

Building an anti-war movement



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Honour October!



Centre Pages

For Socialist Renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!



Lesbian and gay liberation Page 11

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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home

**Stop the War in the Gulf!**  
**National Demonstration**  
**24 November**  
Assemble: noon, Embankment  
March to rally in Hyde Park

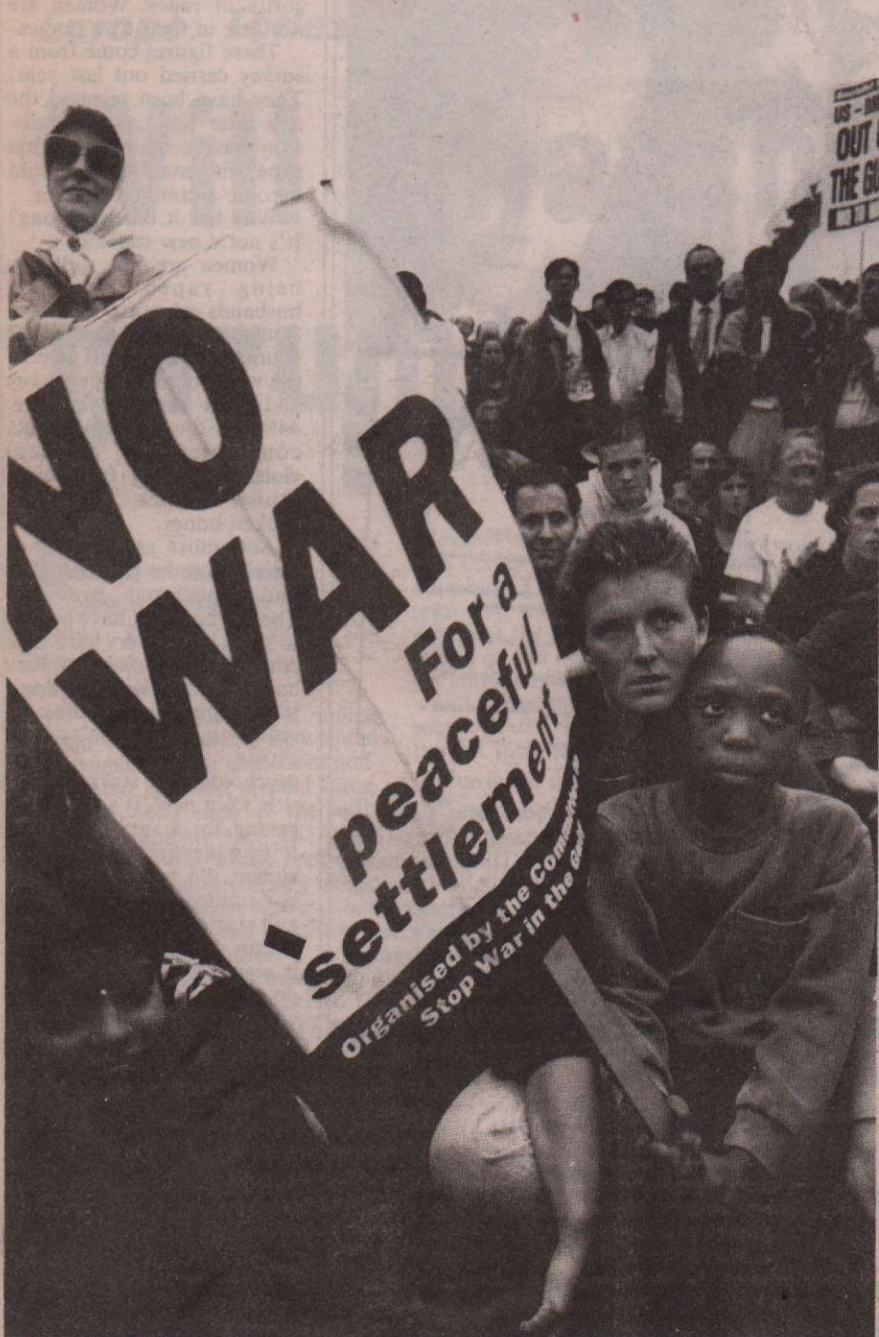


Photo: John Harris

# No to war!

Thatcher banged the war drums in the House of Commons this week. She did it as a means of rallying the Tories to help her see off the challenge from Michael Heseltine. The tabloids immediately started yapping at Heseltine, the *Sun* came close to calling him a traitor.

Thatcher's game was an obvious one. Some Tories were intimidated, but not many were fooled.

Yet people will be fooled, and fooled badly, if they let themselves be lulled into a false security by things like this.

Vast armies have not gone half way round the world to sit in their tents indefinitely. They have been sent to the Gulf either to fight a war or gain the peaceful surrender of Iraq. Almost certainly they will

attack Iraq.

The signs as we go to press are that they are ratcheting up their resolve to strike. President Bush's mid-term elections are now over. Pressure on Bush is growing. He must either gain results or be branded a fool who, like the 'Grand Old Duke of York' in the nursery rhyme, marched his troops to the top of the hill, then marched them down again.

The period of the phoney war with Iraq may be about to turn into a monstrously real war — a war for oil, and for control of the Gulf.

Don't be lulled by the phoney war. They are preparing a real war. It is probably nearer than you think. Build support for the anti-war demonstration in London on 24 November!

**Troops out the Gulf!**  
**Iraq out of Kuwait!**



*It's policy that counts, not Thatcher's style*

# The gap the left should fill

By Tony Benn MP

Very big divisions are opening up in the Tory party over relations with Europe and

the economy generally.

It shows the folly of talking about Thatcherism. If there is a change of leadership those who made Thatcherism the whole point of their arguments, like *Marxism Today* will find 10 years of propaganda going down the pan, because Hurd,

Howe, Heseltine or whoever will be able to say the Thatcher era is over.

It's time to analyse Tory policy and recognise that, fundamentally, it won't change. It's the policy that counts, not Thatcher's style of leadership.

Comments on Thatcher and Thatcherism may blow back in our face because Labour hasn't talked about policies, only style. As Thatcher is brought back into line — which she will be, because either she's going to be replaced or she's going to accept the line of the British

Establishment — the gap between the two parties will become so narrow that a huge vacuum of arguments, aspiration and representation of our interests is going to open up.

That gap is what the left should be filling.

Why the law has started to move on rape

By Jean Lane

One in every four women between 18 and 54 has been raped. That is twice the population of the Irish republic, or just over the entire population of Scotland.

One in seven of the rapes, or 14%, were carried out by husbands, as opposed to 6% by acquaintances, 6% by boyfriends, and 2% by strangers. Blown for ever is the myth of the dirty old man lurking in dark alleyways being the perpetrator of the majority of rapes. Women are not safe in their own homes.

These figures come from a survey carried out last year. They have been released the day after the Law Commission has recommended that rape in marriage should become a criminal offence.

Why has it taken so long? It's not a new statistic.

Women are not suddenly being raped by their husbands who are having a funny turn, all across the country. Four out of five of the wives raped in the survey had been raped frequently. 44% of the rapes were accompanied by physical violence ranging from cuts, bruises, black eyes and broken bones.

And most said that they were put under psychological and emotional pressure. Those who don't have bruises to show have a very hard time convincing anyone that they have been raped. Most don't bother, but live with the consequences of the man's action alone, and often psychologically scarred.

It's not new. It's been happening for a very long time. It's widespread and it's violent. So why now has the law suddenly opened its eyes and started to act?

Part of the reason must be, it seems to me, that women do not hide or internalise what is happening to them so much now. With the growth of Rape Crisis centres, the publicity of statistics such as those in this survey, and the battles to change the way the police and the courts handle rape victims, it has become easier for victims of rape to understand that it is something done to them by men, not something they have brought upon themselves.

Without such developments women are isolated, easy prey. They feel guilty and responsible for the rape. Most women in the survey said that they were made to feel abnormal for not wanting sex whenever their husbands did. Most married women and men believe sex whenever he wants it to be part of the marriage contract.

With such moral attitudes and with the position of women generally in a male dominated society, it is essential that support groups, Rape Crisis centres and campaigns to change the law continue to exist. It is through such pressure that the Law Society has changed its attitude this far.

## Mary Robinson retreats on the edge of victory

By Pat Murphy

If the Irish Presidential election had been held a week earlier Mary Robinson would have won easily.

Brian Lenihan, the original favourite and Fianna Fail candidate, was disgraced by his involvement in influencing the previous President in 1982, lying about it this month, and finally being sacked by his mentor Charles Haughey. Surely a series of events which would destroy his chances of the Presidency.

How could Lenihan be regarded as unfit for a government position and yet deserving a week later of the highest symbolic office, head of state? In fact, as polls closed, Lenihan was rapidly regaining lost ground and the election in the end was a close-run race between the Fianna Fail candidate and Mary Robinson of the left.

Lenihan harvested a large sympathy vote because he was seen as the scapegoat for a scandal which affected much wider sections of the Fianna Fail. In reality, he was sacked to save Charles Haughey's government.

Mary Robinson's campaign has, however, become

more apologetic and defensive. Her past record would make for a powerful campaign. She used the courts to force legal concessions on birth control, she gained the right for women to sit on juries, and ended the criminality of homosexuality. It was because of gains forced through by some of her legal campaigns that the Catholic fundamentalists pressured the government to hold an anti-abortion referendum in the early 1980s.

From the beginning, the managers of her campaign have decided to select bits of this record, but mainly to concentrate on Robinson's image. Changing the candidate's hairstyle and dress became more important than changing Irish society. A campaign leaflet on her legal career neatly ignored her role in the struggle for a Well Woman centre giving abortion information, and played down her role in the fight for contraceptive rights.

The problem with this approach was best seen when Robinson was interviewed by the Irish rock magazine *Hot Press*. Asked if she would agree to open a condom store in Dublin's megastore she gave an ambivalent answer. The result was a concerted attack by her opponents and the Irish press, warning of an



Mary Robinson

interfering and anti-Catholic President.

Speaking to an audience keen for reform of Ireland's rigid patriarchal morality, the young, she needed to promise a different approach. By sitting on the fence she inspired no-one and yet provoked the wrath of the right.

In fact, Mary Robinson's tremendous success could have given the left a huge platform for ideas rarely discussed in high politics in Ireland. It will hopefully establish the left as the major part of political life. Her victory would be a

**Clann Na bFinini**

**The Family Group**

**KNOW YOUR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE**

On the 7th September 1983 the vast majority of the Irish People rejected abortion being introduced into our country, as was divorce in 1986.

One of the present candidates Ms. Mary Robinson campaigned for the introduction of abortion and has down the years shown herself as anti-family with no respect whatsoever for our sacred Constitution and what it stands for.

Mary Robinson also wants to give to the homosexuals marital status, and for the homosexuals to be on par with the natural family.

Mary Robinson would abuse the position of the Presidency if elected, and bring the good office of the Presidency into disrepute.

Mary Robinson was also a member of that sinister organisation (international) called the TRILATERAL COMMISSION.

'Pro-Family' anti-Robinson propaganda

welcome boost though it seems to have ignored the good advice given by the Belfast magazine *Fortnight* during the campaign:

"What would be catastrophic would be to make apologetic noises in the direction of the government/ church consensus and to capitulate to short-term popularity. This is a chance for the left to show courage and lead, not to descend to populism, otherwise it might as well amalgamate with Fianna Fail and call it a day right now."

## Liverpool opposes axe

By Stan Crooke

One and a half thousand Liverpool City Council employees turned up to a lunchtime rally on 31 October in opposition to the threat of up to 1,200 jobs being axed by the council.

The majority of the rally was made up by members of the GMB, whose jobs are first in line for the chop.

The resolution unanimously adopted by the rally was moved by TGWU full-timer John Farrell and GMB convenor Ian Lowes. It declared "total opposition to compulsory redundancies" and pledged that "in the event of the Council declaring compulsory redundancies, we will call upon our members to take industrial action."

The council is in deep economic crisis. There is cur-

rently a shortfall of £30 million on poll tax collection being built up, and the council must also repay debts of £16 million this year, incurred in the mid-1980s when the then *Militant*-dominated council fought the Tories by borrowing large amounts of money from Swiss and Japanese banks.

The council is also suffering from a fall in income from land sales. Partly because of the slump in the property market. And partly because potential buyers are wary about purchasing land from the council lest they receive a dawn visit from the police to ask whether they have had any dealings with Derek Hatton.

The crunch will come in six weeks time at the next council meeting. The intervening period must be used to build a joint trade union-Labour Party campaign in opposition to all job losses, however they might be packaged.

## South Wales should back the overtime ban

I'm disappointed that the South Wales leadership recommended a 'no' vote against the overtime ban. It tells the Coal Board and the government the miners are not united and lays them open to further attacks.

I hope the South Wales miners reject their advice and support the national leadership. When miners have to work so much overtime and have to fight to get as much as they can out of the bonus system, how can they argue against an overtime ban to fight for a decent basic wage.

If they have criticisms of the national leadership they shouldn't express them in this backstabbing way which can only hit at the people they are meant to represent, and who put them where they are, the rank and file miners.

The question of safety has come up again. It seems to me that safety would suffer with

### WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

privatisation. NACODS have been making noises about safety but they are responsible for safety anyway. For years they've ignored safety questions, to focus on production. Their concern is less over safety than for their members' jobs.

It's not surprising that safety would be an issue with privatisation. We've had a decent record

in comparison to the rest of the world, which could be overturned. Private owners are unlikely to want to spend the time, trouble and money to sort out safety matters — look at the Channel Tunnel.

I'm disappointed with the Labour leaders' response to the crisis in the Tory Party. I couldn't help being a bit cynical and thinking that, as Kinnoch has gone along with anti-union laws, the Gulf build-up, supporting free enterprise and the market economy — perhaps he should be a candidate for the Tory leadership?

People shouldn't be fooled by criticisms of Thatcher from within the Tory Party. Whichever face they put on, underneath they're the same old class enemy — a Tory is a Tory is a Tory. People shouldn't be fooled into thinking that if Thatcher is replaced we'll have an easy run. Thatcher is still the best election plank that Labour's got. Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM





International workers' solidarity — the way forward

Europe: Tories seize the nationalist flag

# Will Thatcher gazump the left?

As Mrs Thatcher attempts to play the British nationalist card for the upcoming general election, the Tories are split on Europe — perhaps badly split.

By contrast, Labour is united around Neil Kinnock's new-found Europeanism. The anti-Common-Market left is almost a spent force. The long, long saga of the left's struggle against the EC now culminates in this comic opera absurdity: the most deservedly hated, and certainly the most vicious, Tory prime minister for half a century is stealing the left's clothes!

There have always been right-wing, or just plain maverick, Tories whose attitude to the EC has paralleled that of the left. In the '60s they were quite powerful, their attitude given wide currency by the Express group of newspapers. But this is different! This is Thatcher!

Now what is the left going to do? Sing along in the British nationalist choir, even under the baton of conductor Thatcher? Some of them will, unfortunately.

Others, however, will realise that a political posture which leads to an absurd *de facto* political and ideological alliance with Thatcher needs to be rethought. Radically.

The choice is clear and sharp. Either the left will continue burrowing itself into reactionary ir-

relevance and political invisibility, in a corner of the political ground on which Thatcher is pitching her tent; or it will now, very late in the day, face the truth, that it has been wrong on this question for 30 years. To continue as at present is to add wilful self-wounding of a suicidal scope to the immense difficulties the left faces anyway.

European unity was already the cause of the left at the beginning of this century.

The banner of the United States of Europe was raised during the great European capitalist bloodbath of World War One by socialists such as Leon Trotsky, who diagnosed the cause of the war in the outmodedness of the old European nation states. As long ago as 1923, the Communist International raised the slogan "For a Socialist United States of Europe".

The defeats of the working class, the destruction of the revolutionary workers' movement by Stalinism, and the consequent rise of ultra-chauvinist fascist movements to power in Italy and Germany, aborted the prospects of the revolutionary working class winning European unity and putting its own stamp on it. World War 2 was a consequence of that failure.

Like the First World War, it arose because the productive powers of capitalism had outgrown the nation state, and in the first place the German state. Hitler set out, as the Kaiser had set out a quarter century earlier, to unite Europe by way of German military conquest. Unlike the Kaiser, he succeeded between 1940 and 1944.

The reformists prefer to forget it now, but a number of prominent pre-World-War-2 European "socialists" went over to Hitler in 1940 and after, partly because they believed Hitler had solved the problem of European unity.

After the war, the European nations were liberated — and immediately the question of European

unity again presented itself. National antagonisms had been intensified and rubbed raw by the war; Germany had been levelled and divided. The bourgeoisie sought advance on a new basis.

They had a rough historical parallel and model in the process of uniting Germany in the 1850s and '60s by way of a customs union which prepared the way for the dramatic accession of the King of Prussia to the imperial throne of a united Germany after Prussia's victory over France in 1871.

Leaving the political sovereignties in place, they created a Common Market, first for coal and steel (1951), then for everything else (1958). From that has grown, under the existing nation-states, a capitalist economic unity which has by now irreparably undermined the separateness and sovereignty of those nation states. Though there is a long way to go yet, and there may be unforeseen shocks and tremors along that way, the movement towards a federal Europe now seems inexorable.

It is a capitalist Europe, that is, a Europe of wage slavery, of bourgeois law, of crying absurdities like food mountains in a world where millions are dying of hunger.

But most of those things were there in the old Europe — and, in addition, national antagonisms which led, twice in the 30 years before 1914 and 1945, to the destruction of much of Europe and to the deaths of tens and tens of millions of people.

We should want socialism? Yes, we work for socialism, but the alternative now to the ramshackle European unity the bourgeoisies have built is not socialism — not European socialism, nor socialism in the individual countries like Britain.

The left used to argue — before Mrs Thatcher's discovery that the EC is a socialist conspiracy against



Thatcher has stolen the left's slogans

the sort of Britain she wants — that the EC would stop them taking socialist measures if they had power in Britain. If that happened, then a left-wing government would repudiate the authority of the EC in the name not of little Britainism but of socialism — and it would appeal to the workers of Europe to support it by following the left-wing British example. But throughout the long "debate" on Europe that was never the immediate alternative to the EC. The alternative then and now was a capitalist Britain.

In any case, a socialist-ruled Britain would not survive long unless the workers of Western Europe, at least, quickly followed the British example; and a socialist Britain — in the sense of a stable socialist system of working-class rule — inconceivable except as a unit in a European socialist system.

The working class least of all has an interest in going back to the divided bourgeois Europe which the bourgeoisie itself has now abandoned.

Our interest lies in *cleansing* the EC of the historical paw-marks of the bourgeoisie. Thatcher is right when she points out that the EC is grossly undemocratic and bureaucratic; and so is the left when it says the same. But the socialist conclusion is *not* a reversion to the reliance on the old sovereign national parliaments — which do not now, and *cannot*, control the great Europe-wide economic machine of which the nation states are more or less subordinate parts. The socialist answer is to fight for a fully accountable sovereign democratic European parliament.

Westminster cannot fight the "faceless bureaucrats of Brussels", not unless Britain withdraws and declares a siege economy: only a

fully democratic Europe-wide political system could. That is what the left should fight for.

That is the way out of the present *cul de sac* the left finds itself in. In the language of the Trotskyist movement, the demand for an accountable European parliament is not counterposed to socialism: it is part of the "democratic programme" of socialists.

Nor is it necessarily counterposed to the fight for a system of workers' council democracy ("soviets" in the original meaning): in a great revolutionary working-class upsurge the workers might quickly go beyond the bourgeois parliaments, but that does not exclude fighting to expand bourgeois parliamentary democracy now.

In World War 1 Trotsky asked the question: what should socialists do if the German Empire unified Europe?

He answered that socialists should then try to transform that German militarist empire into a European republic. Probably he underestimated the force of the nationalisms that would have been pitted against the German European empire — but the approach was identical to that of Marxists from the beginning.

When the capitalists created hellish factories, the socialists did not say "back to the handicraft system" — not even when the workers we supported broke the machines in righteous rebellion. We said: seize and use the new system of production, cleansing it of exploitation.

Right now we can reasonably hope to take the working class with us, and unite with the European workers in a fight for a programme of democratising Europe, and in the first place democratising the EC. If the left continues to advocate rolling the film of modern European history backwards we can only hope for deepening isolation from the European working class and from all progressive thought and aspirations, or else to be a distant satellite of a demagogic, populist, Thatcher-led chauvinist movement.

Mrs Thatcher is certainly not intent on bringing Britain out of the EC.

She is driven by a mixture of electoral opportunism, unpurged gut chauvinism, and the uneasy awareness that Britain — the Britain she has shaped — is out of step and way behind the comparatively enlightened bourgeoisies of Europe on social welfare, civil liberties, trade union rights, environmental legislation, and many other things. She is aware of a "left wing" Europe, which is the opposite of the Europe the left has feared would

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"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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# The Sun's continental John Bulls

## GRAFFITI

Not only its primary-school-playground intellectual level, but also another feature of the Sun's continuing anti-French campaign, shows that British chauvinism is a faltering force.

On the front page of Wednesday's Sun (7 November) — second only in world import, according to the Sun editor's news judgements, to Princess Di saying she prefers Jonathon Ross to Terry Wogan — the paper crowed about its journalists having confronted Jacques Delors face-to-face in Brussels.

"How dare you try to scrap our pound?" they asked him. I suppose they have more pounds to worry about than the rest of us.

But who was the bluff, roast-beef-eating, beer-swilling, Union-Jack-waving Brit assigned by the Sun to confront the dastardly foreigner? Who was this John or Jane Bull?

According to the by-line in the Sun it was one Antonella Lazzeri. So feeble are the Anglo-Saxon patriots striving to overturn the Norman Conquest that they even have to conscript continentals to write their chauvinist drivel for them!

One small state might go down in history as the leader in a fight for a political revolution which takes power away from the multinational corporations and the wealthy and gives it back to the people where it belongs," said Bernie Sanders as he was elected to the US Congress from Vermont on Tuesday 6 November.

Sanders is the first avowed socialist to be elected to the US Congress for more than 60 years.

Despite a considerably bolder line in speech-making than Neil Kinnock, Sanders is, however, no revolutionary. Though elected as an independent, he will sit in Congress with the Democrats, and he supports the US military build-up in the Gulf.

Seventy three poll tax bills for Mickey Mouse, nine for Donald Duck, eight for Adolf Hitler, and three for God, have been delivered to addresses in Lambeth, South London.

Bills addressed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost

have been sent to the church of St John the Divine in Stockwell. Apparently the priest has no plans to appeal on the grounds that the three persons are, on the best theological authority available, really only one.

Cuba's leader Fidel Castro has 32 houses, two underground bunkers, three yachts, 9700 bodyguards, and a secret wife by whom he has five children.

Or so claims the Moscow daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. The Moscow press has started denouncing Castro, and echoing the accusations of right-wing Cuban exiles, since the USSR and Cuba fell out. Castro has already banned the distribution of some Moscow publications in Cuba.

Whatever the disarray of the various Communist Parties which used to be guided by Moscow, their "broad democratic alliance" is doing well in Scotland.

A deadpan announcement in the *Morning Star* (associated with the Communist Party of Britain) on 8 November recorded that Scottish TUC general secretary Campbell Christie, a long-time friend of the *Star*, has been made a director of the scandal-hit brewing firm Guinness.

The report does not mention how much Christie will be paid for joining the bosses.

All John Smith's lunches with City financiers have not persuaded the moneyed classes to back Labour. Maybe, however, Smith picked up some hints which will be useful in dealing with the Labour Party's chronic financial problems?

Not even that. The Labour Party's pension fund has just lost £90,000 by holding on to shares in Polly Peck.

A new report underlines Britain's shortfall in childcare provision.

According to the Family Policy Studies Centre and the European Childcare Network, 37 per cent of British women with children under five work outside the home. The figure is lower than in France (52%) or Italy (40%) but higher than Germany (36%).

Yet Britain has publicly-provided day care places for only two per cent of under-fives. France has publicly-provided childcare for 20 per cent of children under three.

# The sheep hits the fan

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Amid all the highly enjoyable furore surrounding the Geoffrey Howe resignation, one name has scarcely been mentioned: that of Bernard Ingham, Mrs Thatcher's press secretary.

Strictly speaking, Ingham is a civil servant who plays no part in party politics. His wages are paid by you and me, not Mrs Thatcher or the Tory party.

In practice, Ingham is the behind-the-scenes mouthpiece for Mrs Thatcher, making full use of the unattributable 'lobby system' to brief the press on his mistress's latest thinking. Doing down the Opposition and promoting Tory policy is a matter of course for Ingham, regardless of his formal position as a 'public servant'. But he comes into his own on those occasions that Mrs T finds herself at odds with the majority of her own Cabinet or when she wants to blackguard a 'colleague'; then, out comes Ingham to put down the poison.

Thus it was that when Mrs T and loyal Sir Geoffrey fell out over the burning question of the single European currency, the papers were suddenly full of reports predicting the imminent demise of Old Dead Sheep. The *Sun* and *Daily Mail* reported that 'Cabinet colleagues' were 'urging' Mrs T to sack Howe because of his excessively pro-European stance; the *Daily Express* suggested that he was planning to announce his retirement at the next election.

The *Sun* followed up on the anti-Howe sniping with an extraordinary campaign against Europe in general, France in particular. Under the headline "Up Yours, Delors!", the *Sun* launched into an orgy of anti-French racism, complete with the usual 'humorous' headlines like "We're No Jacques Asses" and "Hop Off, Frogs!". The campaign

culminated in "Deafen Delors Day", when patriotic *Sun* readers were urged to assemble at the stroke of noon, "turn towards France and bellow: 'Up Yours Delors!'."

By all accounts (except the *Sun's* own) the stunt was a total flop, with *Sun* hacks outnumbering the pathetic handful of half-cut stockbrokers and other jobbos who turned up in Trafalgar Square to "bawl at the Gaul". It seems that the *Sun's* legendary ability to chime in with the prevailing mood of the day may have finally deserted it, just as Mrs

Thatcher's populist touch is failing: no-one, it seems, is really very bothered about Jacques Delors and the supposed threat to democracy posed by the prospect of a single European currency.

In fact, if Mrs Thatcher and her *Sun* lackey continue with this xenophobic nonsense, it seems a good bet that she will be simply laughed out of office at the next election. And not even Bernard Ingham will be able to save her.

Christopher Huhne, Business and Economics

Editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, can be forgiven a little smugness just at the moment. On October 21 he wrote, "On one issue it is very hard to see how there can be compromise — whether the EC is committed by treaty to an eventual single currency. We know that 11 countries will say yes. The British government will be put on the spot next year, and its answer may split the Tory party."

This Sunday, Huhne commented: "I was wrong in one particular. For 'next year' read 'next week'."

Britain has been ruled by women plenty of times in the past. Because of their sex, queens like Boadicea, Victory and Elizabeth I have been remembered, where male kings, unless they were especially notable, have been forgotten. Margaret Thatcher will also be remembered.

Partly because she is the first directly elected woman British ruler, partly because, like queens Elizabeth I & II and Victoria, her reign has been remarkably long. Also, she is probably going to be the only woman Prime Minister of this generation. All the 'up and coming' politicians, both Tory and Labour, are men. Neil Kinnock is not about to make way for Claire Short, nor Douglas Hurd for Edwina Currie.

In some ways, Mrs Thatcher has been a 'success'. She will be remembered by history, not only as the first woman Prime Minister, but as a politician who turned back the tide of the welfare reforms, who weakened labour organisations, and presided over eleven and a half years of decay and demoralisation at a time of plenty.

Thatcher has destroyed the post-war political 'consensus' in favour of a welfare state, and openly fostered and deepened the divisions between rich and poor. Under Margaret Thatcher, the Tories have gone all out to serve their class and their own interests. From her own point of view Thatcher has done extremely well.

# 'Our' first woman prime minister

## WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

It cannot have been an easy 11 years. She is undoubtedly one of the most hated figures in Europe — but I think this is the result of her ideas rather than her sex. Mrs Thatcher has learned to blend in well with the men at the photocall — standing out with her bright frocks and brassy hair, but mouthing the same lies, in the same 'sincere' tones. Whatever their expectations of her 11 years ago, the Eurocrats do not expect Mrs T to talk babies, or produce knitting patterns at the negotiating table.

Much has been made of the sexist abuse Mrs Thatcher receives in the House of Commons and the British press. She is called 'strident' where a male PM might be called 'bold and outspoken' or 'frank'. But, frankly, Mrs Thatcher wouldn't be 'a gentleman' if she were a man. In the children's playground known as the 'mother of

parliaments', people have seized on the fact that she has the grasping nature of the small shopkeeper, and it is that which calls for the abuse, and makes her 'not one of the boys'.

For myself, I hope that Thatcher survives the forthcoming challenges from within her party. I hope she does lead the Tories into the next general election — because if she does, she will surely lead them to defeat. Another Tory leader might, indeed, do better.

Thatcher's true colours are becoming more and more obvious with each day that passes. She has surrounded herself with so many incompetent 'yes men' that even her own supporters are repelled. Her cabinet all jump to her call, and her calls — to reduce interest rates, lie about the poll tax, send troops to the Middle East — are becoming more obvious as desperate manoeuvres to stay in power.

Britain's first woman Prime Minister says she wants another 10 years. She will be lucky if she gets another 12 months. With luck, those 12 months will not include a war in Iraq and the deaths of thousands of young women and women. I hope she is kicked out in disgrace before that happens. I also hope that history meticulously records her final decline — the revealing of what we have always known — Margaret Thatcher as a half-mad, power-crazed, petty nationalist. She's no sister!

# The biter bit

## EYE ON THE LEFT

By Richard Bayley, York NALGO Health

Last weekend's NALGO Broad Left conference in Leeds was attended by some 260 people — an immense increase on the usually moribund AGMs of the past few years.

The apparent surge of interest in the Broad Left, however, is accounted for solely by the SWP

bringing 190 members and close friends to the conference, with the intention of packing it, and so taking the BL out of the hands of the *Militant*! The number of non-aligned delegates was still depressingly small — less than a dozen.

It was definitely a case of 'the biter bit', as the SWP arrived in the morning with a pre-printed 'alternative' agenda, immediately took the chair and proceeded to vote through their major policy documents first thing, pausing only to replace the (all-*Militant*) Broad Left national officers with SWP new ones.

What does this coup auger for the Broad Left? Just because the BL has been viewed as ineffectual and an irrelevance by

most left activists in NALGO, doesn't mean that things couldn't get worse. Rhetorically, at least, the SWP seem interested in building the Broad Left.

This should be a positive step, on condition that they don't lose interest in it by Christmas (the SWP's concentration span seems to be shortening rapidly at the moment).

The more serious problems are rooted in the SWP's politics. The first is a basic syndicalism when it comes to trade union work. Whilst happy to build the Broad Left on a workplace level, they appeared on Saturday to be completely disinterested in intervening in the official structures of the union. This extended as far as not presenting any policy for the NALGO BL to

campaign around concerning the NALGO/NUPE/COHSE merger talks.

The second problem is the SWP's blatant posturing. The Broad Left now has a policy of calling on NALGO's leadership to instruct members to cease all work on the poll tax, moved by the SWP. Quite how they intend to do any such thing or (b) explain to members how to make this stick at branch level, is left unexplained.

Rather than aid building a poll tax non-collection movement in NALGO, by starting from the existing weaknesses in the union and mapping out how to overcome them, the SWP's rhetoric offers easy targets for the right wing.



The Sun finds a new "enemy of the people"



# Why Dessie Ellis is on hunger strike

## Irish Republican activist fights extradition

Dessie Ellis of Finglas, Dublin, has now been on hunger strike since 9 October to stop himself being extradited to Britain on explosives charges. Yet Ellis has spent the last eight years in jail! He was due for release from Portlaoise Prison on Friday 28 April, following his completion of an eight year sentence imposed for explosives offenses by the Special Criminal Court in 1983. This account of the Dessie Ellis case comes from the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee in Dublin.

On Thursday 27 April, 24 hours before he was due to be released, Dessie Ellis was taken to the Bridewell Garda Station by order of the Fian-na Fail Minister for Justice, Gerry Collins.

There he was rearrested by gardai

on two extradition warrants issued by a London magistrates' court and alleging he:

(1) Had control of explosive substances within Britain during the period from 1 January 1981 to 27 October 1983, and

(2) He conspired with others to cause explosions in Britain during the same 34-month period.

In fact it is physically impossible for Dessie Ellis to have had control of explosives in Britain, or to have conspired to cause explosions in Britain, because he was in custody, or otherwise under garda surveillance throughout the entire period covered by the extradition warrants. The only explosions that occurred in Britain during the period in question were in the autumn of 1981 and the summer of 1982. At both these times — and in between — Dessie Ellis was in prison or reporting to the gardai as required by his bail bond.

Dessie Ellis comes from a Republican background. Both his grandfathers took part in the 1916

Easter Rising. Following in this tradition, he was involved in Republican activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

On 13 May 1981 Dessie Ellis was arrested and charged on two counts of possession of explosive substances. The substances in question were not explosives, but electronics units which the prosecution alleged were used in IRA timing devices. The non-jury Special Criminal Court accepted the prosecution case.

It became clear in the course of this trial that Mr Ellis had been under constant garda surveillance prior to the raids. He could not have been in England.

Some months later Dessie Ellis was granted bail by the court. In early February 1982, shortly before his trial was due to commence, he jumped bail. On 6 February he was arrested while attempting to cross illegally into the United States from Canada. He was in possession of false documentation, including a false passport. He was held in

custody pending deportation proceedings.

Because he faced charges in Dublin, Dessie Ellis vigorously fought deportation and lodged an application for political asylum. Lengthy legal proceedings ensued. His battle against deportation was to last over a year. He was in custody throughout that period. He was eventually deported and rearrested on arrival in Dublin Airport on 3 March 1983. Convicted at the Special Criminal court, he was sentenced to eight years imprisonment. He has been in Portlaoise Prison ever since.

If Dessie Ellis is extradited he will be expected to explain his Republican beliefs and history to a British jury whipped into a state of hysteria by the British gutter press. In such circumstances, his conviction and a maximum sentence would be virtually inevitable.

A further aspect of injustice is that he has finished an eight year sentence in Ireland and the attempts of Britain to have him extradited



Dessie Ellis

would amount to a double punishment for something which, in relation to the charges pending in Britain, he could not physically have done.



# The troops are there for the oil

Bernie Grant MP opened the 3 November conference

I think that we are moving towards war. We have a very weak President of the United States. He is not only weak but he is keen to show that he is not weak.

Mrs Thatcher also needs a war. She is in trouble, too. Howe has resigned and the Tory Party has been split down the middle on Europe.

Besides, Thatcher loves war. Thatcher loves death. She thrives on these sorts of situations.

Sections of the Labour Party have a position of not doing anything without United Nations sanction. People are trying to hide behind that position in the hope that the UN Security Council will not declare war, and then they can say that "we were always in favour of peace anyway". But that is dangerous.

We know why the troops are in the Gulf. They are there to protect the oil. They need the oil from Kuwait and the Gulf region.

Let's be clear: no-one is supporting Saddam. People like Jeremy Corbyn protested about the Iraqi regime when no-one wanted to know. We know that Saddam has gassed the Kurdish people.

We should have some very clear policies on the Gulf. We want all of the foreign troops out of the Gulf. There can be no messing around on this issue. The troops must go in order for the region to begin to sort itself out.

200 attended the Campaign Against War in the Gulf conference on 3 November. Speakers (above, from left) included Narendra Makanji, Basim Al Jamal (PLO), Iqbal Sram, Ruth Cockcroft, Bernie Grant MP, and Israeli socialist Adam Keller

## Israeli left fights threats

By Adam Keller

As an Israeli citizen and peace activist, I am very glad to be on the same platform as a representative of the PLO.

I am breaking Israeli law, with a crime which can result in three

years' imprisonment. Already one man has served six months in jail for breaking this law, and others are on trial.

I am going to let the Israeli media and other people know about my action. I am not afraid of the possible result.

We call for a negotiated solution of the Gulf crisis; withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; and withdrawal of American and other forces from Saudi Arabia.

In Israel, we have all the difficulties which you have in Britain and the added difficulty that Saddam Hussein is making direct and immediate threats to Israel. Several times he has threatened to use chemical weapons against the Israeli civilian population. He has already proved he is capable of using such weapons.

It is enormously difficult to talk about Gulf peace to people who feel frightened for their lives. But without peace there are terrible dangers.

There is the danger of what the Israeli right call 'transfer' — that is, massive deportations of the Palestinian population. There is one fascist party which openly advocates 'transfer'. That party is not in the government, but the government depends on their votes in parliament.

The other danger is of an Israeli invasion of Jordan. The Israeli government has already declared officially that if Iraqi forces go into Jordan they will regard themselves as having the right to send the Israeli army into Jordan.

## The US wants bases

By Narendra Makanji, Chair of Black Sections

The US response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was almost immediate action on its real concerns: oil supplies and regional influence.

Since the fall of the Shah of Iran the US has sought a permanent regional base in the Middle East. It has seized the opportunity to position troops and mobilise client states, in the context of a European re-organisation amidst economic crisis and Eastern European collapse, to exploit resources and people throughout the world.

## Protests grow in the US

By Sara Flouder, New York office of Coalition to Stop US Intervention in the Middle East

On 25 October there were 25 demonstrations against the US's Gulf War plans. 25,000 marched in New York; 8,000 on the West Coast.

There is a great response from black organisations, local labour unions are getting involved, there have been big meetings on college

campuses.

We have launched a petition drive for a million signatures against war which we will try to hand to Bush.

We've planned Veterans Day and Thanksgiving Day protests when Bush visits the troops, and a massive rally in Madison Square Gardens in February.

There is no real opposition from the Democrats. Jesse Jackson has remained quiet. Their statements are confined to demands that Congress discuss the issue if war is declared. This is not a real opposition and will not stop a war.

## Will Thatcher gazump the left?

From page 3

face a socialist Britain! But her present posturing has put the left up against the gun.

Socialist Organiser has never supported the left's common wisdom on the EC. We believe that the left has been no left on Europe, no advocate of working-class politics in even the smallest or most indirect sense, but a purveyor of muddled right-wing politics. We have advocated the following programme for the labour movement:

- International workers' unity as our answer to international capitalist integration;
- Levelling-up of working-class rights, conditions, and welfare benefits across Europe;
- Fight for a democratic federal Europe, East and West, and in the first place for democratisation of the EC;
- For a Socialist United States of Europe, East and West.

The left can prove to be the main victim of Mrs Thatcher's nationalist demagoguery. We can find ourselves in a far worse state than we are now. The left can suffer the same sort of catastrophe we suffered once before on this question: in the referendum on the EC in 1975.

Then, the left in the Labour Party was very powerful; so, still, was the rank and file militant movement in industry. The left chose to fight on the issue of British withdrawal from the EC. Harold Wilson outmanoeuvred the left by calling a referendum which the pro-Marketisers won massively.

The left was greatly weakened. Tony Benn was demoted in Wilson's cabinet, and the Labour Government's first wage controls followed soon after.

The consequences will be worse now if we let the logic of wrong policies trap us as camp followers of Mrs Thatcher.

In face of Thatcher's nationalism the left should not respond, as Tony Benn did in Parliament, by questioning the depth and sincerity of her anti-Europeanism. We should raise the demand for a directly-elected, democratic European parliament. We should explain to the working class in Britain that their interests are best served by fighting together with the other workers of Europe for the Socialist United States of Europe.



By Trudy Saunders and Mark Serwotka

As Thatcher's dream of a privatised and cost-efficient civil service — with all this implies for civil servants — heads towards realisation, the civil service unions face their toughest and most decisive challenge.

The next two years are crucial, not only to the jobs, wages and conditions of civil servants, but to the very strength and survival of unions within the civil service.

As government departments are privatised and turned into Agencies and thousands of civil service posts relocated alongside job cuts, flexible working practices and flexible pay deals the very structures on which the civil service unions have been built are threatened.

Thatcher's plans and their consequences are not secret to the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), the union of low-paid typing, clerical and secretarial grades. Yet over the years, various union leaderships have allowed the Tories to strike blow after blow against its members.

The current right-wing National Executive, who have been in power since 1988, have deliberately chosen not to lead a fightback against Thatcher's grand plan for the civil service.

Yet the CPSA has the largest Broad Left in the country, able to drum up thousands of votes at election time. So how, in a youthful and historically militant union, has such a Broad Left allowed the CPSA to reach a state of affairs where the leadership are refusing to fight and the rank and file seem unable to?

The answer lies in the grouping who dominate the Broad Left — the *Militant*. A look at their role in the CPSA over the last ten years reveals exactly why the union is in the sorry state it is today.

In the late 1970s/early '80s the Campaign for Union Democracy (CUD) was set up with the aim of replacing the block vote system of elections with individual ballots, held and cast at workplace meetings. The campaign was set up by Socialist Caucus (the hard left in the Broad Left, including *Socialist Organiser*), and supported by a cross section of the union.

The arguments for the new system were overwhelming — politics and policies would be argued in every workplace throughout the union as CPSA members were given, for the first time, the democratic right to elect their own leadership.

*Militant* opposed CUD's aims, believing that electoral success for themselves would be more difficult to achieve. And they campaigned hard against getting rid of the block vote. Why? Because the *Militant* would rather lead the CPSA on an undemocratic basis than be forced to argue politics in every workplace and thus begin to build up a genuine rank and file movement able to win on a democratic basis.

CUD was successful, despite *Militant's* pitiful attempts, and individual workplace balloting was introduced. Yet when the right wing won the first elections under the new system, the *Militant* argued for the return of the block vote!

Meanwhile, the rest of the left began the job of building a left base in the union and extending CUD's victory by fighting for and winning the right of members to elect the



Militant supporter John McCreadie goes to the bosses' courts for help against the right wing. Photo: Andrew Wiard

## Militant and the CPSA — ten wasted years

CPSA's senior full-time officers.

Today, *Militant* consistently oppose Socialist Caucus's call for the yearly election of all full-time officers. *Militant* argue for five-yearly elections. Why? Because they are not interested in genuine union democracy and, on a more sinister level, fear their own candidates would not get re-elected in yearly elections.

For *Militant*, the prime aim is for *Militant* supporters to lead a passive membership for as long as possible. Thus they are obsessed with electoralism rather than democracy, winning strikes or building an active and genuinely broad rank and file movement.

"Our executive is supposed to be so left wing. We've even got a President who supports the dreaded *Militant* tendency.

"But they're all piss and wind as far as I can see. They never wanted this strike, and they've given us no real support up to now."

That was the comment of a CPSA picket in Birmingham to *Socialist Organiser* (2 December 1982) during their three-month strike over jobs in October-December 1982.

The CPSA executive for 1982-3 had a Broad Left majority. But that Broad Left executive tried three times to end the strike with a compromise — twice failing, eventually succeeding. They did nothing to help spread the struggle. Kevin Roddy, a *Militant* supporter and then President of the union, made one of the attempts to end the strike in person.

The basic argument of *Militant* and their co-thinkers was that this was the wrong time and wrong issue for a fight. Better keep the union's powder dry for the 'big one' — the 1983 pay fight.

In this way they subordinated the class struggle to pre-ordained schemas worked out by a pre-ordained leadership. Instead of seeing the job of socialists as starting from and helping to develop the real struggles of the rank and file, they demanded that the rank and file fit into the schedules of the socialists.

80 DHSS workers in Oxford, nearly 1000 in Birmingham, struck to demand increased staffing. The background was increased pressure on the workers from two directions: both from the lengthening dole queues (meaning more work), and from the Tory government's determination to cut civil service

### How not to lead the left

numbers.

On October 27 Kevin Roddy proposed in Oxford a deal which gave Oxford and Birmingham (between them) 52 extra posts temporarily — in return for CPSA nationally ending its overtime ban and ban on casuals, and promising no strikes on cuts or staffing. The deal was rejected unanimously in Oxford and 427-26 in Birmingham.

On November 19 the CPSA NEC again recommended the same deal — only slightly changed. Rejection was unanimous again in Oxford, 520-23 in Birmingham. The CPSA NEC began to do something, calling a one-day national strike on December 3.

But at the CPSA Broad Left conference on November 27, a motion to condemn the NEC for recommending acceptance was defeated. The motion, moved by *Socialist Organiser* supporter Penny Barnett and backed by the Oxford strikers, also called for extending the struggle to an all-out national strike.

On December 9 a national meeting of CPSA DHSS delegates voted for a proposal from Oxford to recommend an all-out national strike from January 17. A CPSA special conference was planned for January 12. The strength of the struggle was making itself felt despite the Broad Left.

But then the government retreated slightly — and the NEC used the Christmas break to sink the struggle.

Just before Christmas the NEC voted unanimously to accept a new offer, increasing the temporary extra posts to 100 and withdrawing the demand that the CPSA end the overtime ban and promised no strike action. The NEC cancelled the strike call and the special conference and ordered the strikers back to work.

Evidence was that top TUC and Labour Party leaders were central in engineering this deal. The CPSA Broad Left leaders went along quietly.

*Militant* went on to throw away opportunity after opportunity to fight the Tories. A disastrously half-hearted strategy and a failure to recognise the ability to organise an all-out strike in the DHSS ended in defeat

for the Newcastle shift-workers in 1984, when *Militant* once again controlled the Executive.

The magnificent nine-month struggle of the shift-workers was wasted, as was the tremendous opportunity to link with other struggles — all because *Militant* refused to escalate the strike.

In 1986/87, a *Militant*-led DHSS Section Executive Committee committed perhaps their biggest blunder — a blunder which was to be a turning point for the fightback in the DHSS and which opened the way for the right wing to seize control not just of the DHSS, but of the whole union.

In 1986, a *Militant* motion to DHSS conference called for a fight against the Fowler Social Security Reviews — designed to reduce benefits and cut jobs in the DHSS. A strike against the Fowler Reviews was deemed 'political' and therefore illegal under the anti-union laws.

By 1987 the *Militant*-led DHSS Executive had ditched their own campaign because they refused to fight the Tories' anti-union laws. Despite the strong groundswell amongst DHSS workers to fight, the cowardice and political bankruptcy of the *Militant* meant that fight never took place.

Thus the Tories were able to implement the Fowler Reviews and all they implied for the job security and working conditions of DHSS workers.

In 1987 the *Militant* DHSS Executive went on to sell out DHSS workers who took strike action against Limited Period Appointments (LPAs) — ie. long-term casuals — brought in by management to implement the Fowler Reviews.

Having encouraged over 70 offices to take some sort of strike action and promised them a national strike ballot, *Militant* then lined up with the right wing to call off such a ballot. Members had made sacrifices for nothing and were left feeling demoralised and disillusioned.

For *Militant*, the big issue of 1987 was not the Fowler Reviews or the fight against LPAs, but their election onto the National Executive Committee. When *Militant* won a majority they spent the next year fighting boardroom battles with the right wing instead of leading struggles on the ground.

YTS was a big issue, yet the *Militant* leadership wasted the opportunity of leading a battle. 1987 conference mandated the NEC to ballot

on Labour Party reaffiliation. Yet when the Treasury threatened to stop the direct debit of union subs from wages if such a ballot went ahead, the *Militant* NEC backed down and failed to fight the threat or look for ways around it.

But the biggest crime of the 1987/88 *Militant* NEC was to ignore the fight taking place in the DE for more staffing. This important battle — the Camden dispute — did not merit one national circular from the *Militant* NEC. Yet time and money was spent on glossy leaflets to get this same useless NEC re-elected.

But by 1988 activists had become totally disillusioned by a so-called 'left' leadership who spouted fighting rhetoric while in opposition but failed to deliver the goods when in power. *Militant* and the Broad Left were smashed in the 1988 NEC and DHSS SEC elections, and have not controlled these two main bodies of the union since.

Since 1988 the biggest threat facing civil servants has been Agencyisation — a prelude to privatisation. When it was clear the right-wing NEC — by now firmly in power — would not lead any sort of fight, Socialist Caucus supporters launched the Branches Against Agencies (BAA) initiative.

BAA aims to unite all members who wish to fight Agencies through a branch-based campaign. The whole idea of BAA is to cut across the political divisions of the highly factional CPSA and bring together members of all political factions and non-aligned members. BAA infuriated the *Militant*.

They condemned it, set up their own campaign, attempted to take over BAA, and essentially did everything except build it. With over 70 branches supporting BAA and a successful launch conference, BAA is the best hope we have of fighting Agencies.

Yet for the *Militant*, anything that is not the Broad Left, ie. not controlled by them, is to be opposed. *Militant* are not interested in organising the rank and file because they fear they would not control such a movement.

*Militant's* behaviour over BAA clearly showed they would rather sabotage a fight for members' jobs, wages and conditions than support any campaign they do not control.

*Militant* have been a block to the development of a broad, fighting rank and file in the CPSA.

Their obsession with securing leadership positions for themselves at all costs has led the *Militant* to sell out workers in struggle, refuse to lead fights that do not fit into *Militant's* 'scheme', and behave undemocratically within the Broad Left.

They have argued for undemocratic policies within the union, they have even gone so far as to use the bosses' courts to attempt to secure union positions (as when John McCreadie took the CPSA to court over the General Secretary election in 1986), rather than campaign and fight for justice amongst ordinary union members.

*Militant's* role in the CPSA is a sorry one. As such, CPSA members have little faith in the Broad Left whose active membership remains the domain of many left groups. When faced with the might of the Tories and an undemocratic, toadying right-wing leadership, the fact that the CPSA does not have a mass, fighting rank and file is a disaster. Yet even now, faced with our most crucial battle, *Militant* still would rather sit back and hope to get elected than fight.



# The stark choices facing the Israeli left



Victim of the Temple Mount shooting

## An open letter to a left Zionist friend

The Gulf crisis has sharpened political lines in Israel already drawn deep by the three years of the *intifada*. The real threat to the Israeli people from Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons has rallied people to the Israeli right. A number of people who used to criticise Israeli policy from the left have swung back into the consensus, sharply distancing themselves from the Palestinian Arabs on the grounds of the Palestinians' support or semi-support for Saddam Hussein. The internationalist left, however, continues to argue that peace and security for the Israeli people can be won only through *consistent democracy*, recognising the national rights of the Palestinians. This letter by Michel Warshawsky poses the stark choice: murderous nationalism (with or without criticisms and reservations), or internationalism and consistent democracy for all nations. It is translated from the French socialist weekly *Rouge*.

By Michel Warshawsky, an Israeli Trotskyist in jail for alleged aid to Palestinian 'terrorists'

You have received lots of letters recently. The representatives of the Right are greeting you as the prodigal returned; the newspapers talk about you and your sudden re-entry into the consensus.

And, inside your camp — that of the Zionist left — you and your friends have been arguing and exchanging mutual accusations for a month and a half now. I would like to express my opinion on some of the issues that bother you and your friends.

You are still in anguish, seeking understanding and even compassion. But you will get no understanding or compassion from me.

You are torn between your aspiration to peace and your desire to be part of the Jewish national consensus; between your loyalty to old school mates and army comrades from the elite military unit to which you belonged, and your commitment to new friends in East Jerusalem; between your admiration for the United States and the image which you have tried to create in progressive circles in Europe; between your impartial statements and your rational conclusions, and your loyalty to the tribe and the excitement stirred up in you by the preparations for war and the call to the flag.

The Gulf crisis has been a heaven-sent opportunity for the political-military apparatus and for the right in Israel. In the first place, the crisis has diverted attention from the *intifada*, postponed international pressures, and, more importantly, put the question of war back on the agenda — fulfilling the secret, and sometimes avowed,

desires of the big majority of the Israeli ruling class.

But also, for you and for many of your friends, the possibility of war has brought a new pleasure which you are not ready to admit, even to yourself. The fact is that you like wars — "inevitable wars", of course. You like uniform, you like the appeals and the preparations, you share the enthusiasm which runs through Israeli society when the smell of gunpowder tickles the nostrils. And, above all, you like the feeling of national fraternity which characterises the run-up to war.

Your distance from the national consensus was imposed on you. You have emphasised that fact many times, and it is true. It was not you who were changing, but rather the political apparatus which had begun to support options, or more precisely phraseology, which no longer reflected everybody's feelings. You have been forced to say: "This ideology is not my ideology, your methods are not my methods."

Are you hesitant? Are you torn? In fact, you had already taken your decision before the Gulf crisis. You wanted something to happen so that you could rediscover the warm embrace of the consensus and feel anguished about it. Once again — "shoot and weep".

The truth is that you have shown this anguish, this "shooting and weeping", this position of criticising but not deviating too far from the sacred consensus, since the start of the *intifada*. Even when you protest against government policy — and I do not doubt the honesty of your protests — you feel obliged to set limits from the start.

And you define that limit, that frontier between what is allowed and what is forbidden, between agreement and opposition, above all to show, or to try to show, that you are not outside the consensus, and you do not belong to the left which is outside the national camp; you are not among those who con-

sciously and whole-heartedly place themselves outside the national consensus.

In the Gulf crisis you have been at pains for your true position not only to be stated but also to be visible. You have aligned yourself with the Israeli warmongers. You have joined the crazy racist chorus denouncing the "Iraqi Hitler". You have not found the courage for a single word of criticism of the hypocrisy of the American government, which invaded a sovereign state in Central America just a year ago, or the cynicism of the leaders of the state of Israel.

To leave no shadow of doubt about your return to the bosom of the national consensus, you have officially broken links with your Palestinian friends who, as was to be expected, did not see things in the same way as you. That official separation, and the arrogant statements that accompanied it, were in your eyes more important than the problem of lining up with the positions of Sharon and Geula Cohen [ie. the Israeli hard right].

The statement of divorce was meant to cleanse you from any suspicion of lacking patriotism or of cooperating with the enemy. All that and much more.

I know that you are a polite person and if you have used insulting expressions to Feisal al-Husseini and Sari Nusseibeh [Palestinian leaders], whom you were visiting only yesterday, there must have been a reason for your rude behaviour: you wanted not only to join the national chorus, but also to sing all its songs, the bar songs, the crude songs, the racist songs. You are nostalgic for the slogans of 1956 and 1967; you're dying to chant "We'll get you" and "Saddam is waiting for Arens" [Moshe Arens, the Israeli defence minister].

Sometimes I think that you leave the consensus only so that you can have the joy of throwing yourself back into its arms...

The arrogance of Yaron London,

Yossip Sarid or Eleazar Granot [left Zionist leaders] consists in this, that they demand from Sari Nusseibeh, Feisal al-Husseini or Hanan Ashrawi what they do not demand of themselves: to cut themselves off from their national unity and their national aspirations. They respond as Zionists, or at least as people who are loyal to the interests of faithful and "sober" Zionists, who are loyal first to their Jewish brothers and only second to the moral and humanist values which they claim to defend. "Love me more than you love your brothers", say the representatives of the Zionist left to the leaders of the Palestinian community, "but, as for me, I love my brother above all else."

That is where our paths diverge, my friend of the Zionist left. My first loyalty is not to whomever was born of a Jewish mother or a kosher convert; nor to a flag, a national anthem or a tribe. My first loyalty is to the universal values in which I believe, and the realisation of which is the only way to peace and security for my people. I feel no kinship with a right-wing Israeli, and for sure I am much closer to a Palestinian fighting for their national rights than to an Israeli who thinks that their fundamental loyalty is to the tribe.

Not only do I find it not a problem, if necessary, to be outside the national consensus, but I even feel that my place is there, and I want my place to remain there. Being outside the national consensus is not the result of having no choice. It is my choice.

For many years we, the anti-Zionist militants, have been on our own, outside the consensus. You and your friends have always been in the front line of those who called us traitors and placed themselves on the other side of the gate. The attacks against us, in the '60s and '70s, served the same function as your current attacks on Feisal al-Husseini and Sari Nusseibeh: an alibi to demonstrate your patriotism and your adhesion to the national consensus.

But I have news for you, my friend of the Zionist left: we are no longer alone. In your camp, in the Zionist left, in the Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz movement, there are already thousands of men and women who are disgusted by the consensus, who are not afraid to support those who refuse to serve in the army, who are tired of Shamir's and Sharon's wars, who hate Rabin and are beginning to sympathise with the Palestinian children fighting for their freedom.

You are beginning to be in a minority in your own camp, as the recent decisions of the youth movements of Ratz and Hashomer Hatzair show. Many of your friends are beginning to understand that there is no more room for "shooting and weeping" and for being a loyal opposition in the framework of the consensus. There is a choice between life and death, between peace and war — and it is also the choice between Feisal al-Husseini or Geula Cohen.

That does not mean that they accept what Feisal al-Husseini, or Yasser Arafat, says, as the law of Moses from Sinai. On the contrary, they remain critical — but in the framework of identification with the Palestinian struggle for national liberation, which is also the struggle for Israeli-Palestinian peace.



# 1917: When workers

In November 1917 Rosa Luxemburg, the leader of the anti-war socialist internationalists in Germany, received in her prison cell the news of the Russian Revolution. She wrote to her friend Luise Kautsky:

Are you happy about the Russians? Of course, they will not be able to maintain themselves in this witches' Sabbath, not because statistics show economic development in Russia to be too backward as your clever husband [Karl Kautsky] has figured out, but because social democracy in the highly developed West consists of wretched cowards who will look quietly on and let the Russians bleed to death. But such an end is better than 'living on for the fatherland'; it is an act of historical significance whose traces will not have disappeared even after many ages have passed.

Later, still in prison, she wrote a critical, but sympathetic pamphlet on the Russian Revolution. After coming out of prison in November 1918 she changed her mind on some of the criticisms she had made of the Bolsheviks, and did not publish the pamphlet. Nor, in the midst of the revolutionary struggles of Germany, did she have time to revise it before she was killed in January 1919, on the orders of the reformist 'socialist' government. But the conclusion of her pamphlet summed up — and all the more eloquently because of her criticisms — the historic significance of the Russian Revolution:

The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities. They are not supposed to perform miracles. For a model and faultless proletarian revolution in an isolated land, exhausted by world war, strangled by imperialism, betrayed by the international proletariat, would be a miracle...

It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the only ones up to now who



Luxemburg

Across the Soviet Union Lenin and the Bolsheviks are being turned into scapegoats for the crimes of Stalin and his successors. The reality is that the Stalinist system, which is now tottering on the verge of complete collapse, was built on the grave of the first genuine workers' revolution in human history. Martin Thomas explains why we honour October.

can cry with Hutten: 'I have dared'.

This is the essential and enduring thing in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realisation of socialism, and of having advanced mightily the settlement of the score between capital and labour in the entire world. In Russia the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to 'bolshevism'.

All over the world, revolutionary militants rallied to 'bolshevism'. In the USA, for the left wing of the Socialist Party:



Cannon

The Bolshevik revolution in Russia changed everything almost overnight. Here was demonstrated in action the conquest of power by the proletariat. As in every other country, the tremendous impact of this proletarian revolutionary victory shook our movement in America to its very foundation. The inspiration alone of the deed enormously strengthened the revolutionary wing of the party, gave the workers new hope and aroused new interest in those theoretical problems of revolution which had not received proper recognition before that time.

We soon discovered that the organisers and leaders of the Russian revolution were not merely revolutionists in action. They were genuine Marxists in the field of doctrine. Out of Russia, from Lenin, Trotsky and the other leaders, we received for the first time serious expositions of the revolutionary politics of Marxism. We learned that they had been engaged in long years of struggle for the restoration of

unfalsified Marxism in the international labour movement. Now, thanks to the great authority of their victory in Russia, they were finally able to get a hearing in all countries. (James P Cannon)

In Europe, militants trained in Marxism by the old pre-war Socialist Parties, re-examined their theories in the light of the writings of the Bolsheviks and the experience of the Russian Revolution. The Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci has described how he and others decided to:

...devote our energies to the discovery of a tradition of Soviets within the Italian working class, to seeking out the thread of real Italian revolutionary spirit — real because it coincides with a universal spirit in the workers' international...

The very first decree was a call for immediate peace negotiations.

In proposing the conclusion of an immediate armistice, we appeal to the class conscious workers of the countries that have done so much for the development of the proletarian movement. We appeal to the workers of England, where there was the Chartist movement, to the workers of France, who have in repeated insurrections displayed the strength of their class consciousness, and to the workers of Germany, who waged the fight against the Anti-Socialist Law and have created powerful organisations.

In the manifesto of March 27th we called for the overthrow of the bankers, but, far from overthrowing our own bankers we [i.e. the bourgeois Provisional Government] entered into an alliance with them. Now we have overthrown the government of the bankers.

The government and the bourgeoisie will make every effort to unite their forces and drown the workers' and peasants' revolution in blood. But the three years of war have been a good lesson to the masses: Soviet movements in other countries, the mutiny of the German fleet, which was crushed by the Junkers of the hangman Wilhelm...news can spread quickly.

The workers' movement will triumph and will lay the path to peace and socialism.

Like Luxemburg, the Bolshevik leaders saw their revolution as merely the first act of the world revolution. They redoubled their work to build a new workers' international on the ruins of the old In-

ternational which fell apart when its main leaders supported their own ruling classes in the First World War.

In March 1919 the first Manifesto of the Third, Communist International went out to the world:

If the First International presaged the future course of development and indicated its path; if the Second International gathered and organised millions of workers; then the Third International is the international of open mass action, the international of the deed.

Bourgeois world order has been sufficiently lashed by Socialist criticism. The task of the International Communist Party consists in overthrowing this order and erecting in its place the edifice of the socialist order. We summon the working men and women of all countries to unite under the Communist banner which is already the banner of the first great victories.

In Russia, for the first time, the working people had taken power for themselves, instead of overthrowing one variety of exploiters to the benefit of a new variety as in all previous revolutions. The American revolutionary John Reed described it like this in his eyewitness account:

Imagine this struggle [the successful struggle which he had just witnessed, to win one particular regiment over to the side of the Soviet government] repeated in each barracks in the city, in the region, all along the front, all over Russia. Imagine the sleepless Krylenkos [Krylenko was a Bolshevik leader] surveying each regiment, flying from one place to another, discussing, threatening, begging. Imagine the same scene repeated in all the union halls, in the factories, in the villages, on board ship; think of the hundreds of thousands of Russians, workers, peasants, soldiers, sailors, watching the orators, applying themselves so intently to understand and choose, reflecting so keenly, and, in the end, deciding so unanimously. That's how the Russian Revolution was.

In a declaration announcing the victory of the revolution in Petrograd, Lenin wrote:

Comrades, working people! Remember that now you yourselves are at the helm of



Gramsci



Soldier distributes revolutionary papers

state. No one will help you if you yourselves do not unite and take into your own hands all affairs of the state. Your Soviets are from now on the organs of state authority, legislative bodies with full powers.

Rally around your Soviets. Strengthen them. Get on with the job yourselves; begin right at the bottom, do not wait for anyone. Establish the strictest revolutionary law and order, mercilessly suppress any attempts to create anarchy by drunkards, hooligans, counter-revolutionary officer cadets, Kornilovites and their like.

Ensure the strictest control over production and accounting of products.

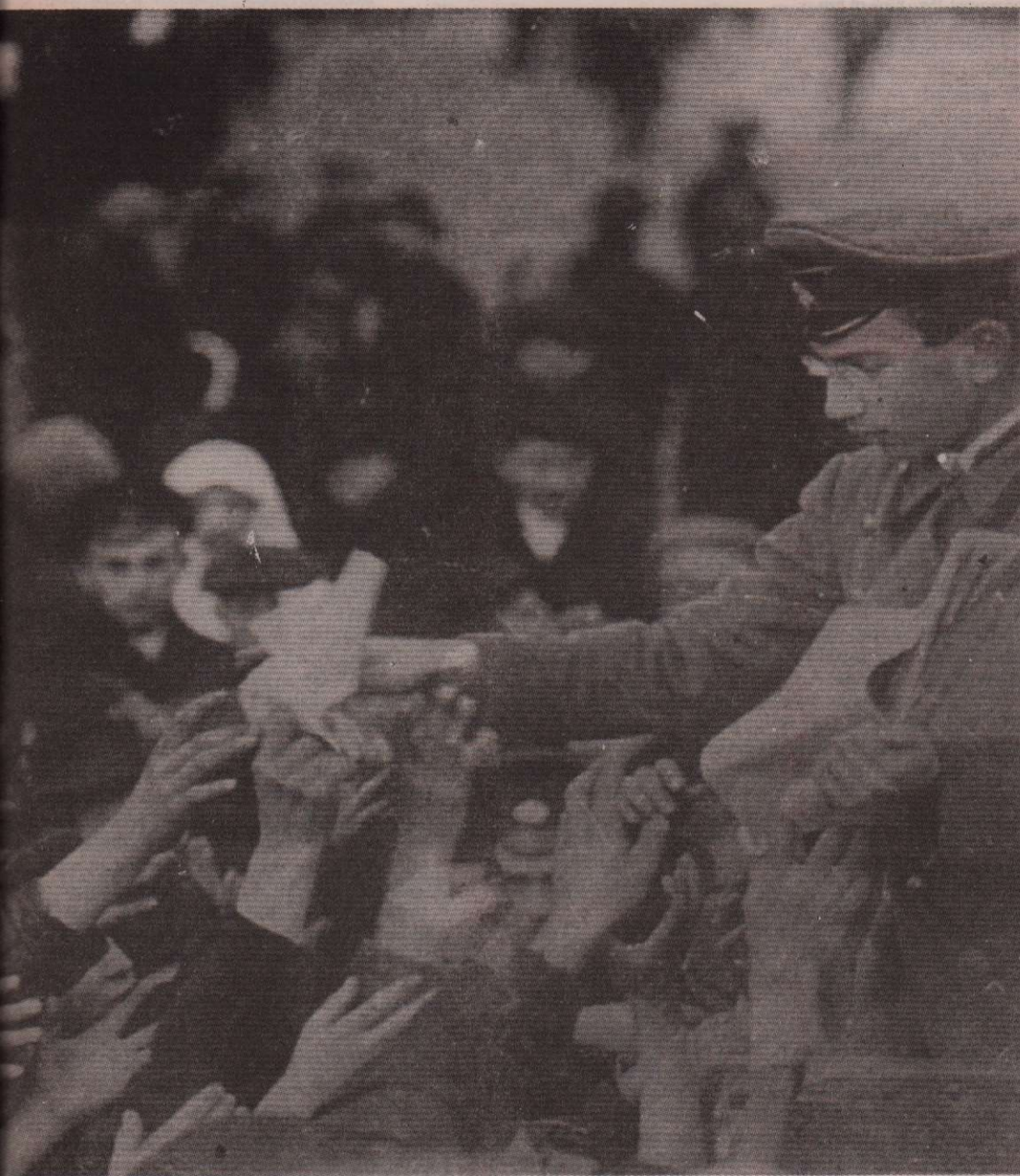
Workers' control was among the first decrees of the new Soviet regime:

1. In the interests of a systematic regulation of national economy, Workers' Control is introduced in all industrial, commercial, agricultural (and similar) enterprises which are hiring people to work for them in their shops or which are giving them work to take home. This control is to extend over the production, storing, buying and selling of raw materials and finished products as well as over the finances of the enterprise.



# October!

# Workers took the power



2. The workers will exercise this control through their elected organisations, such as factory and shop committees, Soviets of elders, etc. The office employees and the technical personnel are also to have representation in these committees.
3. Every large city, gubernia, and industrial area is to have its own Soviet of Workers' Control, which, being an organ of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, must be composed of representatives of trade unions, factory, shop and other workers' committees and workers' co-operatives.
4. The organs of Workers' Control have the right to supervise production, fix the minimum of output, and determine the cost of production.
5. The organs of Workers' Control have the right to control all the business correspondence of an enterprise. Owners of enterprises are legally responsible for all correspondence kept secret. Commercial secrets are abolished. The owners have to show to the organs of Workers' Control all their books and statements for the current year and for the past years.
6. The rulings of the organs of Workers' Control are binding on the owners of enterprises and

can be annulled only by decisions of the higher organs of Workers' Control. Another decree put the land in the hands of the peasants.

Throughout the months following October, the power of the Soviets was extended and consolidated throughout Russia. Through these Soviets the workers and peasants exercised direct power, instead of just choosing every five years who was going to misrepresent and oppress them, as in parliamentary democracy.

All delegates were recallable, and in any case had to be re-elected every three months. In the villages, the Soviets were general assemblies of all the inhabitants. The all-Russian Congress of Soviets was to be convened (with the delegates from the local Soviets newly elected each time) at least twice a year.

But the new power openly proclaimed its class character. The propertied classes were excluded from the vote (though Lenin declared that this should not be a general principle) and one workers' vote was given an equal weight with five peasants' votes. All this was considered necessary because the working class was a small minority.

This was the regime which made 'Soviets' synonymous with the liberation of the working class. But

soon, as the revolution was plunged into war against White Guards (counter-revolutionaries) and invading imperialist armies, military necessity took its toll. The problems were similar to those Jean Jaures described in his history of the French Revolution:

**When a revolutionary country fights both against internal groupings and the outside world, when the least hesitation or the slightest error could damage the new world order for perhaps centuries to come, those who head that enormous undertaking do not have the time to gain the support of dissenters, to win over their opponents. They cannot make much headway either by engaging in polemic or by compromise. They have to knock down the obstacles, they have to act, and to keep their active forces united, to avoid dissipating them, they make an absolute condition of immediate unanimity among those around them.**

In December 1919 the Bolshevik leader Kamenev had said this:

**We know that during the war the best workers left the towns en masse and this led to a situation in which it was necessary here and there to recreate a soviet in this or that province or town giving it a basis for working pro-**

**perly...The soviet assemblies thus often degenerated as political organisations with people occupying themselves with purely technical tasks. General assemblies of the soviets were rarely held, and, when the deputies met, it was merely to be informed about a circular or to hear a speech...**

This was not, however, the bureaucratic dictatorship which Stalin was to lead later. True, the Bolsheviks were driven to ever more complete repression against other parties, as those parties — Mensheviks, SRs, anarchists — supported or participated in armed actions against the workers' state. But Sverdlov, secretary of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, had a staff of only 15 people; and the Party itself, in this period, virtually merged itself into the war effort to defend the workers' state.

The Civil War was won by 1921. But in the meantime the revolutionary wave which had swept Europe in 1919-20 — with Soviet Republics being set up in Hungary and Bavaria, Workers' Councils across Germany, factory occupations and factory councils in Italy — had been defeated. Revolutionary parties on the model of the Bolshevik Party had not been built in time, and the old Social Democratic parties were able to save the capitalist order.

The Bolsheviks remained convinced that socialism could not be built in one country. But in the short term they had to maintain the position conquered by the workers' revolution in Russia.

With the isolation of the revolution in backward Russia and with the exhaustion of the working class and the Bolshevik militants after the civil war, came the mortal dangers of bureaucratisation.

Before his death Lenin tried to form a bloc with Trotsky against bureaucratic tendencies. In 1923 the Trotskyist opposition in the Bolshevik party began its struggle for workers' democracy, for planned and rapid industrialisation, against excessive concessions to the rich peasants and for a revolutionary policy internationally.

1923-24 were to be decisive years, what Trotsky later called the Soviet Thermidor, by analogy with the overthrow of Robespierre in the French Revolution in 1794.

The German Revolution of 1923 was defeated. The 'Lenin levy' of

1924 swamped the Bolshevik party with 200,000 new recruits, many of them careerists. With a virulent campaign against 'Trotskyism', the leaders of the rising bureaucracy, round Stalin, cut themselves free from Bolshevism and Marxism. In 1924 Stalin proclaimed the programme of Socialism in One Country.

So little, however, was Stalinism a legitimate continuation of Bolshevism, that Stalin was only able to consolidate the domination of the bureaucracy by the expulsion from the party, the exile or the murder of all the main leaders of Bolshevism, even those who had sided with him against Trotsky. This bloody process reached its height in the Moscow Trials of the 1930s.

This was not, as the academics and the reformists say, the logical development of Bolshevism, but a bloody counter revolution which was not secure until it had drowned Bolshevism and the Bolsheviks in a sea of blood. In October 1917 Trotsky wrote:

**Bolshevism is the only possible form of Marxism for this epoch. The Bolshevik party has shown in action a combination of the highest revolutionary audacity and political realism. It has established for the first time the only relation between vanguard and class that can assure victory. It has proved by experience that the alliance between the proletariat and the oppressed masses of the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie is possible only through the political overthrow of the traditional petty bourgeois parties. The Bolshevik party has shown the entire world how to carry out armed insurrection and the seizure of power. Those who propose the abstraction of soviets to the party dictatorship should understand that only thanks to the Bolshevik leadership were the soviets able to lift themselves out of the mud of reformism and attain the state form of the proletariat.**

But this is not all. The Bolshevik party was able to carry on its magnificent 'practical' work only because it illuminated all its steps with theory. Bolshevism did not create this theory: it was furnished by Marxism. But Marxism is the theory of movement, not stagnation. Only events on a tremendous, historical scale could enrich the theory itself. Bolshevism brought an invaluable contribution to Marxism...

The degeneration of the Comintern [Communist International] is most crudely expressed by the fact that it has dropped to the theoretical level of the Second International. All the varieties of intermediary groups [Independent Labour Party of Great Britain, POUM and their like] adapt every week new haphazard fragments of Marx and Lenin to their current needs. They can teach the workers nothing.

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Lenin

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# Terry Barrett, the dockers, and the Left

AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



**T**erry Barrett, who died in September, was one of the key rank and file working-class leaders during the years of the great labour upsurge of the '60s and '70s.

In the late '60s he was secretary of the London port workers' committee, whose better known leader and public figurehead was the Communist Party member Jack Dash. This was a time when the dockers had the power to choke off supplies to British industry, and sometimes proved it.

In the mid-'60s, when I first encountered Barrett, he was a member of the Communist Party, in transition to the Socialist Workers' Party's ancestor, the International Socialists (IS).

He was the most prominent of a group of militants trying at the eleventh hour to organise a national resistance to the reorganisation of the ports, the so-called "Devlin scheme". We brought three areas out on strike against it — London, Liverpool and Manchester. As a result of these strikes, dockers gained a better deal for letting the reorganisation take place.

But we failed in our main task — to stop the bosses reorganising the ports in their own way, for their own interests, and, ultimately, at the expense of the dockers. Everything that has happened in the docks since flows from that defeat — the massive loss of jobs, the destruction of the dockworkers' legendary militancy and solidarity, last year's abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme.

**L**ast saw Terry Barrett a couple of years ago, at Bank underground station on a Sunday afternoon. We travelled together for a few stops, Terry with his loud London voice commending the IRA, more to the rest of the passengers than to me.

I didn't argue with him. It was, I thought, more a matter of rehearsing tribal warcries with an old comrade than anything to do with current policies. It wasn't the place to denounce the IRA, and I'm not sure I'd have engaged him anyway. He seemed not in the best state.

I have better memories of Barrett. In 1967 he came to Manchester during a tour of the ports, attempting to create a network for a rank-and-file organising committee for a national strike against "Devlin".

The situation was complicated in Manchester. Militants had joined the breakaway "blue" union in the mid '50s, but the strikes to force the Dock Labour Board — on which the TGWU had half the seats — to give the "blue" negotiating rights were defeated. A dozen years later, the TGWU had most of the dockers, the "blue" was perhaps a hundred out of 2000 dockers, and there was some non-unionism.

The old rank and file movement had been absorbed into the "blue" — but the "blue" leaders, Joe Hackett, Joe Barry, and others, doubled as a rank-and-file leadership still. What was what was unclear — but they were the people who convened the frequent mass meetings on the croft to discuss events in the port. They did most of the talking.

They had good relations with management. They couldn't negotiate officially, but did, as the saying went, go "up the backstairs" while the official union — widely despised, its officials without influence except when strikes were petering out — went "up the front stairs". The "blue" leaders were good trade unionists, unlike the TGWU leaders, and had real respect. But they were tired, too. They were influenced by Catholic Action, and they hadn't a clue about Devlin.



Mersey dockers tell T&G leader Jack Jones what they think of him

**S**ome younger militants — Trotskyists — had been agitating about the need to fight Devlin. We stirred things up enough to force it to a showdown with them at a mass open-air meeting, 1500 to 2000 strong.

A "compromise" proposed to "settle" the difference by electing Harold Youd and myself to "the committee" — the "blue" branch committee under another hat — had alarmed them mightily, and they unleashed a flood of tabloid-press style witch-hunting. Youd and I were "politically motivated men" (the phrase was Harold Wilson's, from the seafarers' strike) and "communists". We "didn't care about dockers". We were nothing but "homewreckers".

In scenes that could have come from *On the Waterfront* groups of dockers squared up to each other, and we lost the vote, about two-to-one. But we moved them. They had to move, or next time our vote would be more than a third.

Into this situation, soon after, we brought Terry Barrett. We announced a meeting on the croft, and put out a leaflet inviting people to hear the secretary of the London dockers' committee speak on the reorganisation of the ports.

The "blue" committee responded with a furious campaign. London? There were bitter memories in Manchester and Liverpool from the six-week strike for recognition of the "blue" in 1955. London was under Communist Party leadership, and the CP supported the TGWU. Although CPers were banned from holding office in the TGWU, and they would continue to be banned until Jack Jones unbanned them in 1970, they backed the TGWU against the "blue", which was Trotskyist-influenced at the beginning.

London worked through the six-week recognition strike. Dockers had long memories. Good militants had a strong class identity, but a stronger group identity as dockers. There was also a local identity. People would tell us with scorn: "You can't rely on London. Look at them during the six-week strike".

Barry and Hackett and their friends stoked parochialism and bitterness. That London now represented militancy, and that Hackett and Barry, the rebels of 1955, were now burned-out do-nothing second-string trade-union bureaucrats, was something we had to argue.

**W**hen we got to the dinner time meeting for Barrett on the croft, there was a lot of suspicion and some hostility.

Barry and Hackett turned up at the centre of a gang of their supporters and stood back, waiting for a chance to pounce. I'd written Terry accounts of the various clashes, so he knew the scene. No doubt he could feel the atmosphere too.

When I had introduced Barrett, I gave him the loudhailer, announcing that he would explain about Devlin and report on London. But he didn't. He made a short speech, almost apologising that he, a mere Londoner, should presume to come to talk to the splendid men of Manchester. It seemed to come straight from the heart of a humble man. No irony, no mockery.

It was, of course, a "performance" to disarm some of the hostility. Terry seemed completely free of moralistic rejection of Manchester parochialism, the sort of feeling that would have made such a performance psychologically impossible for me, for example. He was *fighting*, disarming, pushing aside the parochialism, not "capitulating" to it.

Having made his little apologies for troubling the Manchester dockers, he then asked permission to speak. With the almost

classical orator's gambit, "I pause for a reply", he put down the loudhailer and stepped back.

Of course they agreed to hear him! You admire the skills you haven't got — and Barrett's performance left me ruefully wondering whether with more skill we could have avoided some of the dramatic confrontations with "the leadership". Barrett made a fine speech explaining what reorganisation meant, holding out the convincing prospect of a national docks strike in a couple of months' time, and pledging that London would be "solid".

Two months later, Manchester was one of three ports that did "come out" against Devlin.

**M**y second memory of Terry Barrett is from the same period, July 1967.

The first of two national gatherings of rank and file leaders was convened by Terry in London. It was all terribly late. Reorganisation was coming in September, and here we were in July trying to get a minimal national organisational structure in place.

The unions were supporting Devlin. So was the only political party with enough dockers to give a lead, the Communist Party. The Healy group (SLL, later WRP) had strong support in Liverpool and some in Hull, but they were very sectarian, on the verge of going lunatic. They thought literary denunciation of the CP — including Barrett — was more important than organising unity in the actual class struggle.

There was a couple of Trotskyists (*Workers' Fight*) in Manchester. There were lots of militant dockers and a few unofficial committees — but no shop stewards, even (not until 1970). It was all terribly late, but we met that first time with high hopes and in good spirit, around a long trestle table in someone's back garden in Tower Hamlets, shaded by trees from the sun.

Terry presided expansively as "mine host". Until we talked on the train, I'd remembered the scene as Terry's own



Vic Turner, one of the five dockers jailed by the Tories in 1972, and then released when a quarter of a million workers struck

backyard. I even remember him as chairing the meeting, though probably he didn't.

I don't remember much else except the reports from the areas, a member of the Communist Party executive arguing that we should get the best deal we could and accept reorganisation, and having my own awareness of how far we were from being halfway ready intensified. You can talk a lot about "the crisis of leadership", and still be shocked when you see and feel what it means in real struggle.

**T**he rest of my memories of Terry Barrett have a different colour. Yet they too should be recorded, because they deal with something of great importance: Barrett's subsequent political fate.

There were — and are — vast numbers of competent and sometimes inspired rank and file trade union leaders. Not too many of them found their way to the revolutionary movement, though I guess some thousands did. Very few stayed for long. Barrett was representative in a highly dramatised way.

Disillusioned with the CP, he went over to the IS/SWP with a loose federation. Very middle-class, anti-Leninist, tending to equate Bolshevism with Stalinism and a centralised revolutionary organisation with Stalinist or Healyite bureaucratism. The Healyites were held up as typical "orthodox Trotskyists", the logical result of the Bolshevik tradition. All good came from the rank and file. The job of the revolutionaries was to listen and learn "modestly" (in contrast to the Trotskyist idea that we also have something to teach from "the memory of the class"). IS lionised Barrett — unmercifully, you might say. He became more and more prima-donnaish, and contemptuous of the people who lionised him. Barrett would have been very stupid not to see the lionisation as reflecting the middle-class nature of the group. But he accepted it. For a while.

Eventually Barrett blew out of IS in a huff over some personal slight or conflict — nothing of any consequence politically. He became a fellow-traveller of the IMG for a while, getting exactly the same lionisation from them as from IS, and then, as far as I know, quit politics. He moved from the docks to the car industry. He never, to my knowledge, again played any important role in industry.

The SWP claim he rejoined them recently. But neither the SWP nor Barrett were the same as when they last met...

For a while in the mid-'80s, Terry Barrett was a porter for the Greater London Council in the Ken Livingstone epoch. And there was a cruel symbolism in that too — one of the best militants of the '60s fetching and carrying for the municipal socialists, who cared more for gaining publicity and lobbying the House of Lords than for the working class.

Barrett, in my mind, is the representative of a whole layer of militants who came to revolutionary organisations for a while, and then moved on, often damaged, diminished even, when they should have been strengthened. They could have been the backbone in industry of a movement able to do more than talk about socialism. But because of weaknesses of their own and, more to the point, because of the state of the revolutionary left during the great labour upsurge, they were lost, just as that great historic tide itself was lost.

Barrett remained a socialist to the end. The socialists who continue owe him respect and a debt of gratitude for his struggles. And we owe it to him and the others like him to learn from their fate. When we have built a real revolutionary movement, that will be Terry Barrett's monument.



# Making the labour movement accessible to lesbians and gays

By Janine Booth, Women's Officer, National Union of Students

Peter Tatchell's 'new strategy for lesbian and gay equality' outlined in *SO* 462 was a welcome contribution to a crucial debate.

It offered a thorough examination of repressive legislation against lesbians and gay men. However, I believe that it has two major failings. Firstly, it sees lesbian and gay liberation as solely a civil liberties issue; and secondly, it offers no strategy for the building of a fighting lesbian and gay movement.

We live in a society which controls and oppresses everyone's sexuality. Lesbian sexuality and gay sexuality are at the sharp end of bigotry, discrimination and prejudice.

Capitalism attempts to force every person into its only 'acceptable' sexuality — monogamous, married, child-rearing heterosexuality. Every other sexuality, every other lifestyle, is subjected to ridicule and disadvantage, lesbian and gay sexuality most viciously of all.

This repression also hits bisexual people, celibate people, non-monogamous people, unmarried people, and people raising children outside heterosexual partnership.

It denies women the right to control our own bodies and fertility, and pushes men and women into stereotyped roles. It shapes and constructs people's sexuality, denying our right to make

our own choices.

Lesbian and gay liberation, therefore goes beyond the narrow confines of achieving civil liberties for a minority. It can only come about as part of the liberation of the whole of human sexuality. A liberation that will allow all people our right to decide and express our sexuality as we choose.

The achievement of equality before the law for all regardless of sexuality would be a significant step forward, but would fall well short of real liberation. Lesbians and gay men should aspire to more than just formal equality and respect in a rotten society. We should work for a wholly new sort of society, a socialist society.

Peter advocates the introduction of a co-habitation law, granting legal rights to co-habitees — whether lesbian, gay or straight — including such rights as prison visiting, immigration, inheritance etc. While I would welcome the removal of discrimination in the laws governing these rights, I believe it is wrong to grant these rights to co-habitees only.

For example, socialists should support everyone's right to immigration and to abode in the country of their choice. A Co-habitation Act would give official state preference to monogamous partnership and co-habitation, which amounts to discrimination on the grounds of sexuality!

In a similar way, it is blatantly discriminatory that only heterosexuals are allowed to marry. However, the solution is not necessarily that lesbian and gay couples should be allowed to marry (although that would be preferable

to the current situation). Far better would be for the institution of marriage to be abolished altogether (as a legal contract, not as a cultural or religious act), and for all the privileges accompanying it to be open to all.

Peter's strategy does not address the need to build a powerful movement to win liberation. No matter how well-intentioned the Labour Party (and it seems not even to have good intentions any more), change will not come from above. Liberation cannot be granted from high, but will be created by mass activity and struggle. The liberation of sexuality will come only with increased understanding of sexuality, people's awareness raised by their involvement in struggle.

The labour movement must take lesbian and gay struggles seriously. It is not even coming close at the moment, and needs to change its attitudes and actions. Sexuality is not even thought of as a political issue in much of the Labour Party (including sections of the left). It needs to be brought onto the centre stage of socialist politics.

The Labour Party and trade unions have to be made more accessible to lesbians and gay men — both can be inhospitable and are often completely uninhabitable.

The biggest change the labour movement must make is to commit itself to fight for very well-worded policies. There are some very well-worded policies around, but precious little action. The labour movement must fight alongside the lesbian and gay community, and involve lesbian and gay people in fighting as part of the labour movement.



A promising new initiative is 'Labour Must Deliver', launched recently by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Lesbian and gay socialists also need to play our part in building a strong self-organised lesbian and gay movement. What exists at the moment is sizeable, and it is committed. But it is fragmented and politically weak. We can build this movement in campaigning for positive demands (including legal

rights such as those advocated in Peter Tatchell's article), defending and developing our communities, setting up autonomous lesbian and gay groups in workplaces, colleges and Labour Parties, and widening political debate.

So, perhaps this is another 'new strategy for lesbian and gay equality'. Political rearmament, transforming the labour movement and building a mass lesbian and gay movement.

## Anti-ban campaign looks to regional conferences

Resolution deadlines for Labour Party regional conferences are coming up shortly — London on 16 November, Southern at the end

## Halfway to £25,000

In September *Socialist Organiser* launched a £25,000 expansion fund.

The expansion is already under way — a sixteen page paper, printed on heavier-quality paper, and with new features. But we're still fighting to raise the money to cover it.

We have made two appeals — for regular monthly donations, through a '200 Club' which enable us to take out loans from the bank and then cover repayments; and for lump-sum donations.

Lump-sum contributions so far total £1,860 and '200 Club' contributions enough to cover credit to the amount of £10,280. Total so far: £12,140. Still to be raised: £12,860.

This month we announce the winner of the first monthly draw in the '200 Club': Stephen Smith, of London SE17, wins £100.

If you think the new format of *Socialist Organiser* is an improvement, please help us pay for it and maintain it!

- Send a donation.
  - Take out a bank standing order for a regular contribution.
  - Approach other readers for donations and regular contributions.
- Donations to, and standing order forms from, *SO*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

of the month, Scotland on 3 December, Yorkshire on 7 December, and the North-West on 10 December.

Supporters of "End the Ban!", the campaign against the Labour Party's ban on *Socialist Organiser*, hope to get resolutions submitted to each conference calling for no disciplinary action in that region against Party members associated with the paper.

A mailing is also being done to CLPs whose delegates supported 'End the Ban!' at Labour's Annual Conference in October, thanking them for their support, informing them about how the campaign is continuing, and appealing for donations. 'End the Ban!' is still very much in the red, because in the short time it had before Annual Conference mailings had to be sent out, advertisements paid for, and so on, without being able to wait for donations to come in.

A small but steady trickle of messages of support, donations and requests for speakers is still arriving for 'End the Ban!'.

All that aside, this is a time of waiting for the campaign. The decision of Labour's July National Executive meeting, endorsed by the October conference, opens the way for moves to expel individual Labour Party member on grounds of association with *Socialist Organiser*, but we do not know when Labour Party HQ officials will start such action.

The July National Executive mandated Party Organisation Director Joyce Gould to investigate *SO* supporters in the Wirral and Nottingham East, and the first moves for expulsions are likely to come from her reports on those areas.



## New subs drive launched

From the New Year, *Socialist Organiser's* subscription rates will have to go up.

We've kept the rates the same for over eight years now, despite increased costs for postage and everything else. With the recent expansion of the paper and the new rise in postal rates, we can do that no longer.

To help bring in subscriptions for the new format, we're keeping the old rates until Christmas only.

Special sub offer leaflets have been printed, and are available for distribution in your local Labour Party, trade union, or anti-poll tax group.

Subscribe now, get others to take out subscriptions and help build the circulation of *Socialist Organiser*!

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## Student CND fights links with US military

By Eddie Goncalves, Co-Chair of National Student CND

A new report from Student CND exposes the hidden role played by universities and polytechnics across Britain in helping develop the imperialist American military machine which now threatens to drag the whole world into war over the Gulf.

This has been one of the most overlooked aspects of the so-called 'Special Relationship' between America and Britain. While you may know that many British scientists and laboratories have been involved in Star Wars, you may not be aware of the full extent to which the Pentagon has permeated the British education system. There are some 30 British colleges doing American military research and development work with a total value of over \$10 million for the US Navy, Army, Air Force and a Pentagon organisation called the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.

This is part of a pattern of creeping militarisation in education encouraged by a Tory government. We are helping Bush develop the next generation of biological weapons using horrific genetical engineering techniques.

In America itself, a half of the Pentagon's programme to develop new weapons systems is fed into the universities. The entire American nuclear warhead design and development programme is sited at the University of California.

Student CND was formed just a few months ago, and our aim is to

expose completely the link between the military and universities and polytechnics in this country. Our colleges have been involved in everything from the production of CS gas used in Northern Ireland, the development of phone-tapping technology used against the left in Britain, the missile technology used in American bombers against Libya and all the equipment and weapons systems that make American 'surgical strikes' possible.

Let's not be in any doubt as to America's real interests in the Gulf. We must stop the US war machine at root — that is our responsibility and our duty to the working classes in every part of the world who almost always end up fighting and dying in the wars of the generals and the interests they represent.

That means putting a stop to developing America's military technology. This means campaigns and actions on campuses throughout Britain which demonstrate the fact that we will not support and sustain imperialist interests any longer.

Student CND welcomes the support of all those determined to stop the American war machine in the Gulf in a non-sectarian way. Support Student CND's campaign in the co-operative spirit in which we invite it. Whether you're a student, a lecturer, a campus trade unionist — join us in our campaigning, our actions, our picket lines.

We can't hope to stop American military intervention in the Gulf or future acts of imperialist aggression if we don't help paralyse the advance of American military momentum and capabilities today.

Contact Student CND, c/o 168 Holloway Road, London N7.



# Down these mean streets

## Books

The writers of mass-sale "pulp" fiction play a tremendous role in the creation and reinforcement of mass popular consciousness. The snobbishness and brutality of Ian Fleming's James Bond, the clever pseudo-aristocratic fantasies of Dorothy L Sayers, the moronic fare churned out by Mickey Spillane, the cosy murder-without-pain of Agatha Christie, or Erle Stanley Gardner's surprisingly radical view of the police and law enforcement in the Perry Mason stories, all enter into and help compose the feel and texture of popular consciousness in our capitalist society.

In this first of an occasional series on such writers, B J Siddon examines the work of the Canadian-American novelist Ross Macdonald, a writer in the Chandler vein considered by many to have done it better than Chandler.

I stumbled on Ross Macdonald (1915-1983) almost by accident, having suspected that his detective would be a weary cynic and his locations oppressive. I was right, but I was wrong about just about everything else. Ross Macdonald was a superb novelist.

The books feature private detective Lew Archer, "an emissary from the adult camp" to the world of teenage dropouts, Las Vegas glamour, and wealth built on lies. Lew Archer moves amongst the depraved middle classes and the battered poor with cynicism yes, but with compassion too.

Archer is not rich, he doesn't quote Shakespeare and he doesn't drive a fast car or drink champagne. Far from using the little grey cells, he dashes here, there and everywhere, weaving past events together into a rich tapestry of truth. He deals with real people, likely events and possible world with racial prejudice, bent cops and shots that miss.

Macdonald's southern California is a breathtakingly beautiful country, peopled with ugliness and exploitation. "Before we crossed

the valley the red sun had plunged behind the clouds over the coastal range. The shadowed fields were empty. We passed a dozen truckloads of fieldworkers returning to their bunkhouses on the ranches. Crammed like cattle in the rattling vans of the trucks, they stood in patient silence, men, women and children waiting for food and sleep and the next day's sunrise." ('The Moving Target', 1949).

"An oval of sunlight from one of the ports, moving reciprocally with the motion of the yacht, fluttered against the bulkhead like a bright and living soul. I said to it:

"McGee?"  
"Something stirred in an upper bunk. A face appeared at eye level. It was a suitable face for the crew of a boat named 'Revenant.'" ('The Chill', 1963).

But despite descriptions of landscape and town which give you the taste of dust and the smell of the sea, it is the people who bring Macdonald's books to life.

"She rose cumbrously to her feet, tucking wisps of grey hair under her hat. She was just an old lady in dirty tennis shoes but her body, undetermined in a loose blue smock, carried itself with heavy authority as if it recalled that it had once been powerful or handsome." ('The Chill').

"The boy glanced at him but didn't turn. As the man and the woman moved on him from different directions, the boy's face had lost its look of reckless pleasure. His small body seemed to grow smaller as if under the pressure of their meeting." ('The Underground Man', 1971).

Here is an author who is never short of words. Macdonald never has to fall back on clichés or tired situations. 'The Ivory Grin' is, amongst other things, the story of a black youth suspected of murder in a white town. Prejudice is there — not overstated, but in the fat slob who says, unasked: "You want my opinion, I think that young buck done it. They're always cutting their wenchies, you know that."

Injustice is recognised — "How did I know she was passing for white?" reveals the existence of a colour bar in a filthy motel. But the blacks are not stereotyped or belittled.

Those who don't learn from history are likely to repeat it



November 11 is Armistice Day: 72 years ago the great bloodbath of the First World War ended. Scenes like that above were common in France and Belgium. The author of this poem, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth',

Wilfred Owen, was killed by machine gun fire on the Sambre Canal in the last week of the war, on 4 November 1918.

## Anthem for doomed youth

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?  
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty orisons.  
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;  
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, —  
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?  
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes  
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.  
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;  
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds.  
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.  
Wilfred Owen



ed. The black experience of justice at the hands of the cops is found in the mother's despair at her son's arrest. His father was killed in the war, fighting for America, and she and the boy are known for respectability, and regular churchgoing. Yet still the boy is one of 'them'. Even the police chief, who seems decent enough, is ready to believe that 'they' are all potential murderers. Archer is the only one to listen to the boy's story and take it seriously, as one human being to another. "He seemed to be seeing himself for the first time as he really was: a black boy tangled in white law, so vulnerable he hardly dared move a muscle."

The victimisation of black people by American 'law' is hardly news today, but this book was published in 1952 against a background of Jim Crow and the ready acceptance of 'them' as murderers.

The same book also deals with organised crime — again in terms of real people rather than stereotypes. The gangsters in 'The Ivory Grin' are not a 'gang' trying to take over the world, as found in paranoid cold-war fiction, but a couple of desperate, amoral failures trying to keep a 'numbers racket' together. Criminals in Macdonald's stories are often like that — perhaps the victims of blackmail, or the sort of people who let themselves be convinced that crime is an easy way to make a living.

Macdonald's villains are not evil, any more than his victims are innocent. Macdonald shows people motivated by petty envy, greed and the feeling that the world owes them a good living. But he doesn't sit in judgement over them, or condemn their lack of morals. He just shows them, as products of a country which says everyone can have everything, but doesn't provide the means. Macdonald shows people who are too weak to face reality and its consequences, but he doesn't

give us a lecture about it, or blame 'the system'.

Macdonald's stories also deal with the 'big' motives, which occur throughout human history — sibling rivalry, mother love, obsession, revenge. In the stories these motives are obscured by the gloss and dross of modern society. In one of the Shakespeare tragedies, these motives would be on display — here they are slowly uncovered by Lew Archer, who searches through the distant past for clues to explain yesterday's murder.

If there is anything bad to be said

**"Macdonald's villains are not evil, any more than his victims are innocent. Macdonald shows people motivated by petty envy, greed and the feeling that the world owes them a good living."**

about Ross Macdonald's books it is that they always involve a search through the distant past. The unexplained, or covered-up death 20 years ago is always the key to yesterday's murder. But the connection between past and present is not inevitably the same connection. We are not dealing with Brother Cadfael here — 20 books sharing three plots.

The only point of contact between Ellis Peters (a great entertainer) and Ross Macdonald (a great novelist) is that both authors have faith and hope in youth. Alex Kincaid in 'The Chill' begins the

story drinking too much, being overdependent on his father, and suffering from 'nerves'. By the end he can stand (uncertainly) on his own feet and the dependence has turned to loyalty. Alex says:

"It's really amazing, you know? You really can make a decision inside yourself. You can decide to be one thing or the other."

"The only trouble was that you had to make the decision every hour on the hour. But he would have to find that out for himself." We are left with the impression that Alex will find out, and will be able to cope with the knowledge.

Much of Macdonald's work rests on Freudian-style investigations into the past, and one story even hinges on the revelations of a young woman under hypnosis. Detective writers often use such material, but simplistically or glibly. Macdonald does not follow all Freud's methods or accept all his conclusions, but where he does, he does it well. Lew Archer digs up the material past, rather than the subconscious. Above all he is sympathetic to the other humans — they are not 'subjects' being investigated, but people.

Finally, there is one question which remains unanswered. Are these books any good as detective stories? Is there a crime, and is it solved? There is crime, and there is a solution, but Lew Archer does not make a list of suspects with notes on their alibis. The stories are not country house murders, and they sometimes have too many people in for my liking! I can never guess whodunnits, but I don't care because I don't really want to.

It is sometimes interesting to guess the identity of X, in the same way that romantic fiction readers try to work out who will get the girl. The real pleasure is not found in the answer, but in the developing story. Ross Macdonald gives all that pleasure and more.



The Handmaid's Tale

# Backwards to the future

Cinema

By Cathy Nugent

The Handmaid's Tale' is set in the not too distant future, in an America after a terrible nuclear accident or war.

The state (now called Gilead) has been taken over by the Moral Majority, right-wing Christian fundamentalists. Society is organised along totalitarian and patriarchal lines. All opposition has been thrown down and the drifters, women especially, have been rounded up, classified and graded: into blacks, semites, caucasians, gender-traitors (lesbians) and, most importantly, fertile.

Only one woman in a hundred can now bear children. These women are the 'handmaidens'.

Only the ruling class have access to these women: rich women who are barren and their gun-toting, bible-thumping husbands. The handmaidens make babies for them.

This is the story (or chronicle) of one handmaiden, Kate, now re-christened Offred (Natasha Richardson), who is 'placed' with the evil Commander (Robert Duvall) and his neurotic wife Serena Joy (Faye Dunaway).

This is a serious film. Based on the book by Margaret Atwood in my opinion, one of the best feminist futuristic stories around. There are a whole lot of them. But

this, like Doris Lessing's 'The Marriage Between Zones 3, 4 and 5' is also socialistic and left-wing. It has a complex view of power and class and gender. In the end, men and women fight together against reaction. A difficult, fraught alliance it is. But still a necessary one.

The story draws out the political detail of the very current right-wing reaction in America.

We see the hypocrisy. At one point Kate is taken to a huge pleasure emporium — a gigantic brothel — by the Commander. Here women who have tried to escape, or are black, or are 'gender-traitors', are bound into sexual slavery. It is tucked away where no-one can see, guarded by tanks and barbed wire and a hundred armed guards.

We see the celebration of masculinity at its most extreme. And this is one big con: in a rare moment of self-reflection, not realising Kate is watching him, the Commander admits he cannot bring himself to fire his gun. This is the big, all-American hero John Wayne and Eisenhower rolled into one. Well, he's just a yellow-bellied creep who rapes women!

In fact, of course, the things we see in this fantasy about an imaginary future America are the stuff of life for millions of women around the world now. In this world millions of women are treated like cattle. They can be legally raped; they can be murdered by the state for all kinds of 'gender treachery', infidelity, prostitution.

And it is not just religious fundamentalist states that sanction



such extreme repression. It is done often under the guise of culture and tradition. Thousands of women every year, for instance, suffer genital mutilation so that they will remain 'virginal' and pure for their husbands to be. This is very much a story of the present.

Margaret Atwood's book has been very effectively adapted. Some of the edge is lost — it's a film. It is not possible to transpose such a dark and complex piece of writing without losing something.

In the book, for instance, Gilead is much more totalitarian, and the sense of historical direction seems to be backward, to a sort of Dark

Ages. It is not futuristic at all.

For instance, in the film the handmaidens wear a red scarf covering their hair. In the book they wear a winged white cap that restricts their vision. They are not allowed to see or communicate with their eyes. Some of the symbolism of the book is lost, here. Eyes are evil, dangerous and portray the influence of the devil. The Evil Eye (a primitive pagan but Christian-adapted concept) is everywhere.

Kate is not so fearful here. But that is quite pleasing. Predictably, too, the film makes too much of the 'romantic interest', but that's quite pleasant too. Go and see it.

## A sense of class

Books

Ruth Cockroft reviews 'London Fields' by Martin Amis (Penguin, £4.99)

Some months ago I read an interview with Martin Amis in one of the Sunday glossies. He had come across as a pompous middle class twit, true son of Kingsley.

I bought his 'London Fields' because the blurb on the back of the book promised a 'thriller'. This overrode my prejudice against the author.

The 'letter to my readers' at the beginning of the book confirmed my opinions of Amis. Here, we are told that the author had many sleepless nights thinking up a title for his precious opus. I mean — who cares?

But I read on and I found the novel to be extremely clever. Yes, clever is exactly the right word. Clever enough to be nail-bitingly suspenseful and just a little bit disturbing. In fact, the story is so intricate and the murder so strange I can't say anything sensible about it without telling you too much and maybe spoiling it for you.

There are four main characters in the novel, whose qualities represent different aspects of our society, as Amis views it. This representation is

done in a grotesque and sometimes comic way. Which is just as well because such stuff can be really pretentious.

There is Keith, a lager-swilling rotten-to-the-core darts-playing womaniser — correction, rapist.

He, says Amis, represents the non-working class of today — specifically of today. But, of course, this is such an old stereotype.

Then there is Guy, an old-family raping-pillaging-and-exploiting-runs-in-our-veins capitalist. On the surface Guy is a nice guy if a bit of chinless wonder.

Nicola is an extraordinary femme fatale whose world-weariness extends to wishing, plotting and fortelling her own death. Nicola is by far the most interesting and intelligent character. She is, though, a sadistic character and quite supernatural. What this says about Amis' view of women, I wouldn't like to speculate.

Finally, there is Sampson, who is the narrator and author. He is an American Jew — he might have slipped straight out of a book by Philip Roth.

In fact, it is all quite derivative — Orwell, Graham Greene, Clockwork Orange...

The novel is quite centrally about

class. But Amis's conception of class is more to do with culture — taste in clothes, leisure pursuits, etc. Keith, the working class, comes out of this badly. Keith's wife Kath appears as worn out and used up. In other words, working class people are not capable of struggle or even of wishing for anything better, apart from ridiculous contemptible things — Amis says — such as winning a national darts competition. In other words, Amis is a snob.

Overall, Amis's politics are pessimistic: it's a tired old world, there is no genuine, positive human creativity left in it. They call this the post-modern condition, I believe. And there is no way out. We live in a sick, dog-eat-dog society and it is all rather distasteful.

But class divisions can also be a source of discontent focused not on doing someone else down (cheating, thieving, and coshing as Keith does) but rebellion against the system in quest of emancipation.

For this reason I cannot take Mr Amis's middle-class angst seriously. In fact I find it repulsive.

I enjoyed the book, however. Buy it but spit on the politics or alternatively, if you ever happen to be in a restaurant where Mr Amis is sitting, spit in his nouvelle cuisine soup. Trouble is, he'd probably find it amusing.

## Whose gunpowder plot?

Television

By Thomas Macara

Have you ever thought how strange it is that Catholic kids should burn effigies of Guy Fawkes, and set off fireworks to celebrate his capture? (He was hanged, drawn and quartered for treason after trying to blow up parliament with gunpowder in 1605).

For Fawkes and his friends were Catholics, and Catholics were long blamed for what he tried to do.

Remember, remember The Fifth of November, Gunpowder, treason and plot. I see no reason

Why gunpowder treason Should ever be forgot.

That old kids' jingle started life as a serious political battle chant. It meant: keep the Papists down. Catholics didn't achieve full civil rights and equality before the law until 1829.

Most British Catholics had converted to Protestantism by the 18th century, so it didn't matter too much here, except to a small layer of the upper classes. In British-ruled Ireland, where Catholics are the majority, the consequences of their long persecution and legal outlawry in their own country are still being felt.

Traitors, BBC2's Bonfire Night

**The 'gunpowder' plot was something else entirely, a plot hatched by King James I's Chief Minister Cecil to frame up English Catholics as 'terrorists'**

drama, put forward the thesis that there never was a "gunpowder plot" by Catholic desperadoes to blow up Parliament. The "gunpowder plot" was something else entirely, a plot hatched by King James I's Chief Minister Cecil to frame up the English Catholics as terrorists. His spies and agents controlled it from the beginning.

It was a government-sponsored "happening", so to speak, a contrived and faked historical "photo-opportunity". It was the sort of thing the Nazis did when, for example, in 1939, they dressed captured Poles in German uniform, shot them, and charged the Poles with attacking Germany (which then invaded Poland).

Jimmy McGovern's play was more of a lively lampoon than a pofaced thesis. It made the Catholic Church — which would continue to be a combative force in most of Europe for most of the 17th century — too much the innocent victim, the fanatics being manipulated by government agents just too untypical. Yet it was thought-provoking.

And it highlighted a truth no socialist should forget: the victors write and censor history, and shape to suit themselves the beliefs and myths into which real events are transmuted in popular consciousness.

Next time you see a young Catholic acquaintance letting off fireworks on Guy Fawkes night, think of all the workers who let off mental fireworks in honour of their masters, masters who have risen to rule them by defeating them and their forefathers and who stay where they are now by brain-washing them.

The first issue of 'The Socialist Workers Notebooks' (in Farsi) published by Iranian Revolutionary Socialists. Single issue: £1.00 plus 30p p&p from Cathy Nugent, c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA (or phone 071 639 7965)





**WHAT'S ON**

Friday-Sunday 9-11 November. CND National Conference. Coventry Poly. Details: 071-700 2393.

**Saturday 10 November. Demonstration for Troops out of the Gulf. Assemble 11.30, Sparkhill Park, Birmingham.**

Saturday 10 November. Irish Unity. Connolly Association seminar with Kevin McNamara and Clare Short. 10.30, MSF HQ, 79 Camden Road, NW1.

**Saturday 10 November. Polish Solidarity Campaign meeting. Speakers: Anthony Polonsky and Taras Kuzio. 1.30, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2.**

Saturday 10 November. Women in Black picket of El Al office to protest about the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel. 3-4pm, Regent Street, London W1. Women only.

**Sunday 11 November. Vigil outside the Chinese Embassy, central London. 3-4pm. Organised by the Chinese Solidarity Campaign.**

Sunday 11 November. Anti-fascist demonstrations in York and London.

**Sunday 11 November. Variety night with Jeremy Hardy, Tom Robinson and Billy Bragg. Bloomsbury Theatre, near Euston. Proceeds to the London Campaign for the Birmingham 6.**

Monday 12 November. Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture. Terry Eagleton on the origins of ideology. 7.30. New Lecture Theatre at the LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2.

**Tuesday 13 November. Anti-Fascist Action meeting with Mildred Gordon MP and Micky Fenn (T&G, Tilbury). Davenant Centre, Whitechapel High Street, London E1.**

Thursday 15 November. The Ideas Kinnock Wants to Ban. A Socialist Organiser meeting. 8.00 at Nottingham YMCA.

**Thursday 15 November. Britain and the Gulf public meeting. Speakers: Mark Fisher MP and from the Campaign Against War in the Gulf. 7.30, Stoke Town Hall.**

Saturday 17 November. Musicians Against Nuclear Arms 'Concert for Peace'. 7.30pm at St Martins in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London.

**Saturday-Sunday 17-18 November. Socialist Movement Conference, Town Hall, Manchester.**

Wednesday 21 November. Further Education student campaign conference. 11 to 5 at Manchester Town Hall. Details: Dan Judelson, 061-224 1830.

**Saturday 24 November. "Stop War in the Gulf" national demonstration. Assemble noon, Embankment; march to rally in Hyde Park.**

Sunday 25 November. National Anti-Poll-Tax Conference at the Apollo Theatre, Manchester. Details: PO Box 764, London E5 9SX.

**Thursday 29 November. Torchlit demonstration for peace in the Gulf, called by CND. 7pm, Newcastle upon Tyne.**

Saturday 1 December. "Left Agenda" conference organised by Labour Left Liaison. Speakers include Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone. 10.30 to 5 at LSE. Details: 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

**Saturday-Sunday 1-2 December. "Fighting for Workers' Liberty". Socialist Organiser student weekend in Manchester. Details: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.**

# CPSA/NUCPS: merger yes! but not this one!

Given its undemocratic nature, I think it is clearly right to oppose the current proposed NUCPS/CPSA merger.

To support it now in the hope of putting right vital democratic questions at a later date (Sarah Cotterill, SO462) would be a serious tactical mistake. It would leave the merged union even more securely in the hands of a strengthened and emboldened bureaucracy.

Sarah is, I think, correct in principle, however, in supporting a CPSA/NUCPS merger. A single civil service union should be our aim and a CPSA/NUCPS merger would be a big step towards this but any merger must safeguard the democratic advances won in both unions.

Some of the other contributions clearly spring from opposition to the merger "in principle", based on a crude and simplistic view of NUCPS as a "bosses' union".

Trudy Saunders' and Mark Serwotka's articles exemplify this approach. Their view, that NUCPS members' managerial/supervisory role in the work process acts as an absolute determinant of their consciousness is both one-

## WRITEBACK

Dear S.O.,  
You've done it again!  
Your recent article on the  
Civil Service by...

Write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

dimensional and deeply pessimistic.

NUCPS members largely represent a strata, between the bourgeoisie and the working class, of lower-paid supervisory grades. In advanced capitalist countries such strata make up a large section of society. I would agree with the view of these strata being proletarianised due to the "de-skilling" of their work.

Trudy and Mark, on the other hand, implicitly define NUCPS members as simply middle class. Thus Trudy (in SO462): "the strength of CPSA is that it is a union which does not include executive grades", and further-

more, "CPSA and...NUCPS members have different interests to defend". Different class interests? That is the implication.

Such an exclusive and restrictive definition of the working class would tend to make the working class a minority not only in the civil service but in society as a whole.

Logically this view is deeply pessimistic and poses serious questions not only about the ability of civil servants to defend their pay and conditions, but also fundamentally about the prospects for socialism.

As Marxists we have a responsibility to develop a strategy which unites the broadest section of the working class possible and strengthens the ability of the working class to fight for its interests. As a step along this road we should oppose this merger but argue strongly for a democratic merger.

Martin Donahue  
West London

## Winston and George Silcott

I have just received a letter from Winston Silcott.

His brother, George Silcott, is in danger of being framed.

Apparently the police have been regularly picking on him.

Winston Silcott is permanently 'on the block' at Albany Jail (Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS). If you want to write to him, his prison number is 4053.

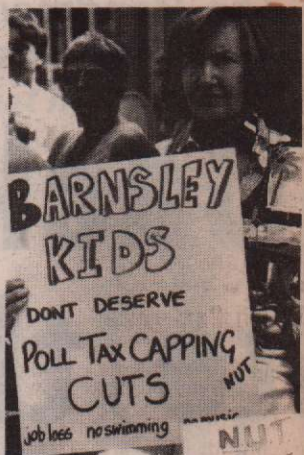
Mike Shankland  
Sheffield

## How to boost the Labour vote

When I stood as a 'Labour Party - No Poll Tax' candidate in a local council by-election I received a rasping rebuke from an interfering bureaucrat at Walworth Road who urged me to stand down.

Against the official's advice, fighting on a clear-cut socialist programme, we quadrupled the Labour vote, and only lost the election by one single vote.

In the recent parliamentary by-election at Eastbourne, local choice candidate Peter Day, fellow poll tax fighter, was replaced by 'non-



Anti-poll tax Labour candidates can focus the resistance

controversial' Kinnockite Charlotte Atkins. Contesting the election against what Eric Heffer would correctly call an 'SDP Mark 2' programme, they halved the Labour vote, only retaining the deposit by three votes.

Now they have intensified the McCarthyite witch-hunt against socialists in Sussex by closing down the Brighton Labour Party. The way they are going about things, they may well find they don't have enough activists left in the Labour Party for forthcoming election campaigns.

Moreover, given a choice between the Liberal Democrats and a lookalike new non-socialist Labour Party, southern voters may actually plump for the former - or not vote at all, uninspired by a toss-up between a dead parrot and a wilted rose.

Richard Hanford  
Secretary  
Mid-Sussex CLP

# Kim Il Sung's foreign legion

## LEFT PRESS

The US weekly *The Militant* has declared a crusade for the reunification of Korea.

Two leaders of the Socialist Workers' Party, the group behind *The Militant*, are now on a speaking tour, and the paper carries articles, each week from the viewpoint of the North Korean government.

With Albania now essaying reform, North Korea is the most rigidly Stalinist regime on earth. It is strange to find any socialist journal identifying with it - let alone one, like *The Militant*, which lays claim to the political heritage of Leon Trotsky.

*The Militant* is no relation to the British *Militant*, and the American SWP no relation to the British SWP. They have a tiny British offshoot-group of their own.

Their Korean campaign seems to have started from their conference in June. The ruling party of North Korea sent greetings to the conference, and the conference responded with:

"...warm revolutionary greetings to you and the people of Korea in your struggle for reunification.

"For almost a century imperialist occupation forces - first Japanese and then US - have plundered your country, violated its sovereignty, and denied the Korean people's right to self-determination.

"Forty-five years ago, as your nation reasserted its independence, US troops invaded the south, crushing the popular uprising that declared the People's Republic of Korea. A US-backed regime was installed

there, which continues to rule today through bloody repression.

"Forty years ago Washington carried out its criminal aggression aimed at conquering all of Korea. Millions of Koreans were killed or wounded, and thousands of US GIs lost their lives in this imperialist war. Korean patriots fought heroically and, together with international volunteers from the People's Republic of China, stalemated the US invasion at the 38th Parallel.

"Today the division of Korea remains the most important and explosive unresolved national division imposed by the US imperialist rulers in the aftermath of World War II."

In October SWP leaders visited North Korea. Their report (*The Militant*, 2 November) says nothing about society in North Korea except to claim that since the Korean war of 1950-53:

"...the workers and farmers of North Korea have successfully undertaken the Herculean task of rebuilding their devastated homeland.

"Impressive in this regard is the West Sea barrage. Built along the five-mile mouth of the Taedong River, which drains into the West Sea, it stores billions of cubic yards of water to irrigate 247,000 acres of reclaimed soil - a figure officials hope they can triple..."

The report notes, however, that:

"Our delegation was able to have several discussions with members of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea about world politics and the increasingly weighty place of the fight for Korean unification in the struggle between conflicting social classes in the United States. WPK leaders were interested in what communists who are committed to making a socialist revolution in the United States think about Korea and the

world.

"These discussions were shaped by the fact that three days before we arrived, the government of the Soviet Union had decided to establish normal diplomatic relations with South Korea, thereby giving a boost to Washington's efforts to freeze the division of Korea.

"Moscow's decision was branded a 'betrayal' by the WPK, and an editorial was run in the October 5 issue of the party's newspaper, *Rodong Sinmun*, pointing to Moscow's co-responsibility with Washington for dividing Korea in 1945."

It would seem that the North Korean dictatorship's falling-out with Moscow is the crucial development which has shaped the SWP's enthusiasm.

It is not the first such en-

thusiasm. From 1979 (and still today) the SWP identified itself politically with the Cuban government, and (for a time) with the Nicaraguan government.

James P Cannon, a leader of the SWP before its recent political degeneration, wrote in 1954:

"The degeneration of the Communist Party began when it abandoned the perspective of revolution in this country, and converted itself into a pressure group and cheering squad for the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia - which it mistakenly took to be the custodian of a revolution 'in another country'...What happened to the Communist Party would happen without fail to any other party, including our own, if it should abandon its struggle for a socialist revolution in this coun-

try, as the realistic perspective of our epoch, and degrade itself to the role of sympathiser of revolutions in other countries. I firmly believe that American revolutionists should indeed sympathise with revolutions in other lands, and try to help them in every way they can. But the best way to do that is to build a party with a confident perspective of revolution in this country. Without that perspective, Communist or Socialist Party belies its name. It ceases to be a help and becomes a hindrance to the revolutionary workers' cause in its own country. And its sympathy for other revolutions isn't worth much either."

Now the SWP has become a cheering squad, not for revolutions in other countries, but for decades-established totalitarian dictatorships in other countries.

## Liverpool council: Militant's responsibility

### AS WE WERE SAYING...

Militant do not understand that the situation is largely of their own making, and that their sectarian politics have effectively played into the hands of the right wing.

It is not at all clear that they have any strategy right now, except to pass the responsibility for making cuts on to the Liberals. They are just hanging on waiting for the moment when the courts disqualify the 47 Labour councillors from office on or after July 7th.

Then they will be able to cover up their own record as Liverpool's rulers in streams of rhetoric blaming Kinnock for his treachery. But in generating the grotesque series of fiascos in Liverpool, Kinnock's treacherous attacks on the council played only a secondary, though important, part.

The central responsibility rests with Militant. Militant has run Liverpool like the old-fashioned corrupt Tammany Hall Labour right wing ran it, only adding left posturing and left rhetoric, and a vicious, factional narrow-mindedness that even the old Catholic bigots never quite matched.

The Liverpool experience provides a tragic example of

how not to build socialism at the local level. A mass movement of thousands of workers could have been organised and galvanised around an anti-capitalist political programme. It wasn't. Neil Kinnock could, with justice as well as hypocrisy, denounce 'the Marxists' for making Liverpool workers redundant.

The sectarian course pursued by Militant has served only to produce demoralisation.

Militant's record in Liverpool must be accounted for, and we can only hope that genuine socialists who supported Militant in the past will participate in the process.

SO, July 1986



## INDUSTRIAL



# Labour movement campaign needed Fight to save Lairds!

By Gail Cameron

Four weeks ago it was announced that Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead, Merseyside, will close in 1992, if a buyer is not found. The response locally has been total opposition to the closure.

The *Liverpool Echo* has launched a campaign to 'Keep Laird Afloat' and the free newspapers on the Wirral are pushing the same message.

All the Merseyside MPs, Labour, Tory and SDP have pledged support for the yard. Wirral Borough Council has set up a task force to help prevent the closure. The churches are

saying prayers for Lairds.

There is no doubt that most people oppose the closure. But the question is, how do we fight it?

The senior stewards, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, Wirral MPs and the local papers see the selling of Lairds to a new owner as a shipbuilding concern as the first priority.

Wirral District Labour Party carried a resolution at its last meeting which called for opposition to any further job cuts at Lairds, for the setting up of a labour movement campaign to save Lairds and for that campaign to have the re-nationalisation of Lairds as one of its central planks. The DLP resolution makes it clear that they have no illusions in the

chances for the survival of the yard under a new owner.

Redundancies are already taking place at Lairds and convenor Ken Morris has stated that redundancies will not be opposed as they are inevitable. Ken Morris has made press statements which stress the skill, flexibility and compliability of the workforce and the whole emphasis of the stewards campaign is a PR job to get a buyer with the possibility of a

management/workforce buy-out if a buyer can't be found.

Attempts to widen the campaign by holding a public meeting in Birkenhead have been scuppered because the senior stewards and the Wirral MPs refuse to support it.

There are fears in the Wirral Labour Party that even if a new buyer is found, it will be a short-lived victory because of rationalisation and asset-stripping. It has been claimed

that, of 80 buyers approached, 15 have shown an interest, but an interest can mean anything. In the meantime, jobs are being lost without a whimper.

It is important to get a labour movement campaign off the ground as soon as possible. That campaign should attempt to convince the stewards and workforce of the need for a workers' plan to save the yard which is not solely reliant on a new buyer being found.

## DSS strikes — solidarity not scabbing

By Steve Battlemuch, DHSS South Notts CPSA

NUCPS members in eight offices around the country have started all-out strike action over the massive staff cuts arising out of a new computer system.

The bankrupt BL'84 (Kinnockite) leadership of CPSA in DSS have failed to call any action at a national level and are effectively scabbing on the NUCPS strike (this from the people who campaigned so hard for the NUCPS/CPSA merger).

CPSA members face the same problems as NUCPS members, if anything our members are at the sharp end on the counter, answering non-stop phone calls, etc. — it's a disgrace that CPSA haven't called for action against the cuts.

To make matters worse, CPSA's leadership is calling on members to cross NUCPS picket lines. CPSA has issued a circular, written by John Ellis, but issued under the name of Terry Adams, the DSS Section Secretary, which calls upon members to report for work as normal. How can you report for work as normal when one union in the office is on strike?

Out of the eight offices where NUCPS are on strike only one — Ilford — has CPSA come out indefinitely as well. CPSA members in Wallasey and Doncaster West came out for a day on Monday 5th, but returned to work the following day.

The CPSA Broad Left needs to get its act together in DSS; we need a co-ordinated line across the eight offices. In my view, the NUCPS strikes could be the start of a real fightback in DSS.

Over the next few days we need to do the following:

- Get CPSA members not to cross NUCPS picket lines and to vote for strike action;
- NUCPS strikers to picket effectively — ie. to ask CPSA members not to cross;
- A massive campaign to win full official CPSA support;
- Escalation of the strike to other offices facing staffing difficulties;
- NUCPS strikers to share their 85% strike pay with CPSA members on unofficial strike with no strike pay;
- Militant supporter and appointed full-time official, Terry Adams, to make it clear that the circular issued under his name was done by Ellis and that he should refuse to do the right-wing's dirty work. He should put out a counter circular arguing for solidarity with NUCPS.

## Steve Hughes, Wallasey DSS NUCPS explained why they're on strike

North West DSS offices as well as offices in Scotland, have been used as pilot schemes for the implementation of the new computer system.

We've had the computers for about six to nine months — initially with a few extra support staff. Now those staff have gone and extra jobs have gone with them. In Wallasey there's been a cut of around 10 admin posts. So we've been straining to take some sort of action.

We've had great support from CPSA members in the office. On the first day of the dispute they met with a CPSA national official to find out why they weren't sanctioning the action and were told they should wait for the outcome of the staff review.

Instead, the majority of the office walked out, unofficially, as a token of their support. It's not surprising because really it's the clerical grades that are first hit by the cutbacks.

## Workers invade council chamber

By Noff Tofias, Sheffield NALGO

400 workers from Sheffield direct works department staged a militant and defiant lobby outside the town hall last week in protest over the threat of widespread redundancies.

The workers invaded the town hall to force councillors to justify their policy of job cuts.

A major budget crisis — a direct result of the implementation of the poll tax —

has meant Sheffield City Council is planning £60m cuts in the next financial year. Local services are being axed, right across the board from education, cleansing, recreation and building construction and maintenance, including a freeze in library purchasing, the closure of local swimming pools and the shedding of thousands of jobs.

One NUPE full-timer has said that the council should lay off more white collar workers — obviously this is no solution and just divides the workforce.

Calls have been made for joint shop stewards activity across all unions and departments to oppose the redundancies. NALGO is planning a one-day strike in opposition to the cuts, and immediate strike action once any redundancies are served.

## Teachers need action over pay

By Liam Conway, Central Notts NUT

Under a shroud of looming bankruptcy, the NUT met in

## How to solve the financial crisis

The present money troubles are largely the result of the union's recent reorganisation, which the leadership pioneered under the cynical pretext of saving the union money.

These changes led to a greater centralisation of the union, with more power for full-timers and central control of membership, not to mention near bankruptcy.

Yet it's all been a total disaster in terms of membership, which continues to decline, representing the major cause of the current financial crisis.

In response to the crisis the 'Broad Left' plan to attack the democratic and campaigning aspects of the union. McAvoy, the General Secretary, would abolish annual conference and make the subsequent biennial event less representative of the rank and file. His proposals also include an attempt to cut the finances available to local associations of the union. That's rich! The national union's almost bankrupt, so the well managed local associations have to pay the price.

A campaign of action on pay and continued support for those areas facing cuts brought about by the poll tax represent the best way of boosting membership, and thereby solving the financial crisis.

The left must revitalise proposals to link the pay of officials to the pay of classroom teachers, cut down on their enormous expenses bills (£11,000 for McAvoy last year) and make their jobs conditional on the ballot box.

We must preserve the democratic structures of the union intact so that they are ready for the battles to come in defence of teachers and all those who work in and use the education service, which is in mortal danger from the poll tax.

Scarborough last Saturday, 3 November, to discuss next year's salaries campaign.

With McGregor having already announced an 8 to 10% limit on teachers pay, the provocative appointment of bruiser Clarke to Education and the vulnerable state of the government, one wonders what new signals the NUT leaders need before they will be moved to action.

Yet once again, if only by a slender majority, they were able to persuade this conference that a pre-planned action campaign, to include a one-day national strike early in the new year, was inappropriate.

The Executive line that a 'flexible' approach, which doesn't rule out strikes, should be followed, carried the day. Strikes announced now for the new year, they claimed, would just let the government know our tactics in advance.

The truth is that the Executive will avoid action if at all possible. In a radio interview General Secretary Doug McAvoy said, as if to rub salt in teachers' wounds, that we hadn't needed strikes under McGregor and we wouldn't need them under Clarke.

Most of the spineless 'Broad Left' members of the Executive will follow that line when it comes to the crunch. Only this time, for a number of reasons, they may not be able to rely on the acquiescence of the members. The government is now

trapped in a prolonged crisis. It is deeply unpopular and divided over Europe. Through the cutting machine of the poll tax it will try to make public sector workers pay for the crisis, with low wages, job cuts and depleted services.

The 'strike' talk at the special conference by right-wing leaders is not just rhetoric, but a recognition that it will be much harder to avoid an industrial clash with the government after several years of wage cuts.

To the credit of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and the Campaign for a Democratic, Fighting Union (CDFU), the left have already begun to prepare the ground at local level for a fightback over pay.

Following on from the successful rank and file conferences in Nottingham and Camden, a further conference on the salaries issue is to be organised in the new year in Leeds.

But before that there is a great deal to do at local level. STA and CDFU comrades must work together in mobilising members in preparation for a serious salaries campaign. Salaries motions must pour into Hamilton House from local associations calling for strikes over pay.

The leadership's claim of £1,500 flat-rate plus 10% is, for once, a reasonable one. Now we must pressurise them to deliver the action that even their salaries memorandum promises if the government rejects our claim.

## In Brief

Bill Jordan has been re-elected President of the AEU engineering union. Encouragingly, his sole contender, Liverpool District Secretary Dave Gough, who was supported by the Engineering Gazette and many independent leftists, received nearly 40% of the vote.

Jordan was expecting a landslide, hoping to bask in the reflected glory of this year's shorter working week victories. The vote against him shows the potential for building a serious rank and file opposition.

Last Tuesday, 6 November, lecturers in 84 polytechnics and colleges of higher education took half-day strike action over pay and in protest at the introduction of personal contracts.

The unofficial Oxford postalworkers strike against the sexual harassment of a female supervisor came to an end last Thursday (1 November). Involving over 1,400 workers the action stopped most of the mail in the county and quickly spread to Swindon and Northampton as workers struck rather than handle

blocked mail.

The strikers didn't win a clear victory — the supervisor was transferred rather than suspended pending an inquiry. Nevertheless, the fact that 1,400 mainly male workers were prepared to strike in protest at sexual harassment is a massive step forward.

Elsewhere in the Post Office, officials have rejected Royal Mail's 9.5% 'final' pay offer and threatened action while over 85% of the capital's postal workers gave a resounding thumbs down to a 'final' offer of 12.7 per cent London weighting, despite a recommendation to accept from the officials.

The merger ballot between the two main civil service unions, CPSA and NUCPS, has been suspended on the CPSA side because of irregularities.

If genuine malpractices are revealed then the ballot result should not stand. Otherwise the 1,000 majority for merger should be accepted.

Haringey council workers in the poll tax, finance, revenue and accounting departments are out on indefinite strike to stop 14 compulsory redundancies.

The action is set to escalate.

## Manchester guards call for national strike action

The strike by British Rail guards at Manchester Piccadilly which started after a management lock-out on 27 October, remains solid.

The Manchester guards are looking to make the strike national. They know that if the management gets away with imposing new unsocial rosters in Manchester the national agreements will be disregarded all over the country.

They have gained support from a number of other branches (particularly in Merseyside and

Sheffield) for their demand for a national ballot and a recall of Train Crew Grades Conference, but at present the RMT Council of Executives is resisting pressure to spread the action. The stewards in Manchester are fairly optimistic about the prospects for spreading the action.

The guards in Manchester have started a collection for the strike. Donations can be taken to the picket line at Piccadilly between 4.00am and 8.00pm every day. For further information, and messages of support, contact the RMT Branch Secretary, RJ McDonald on 061-230 7579.

## Morecambe Bay oilworkers join the action

By Stephen Ryaptis

Morecambe Bay oilworkers have been out on strike since Tuesday 30 October after management refused to offer pay parity with oilworkers in the North Sea.

The demand for parity was raised over two weeks ago through the established grievances procedures.

The response from management, when they met representatives of the workers last Wednesday, was to 'offer' an enforced two hours overtime pay per day plus an extra 70p bonus on the hourly rate.

This would have meant a 14-hour working day, whilst rates of pay would continue to have lagged behind those in the North Sea. The talks broke down completely.

The evening of the same day management phoned workers

due to fly out to the rigs on the Thursday morning and demanded of them individually that they accept the conditions laid down by management. But this attempt at intimidation failed.

The strikers are now picketing Blackpool airport (used for flights to the Morecambe Bay field) and appealing for support from other oilworkers. As a statement issued by the strikers puts it:

"The committees of the workforces see no further alternative (after the breakdown of talks) but to request the withdrawal of all labour from the companies involved.

"CGS are at present asking some of the workforce to return to work. The workforce of CGS and Cape Scaffolding are calling on the remaining workforces in Morecambe Bay field to support their colleagues on shore."

Donations for the dispute to: Merseyside Trade Union, Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool. Tel: 051 709 3995.



# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Scargill and Heathfield  
argue for action

## Why miners should back overtime ban

By Gary Scott

**A** hundred miners attended a meeting in Murton, County Durham on November 3 to listen to Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield explain why miners should support an overtime ban in pursuit of the NUM's wage claim of £10 a week on the basic pay.

The purpose of the overtime ban is to persuade British Coal to negotiate with the NUM. At the moment British Coal will only talk with the NUM if the NUM will accept what is called the "minority/majority concept".

At local level, British Coal will talk only with the union — either the NUM or the scab UDM — which has the majority of union members. This leads to absurd results.

At one pit in the Notts coalfield, 42% of the miners are in the NUM. Should the NUM members be represented by the NUM's arch rival, the UDM? British Coal says "yes".

Scargill asked the Durham miners to reject the minority/majority concept as divisive. He would, he said, only favour such an approach in the national situation, where the NUM has over 90% of miners, and the UDM less than 10%.

Scargill cited last year's UDM wage claim, in which they complained: "Even we moderates in the UDM are getting fed up and we are warning the Coal Board." This year the UDM is still feebly belly-crawling: "If the workforce were not doing their best, Draconian measures by British Coal would be justified". They are advocating an advertising campaign extolling the virtues of British Coal and apologising for the right even to negotiate with British Coal.

Both Heathfield and Scargill denounced the decline in basic pay and the increase in overtime worked by miners since the end of the 1984-85 miners' strike.

- Wage levels have dropped fifteen places in the wages league.
- 115,000 jobs have been lost.
- Productivity has increased by over 100%.
- Overtime worked by face-workers has increased by 400%.
- 80% of the workforce are working shifts — a higher percentage than in any comparable industry.
- The basic wage for some miners is as low as £80 a week take home.

Despite this steady decline in basic pay and increase in the working week, British Coal propaganda has tried to create the illusion of a highly paid workforce. The reality is that 42% of the miners' wage is made up of such variables as overtime and bonus in a situation where the amount of bonus paid is not guaranteed but fluctuates. Often it is determined by such things as geological factors.

Miners find themselves forced to work as long as 12 hours a day, six days a week.

As Peter Heathfield said: "A basic wage needs to be established to bring an element of security to our families so we are not reliant on variables, so people can plan their lives."

Unless miners take action, their basic wage will continue to decline until, eventually, their wage will be almost entirely made up of variables. And they themselves, and their families, will be almost entirely at the mercy of the bosses.



Since the great strike the bosses have been on the offensive. It's time to fight back.  
Photo: John Harris.

## Don't fall for British Coal's propaganda

**C**oal has lost its kingdom. The miners are divided and a spent force. Talk of industrial action over pay in the pits is nonsense."

That is the message that the Coal Board, the Tories and the media will be pumping out over the next few weeks. No miner should believe this hollow propaganda.

The miners are in a strong position; they have plenty of economic muscle if they choose to use it — coal is still central to the economy. Just look at the facts:

Over 80% of electricity is still generated from coal. That figure is not likely to decline in the next few years. Electricity demand is likely to rise in the next year by 2-5% while oil prices rocket in the wake of the Gulf crisis and the nuclear industry faces contraction and crisis.

So the demand for coal will go up in a situation where coal

## PLO states its views on the Gulf crisis

### The Palestinians want peace

By Basim Al Jamal

I would like to make our position on the Gulf crisis clear. The British media have concluded that the PLO are supporting Saddam.

Since the Gulf erupted, since the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, the PLO, along with various other Arab governments, have attempted to avert a serious crisis in the Gulf.

We have played a mediation role to bring about genuine peace in the

area.

There has been an immense amount of warmongering pressure exerted on the PLO.

Our position has been very clear, from the very beginning. The PLO is against the use of force by any country for the acquisition of territory. The PLO opposes a war in the Gulf. Consequently we oppose the relentless and massive build-up of force in the region.

The PLO opposes the worst application of double standards and the hypocritical approach to

regional conflicts.

The PLO wants, above all, a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis, based on international law, legality, the United Nations Charter.

We support dialogue between all concerned parties leading to a negotiated settlement which safeguards the rights and dignities of all parties. The PLO wants a regional solution. The Iraqi-Kuwaiti problem is an Arab problem. It should be solved by Arab people themselves.

Our position is clear for all to see. It is only natural that our position on the Gulf crisis is as it is. Time and time again we have declared our commitment to abide by international law, the UN Charter and all UN resolutions.

We also want a just and lasting peace in our conflict with Israel. We have called for a redress of the violations of our land, violations of our people, the violation of our very existence as a people and the forcible occupation of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gazi, Sinai and the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon — a process which began with Resolution 242 of November 1967: this was five months after the events of June 1967.

But after five days the UN Security Council took six resolutions to be applied against Iraq. But 242 did not demand an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. It did not threaten a trade boycott. It did not call for an embargo on Haifa port.

The Gulf crisis has seen applications of all the principles which were abdicated to solve the Palestinian problem.

Overnight everything was thrown overboard. The message from the US was clear. The Gulf crisis was not going to be solved politically. The military option was the only option. And the US would fight in the UN in order to oppose the principles of the UN.

If the role of the multinational forces led by the United States is simply to see that UN resolutions are implemented, why is there not the same determination concerning all other UN resolutions? Why is there not this sort of determination to implement resolution 242 which applies to Palestine?

There are two other principles. The application of UN resolutions and international law requires application to others of what you apply to yourself. Democracy implies consistency.

What we are suggesting as a solution to the Gulf crisis is consistent with our overall approach and our proposed solution for the question of Palestine. That is a solution which respects the rights of the two parties: Iraq and Kuwait. This is what we have proposed for the Palestinians and the Israelis.

This is the essence of our two states solution. This is our approach.

Secondly, when we accepted a peaceful political approach of resolution 242 we were denied the right to a parallel solution to the Gulf situation. The PLO were condemned and accused simply because we tried the peaceful political approach in a problem between two neighbouring countries. At the same time we were condemned and accused.

Our people are still making enormous sacrifices. The intifada continues. We are sacrificing our own flesh and blood. Women and children are dying in the streets of Palestine.

However, resolutions alone have not succeeded with the Israeli government. Pressure alone will not succeed with the Gulf crisis. What is needed is application of resolution 242 to the Gulf situation. And application of UN resolution 661 on the Gulf to the Israelis. This will bring stability, once more, to the area. It will also bring the issue of Palestine to the fore.

We need to solve the Gulf problem now. The Palestinian problem must be solved immediately after.

Speaking at the Campaign Against War in the Gulf conference on 3 November

