of all this shit think they're kidding?

For most of us our daily experiences are quite the opposite. Unemployment, low pay, sexual and racial harassment, poverty — the list goes on. Real

the more obscene when it's juxtaposed with the myths the media peddles. Life for most of us under capitalism isn't shot in black and white with a slow, moody jazz melody as a backdrop. Instead it is in glorious technicolour. It's cheap and gaudy and the marketing of parenthood and babies as the latest fashion accessory is just one example of how horrible it can be.

Where we stand

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.
2. These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.
3. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

- ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.
4. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.
5. We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

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

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

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

Fighting for women's freedom in the new Eastern Europe

Only in East Germany, so far, have the East European revolutions of 1989 led to the emergence of sizeable feminist groups. "Lila-offensive" is a socialist-feminist group in East Germany, part of the United Left. We print excerpts from its platform.

The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) is appealing for money to help "Lila-Offensive" and the Independent Women's Federation. Send cheques, made payable to CSWEB and marked 'Women's Appeal' on the back, to CSWEB, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5; all donations will be split equally between the two groups.

Traditionally typical female professions have less prestige and are worse paid on average than traditionally typical male professions.

The characteristic demands of 'women's professions' and 'men's professions' differ significantly: women are usually allotted monotonous repetitive activities and areas of work, whilst men, on the other hand, are usually given the work which involves more variety and is intellectually demanding. Men usually have better prospects than women of obtaining positions of responsibility and decision-making.

Housework and bringing up children, as well as caring for the mental and physical well-being of the husband, are still the responsibility first and foremost of the wife. People speak of the problem of how to combine having a job with being a mother, and not of how to combine having a job with being a parent (cf. socio-political measures concerned with this).

From this there results an objective existing double burden for women, with clear negative consequences for their personality development.

Even where they are equally competent, women have significantly less prospect than men of obtaining positions involving decision making and the exercise of power. This holds true for all spheres of social life (economy, science, politics, etc.)

The allocation of fixed fields of activity to women and men and the different evaluation of these fields of activity led to the formation of stereotypical gender roles. Corresponding to the relatively specific characteristic demands of such activity, these stereotypical gender roles were characterised by one-sidedness.

The model for women stresses the obsequious, self-sacrificing, and subordinate role of the woman, her proneness to emotions, her feelings, devotion, care, love etc., whilst the model for men is oriented towards leadership, competence, achievement, power, domination, competition, rationality, and hostility towards potential competition.

This is not without consequences for how women and men regard themselves, and how each sex sees the other. Women and men see themselves very differently, have a

very different estimation of themselves, and have a very different ability to articulate and achieve their own interests. Such differences stand in the way of a real equality of respect for the sexes.

The emancipation of women is fundamentally impossible without a significant change in the situation of men. The road to equality and equality of respect is a process concerning society as a whole, a process which concerns both sexes, albeit in a different way and with different consequences. That includes, amongst other things, men having to give up their privileges.

The activity of 'Lila Offensive' will concentrate on the concerns of women.

Our goal is to challenge the inequality of the position of the sexes in society. In particular we want to single out and combat those mechanisms which are geared to reproducing and copperfastening the existing social inequality of woman and man.

We see the possibilities and necessities of our work as being on three levels.

a. We want to contribute to creating a consciousness of the problematic nature of the position and situation of women and men in the German Democratic Republic, and contribute to clarifying the existing consciousness of these.

b. We want to demand changes in social conditions which are directed towards the creation of real equality of women and men.

c. We want to contribute to improving the ability of women to recognise their situation, to articulate their own needs and wishes, and finally to realise the intentions and demands derived from these.

We regard ourselves as feminists. For us, feminism is the recognition

"Our goal is to challenge the inequality of the position of the sexes in society... We work to combat those mechanisms which are geared to copperfastening the existing social inequality of women and men."

and the representation of the interests of women, irrespective of how they live their lives and of their sexual relationships.

Feminism can be defined in two respects.

• Feminism is a way of viewing social relations which consciously perceives and analyses these from the point of view of what place, what role, and what importance women have in the various spheres of society. This point of view, which is alien to a male-dominated society, implies posing questions and raising ideas which are different from the usual ones and which, as a consequence, lead to new ideas and the formation of new scientific theories.

Feminism means posing the ques-



Demonstration against the 'colonisation' of East Germany

tion of the sexes as an important issue in our understanding of society.

• Feminism is at the same time the term for politics which consistently proceeds from the interests of women and attempts to realise these.

Feminism as we see it does not mean the complete marginalisation of men. If equality is to be really practiced, if it is to be really effective, then how men see themselves must develop in parallel to how women see themselves. We feminists, therefore, cannot be concerned with a women-centredness which treats men only as objects.

Our concern must be to make possible their understanding of, and support for, our views, so that the knowledge of the emancipation of one sex can be achieved only through the emancipation of the other sex can be put into practice so that the relations between the sexes become emancipated relations.

The struggle of women for real equality needs a double strategy of autonomy on the one hand and of co-operation/integration on the other.

The independent and autonomous organising and representation of women is indispensable

a. because, the liberation of women is a concern of women first and foremost themselves;

b. for the development of the consciousness and the self-confidence of women in structures which we want to free from patriarchal patterns and pressures;

c. for the motivation of women to consciously champion their own interests;

d. for the establishing of a consciousness of their situation as a sex which, in its majority, is disadvantaged.

Co-operation and critical joint work are necessary because:

a. the woman's question is a question concerned with society as a whole, and must therefore be the affair of all social forces;

b. the real equality of women is to be achieved only through and via the co-operation of women and men in all spheres of life in society.

Our Demands:

Real economic equality of woman and man, as well as free access for women and men to all professions. For this the following steps are necessary:

• a higher evaluation and better pay for 'typically female' professions;

• improving the motivation and access of women as regards scientific and technical professions;

• improving the motivation and access of men as regards professions in the social fields of economic activity (bringing up children, health, service sector);

• quotas for jobs involving management and decision-making;

• equal possibility of development for women and men in a profession with regard to their professional ability and knowledge;

• Labour legislation which is supportive of parents and children. For this the following steps are necessary;

• improving the possibility of combining both being a mother and also being a father with paid employment;

• extension of taxation concessions and additional financial payments for people bringing up children;

• equal opportunities for men and women with regard to part-time work;

• extension of the possibility of caring for relatives or partners in need of being looked after without financial disadvantages.

* Women and men to share equally the responsibility and labour involved in domestic work and bringing up children. For this the following steps are necessary:

• ending the one-sided orientation of socio-political measures towards mothers;

• the right and obligation of social paternity;

arrangements,

• democratisation of the process of social education;

• creation of alternative ways of looking after and bringing up children (children's centres, playhouses, youth centres).

* Power and decision-making: The interests of women must be taken into account in all spheres of social life. For this the following steps are necessary.

• introduction of a 50% quota for all candidates for all levels of popular representation (parliament, regional councils, district councils);

• implementation of quotas in the leadership of parties and organisations, corresponding to the proportion of women and men in them;

• accepting and promoting alternative representation of the interests of women (autonomous women's movement);

• formation of a women's fraction in the national parliament, in which representatives of the autonomous women's movement have an equal place;

• a women's ministry or a women's department in the government as a transitional measure.

* Reworking the penal code with the goal of making possible the consistent punishment of any form of violence against women.

* Establishment of equality of status for men with regard to the right of bringing up children in the event of divorces, as well as in terms of social paternity in general.

* The dismantling of sexual-stereotypical norms of behavior. For this the following steps are necessary:

• the creation of opportunities for women to meet and relate to one another, and which allow women to establish and articulate their own needs (women's cafes, women's clubs, women's libraries, women's communes, women's holiday homes).

* The development of public consciousness and discussion about the question of the sexes:

• opening up the media to this theme, and allowing new women's broadcasts, magazines etc.;

• publication of and free access to the results of feminist research;

• taking up the issue of the sexist content of media productions and dismantling this content;

• promoting language and use of language which does justice to women.

* The dismantling of education based on fixed gender role:

• a critical analysis of school timetables and schoolbooks with regard to them conveying stereotypical gender roles, and developing new means of teaching;

• a sex education which is free of taboos and which is not hostile to the human body;

• education to encourage shared responsibility for preventing pregnancies.

* Freedom of decision in relation to how people live their lives and the sexual relationships into which they enter. For this the following steps are necessary:

• abolition of all privileges linked to marriage;

• protection in civil law for all non-marital (eg lesbian) joint living