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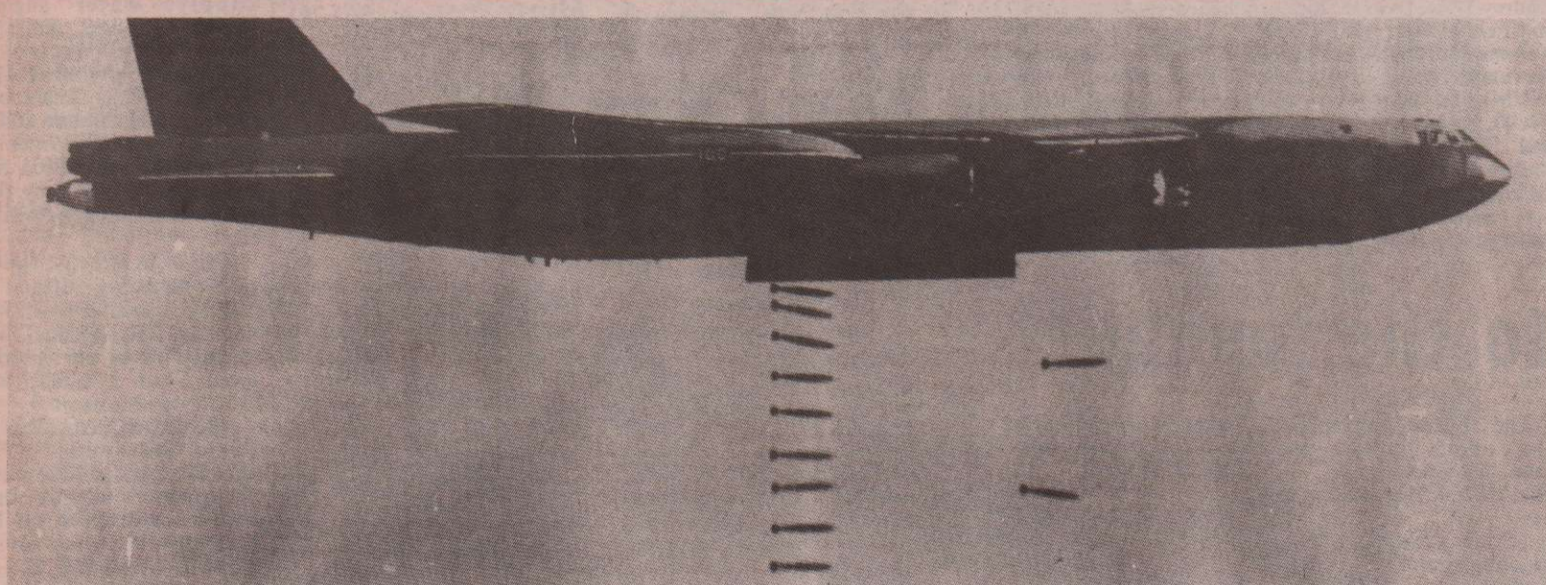
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The main enemy is at home!

Labour's anti-war voice

The blitzing of Iraq



"Men", wrote Machiavelli, "must be either pampered or crushed, because they can get revenge for small injuries but not for fatal ones. Any injury a prince does a man should be of such a kind that there is no fear of revenge."

For many years the US and Britain pampered Saddam Hussein. The CIA helped his Baathist party to power. The West armed him, traded with him, helped him against Iran, did deals with him, apologised for him. Now the US and Britain are out to crush Iraq.

The 17 million children, women and men of Iraq are being bombed, blitzed, killed, maimed and battered so that the West can be sure that no future Iraqi government can take revenge. They are being made to pay the bill for years of dirty dealings between Saddam and the Western governments, dealings in which they had no say.

Turn to page 2

Stop this atrocitiy!

Troops out of the Gulf! Iraq out of Kuwait!

Profit-first kills!

By Matt Cooper

As commuters complain about the non-arrival of their trains, and people lose sleep over the possibility of the A56 being closed, there is one section of society for whom the sub-zero weather is a matter of life and death: the homeless.

Even conservative estimates put the number of people sleeping rough in Britain at over 5,000; 2,000 of them in London. This weather could easi-

ly kill a healthy, well-fed person. After spending months, often years, on the streets, the homeless are even more vulnerable to the cold weather.

Despite its pious proclamations the government has not even been able to supply emergency accommodation during the cold weather. Its policies of profit-first housing have created the problems, its squeeze on local government and the voluntary sector has stopped those who are trying to solve it.



A homeless man huddles in the snow — Lincoln's Inn Fields, London

Build "Labour Against War"!

By Bill Hamilton

Labour Against the War was launched at a meeting in London on Tuesday 12 February. The aim is to give a collective voice to the thousands of Party members who oppose the war in the Gulf.

Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Bernie Grant, Alice Mahon, Dawn Primarolo and Gavin Strang joined activists from Labour CND, Labour

Action for Peace, and Labour Party Socialists to launch the new campaign.

More than 40 MPs, MEPs, trade unionists and local councillors signed the letter of invitation including MPs Audrey Wise, Dennis Skinner and Eric Heffer, MEPs Stan Newens Alf Lomas and Eddie Newman, Peter Heathfield (NUM) and Jake Ecclestone (NUJ), plus Joan Twelves and Yvonne Nolan (the leaders of Lambeth and Wirral councils).

A meeting at Labour's local government conference

last weekend, 'Labour Voices Against the War', attracted over 100 people, making it not only the biggest fringe event but better attended than many of the official sessions with the party's front bench spokespersons.

Labour Against the War will raise opposition to the war at all levels of the party, involving individual members in petitions, lobbying and letter writing, encouraging constituency Labour Parties to adopt "Stop the War" policies and put pressure on, and support MPs, in raising

opposition to the war in parliament.

In these crucial days just before an allied land assault, Labour Against the War will launch its campaign under the simple slogan of "Stop the War Now", uniting all those in the Party who wish

to oppose this unnecessary carnage.

Contact: Cate Murphy, Secretary, Labour Against the War, c/o Kensington Labour Party, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11: 071-277 7217 or 071-703 9260.

Labour's soft-left ducks out

By Martin Thomas

Labour's leading "soft left" MPs have been caught uncomfortably between pressure from both sides on the Gulf war.

The "soft left" is now in retreat. Its secret meetings, under the name of the "Supper Club", have been "exposed". Neil Kinnock has publicly rebuked John Prescott for attacking the Tories on war aims without any rejoinder from the "soft left", and now the media (no doubt briefed by Kinnock's office) are putting it about that Prescott will lose his job.

The extra-parliamentary voice of the "soft left", *Tribune*, has been more for-

thright than the MPs scared of losing their front bench jobs: it does at least say "Stop the War!" But it devotes much less energy and space to attacking the Tories than it does to attacking the anti-war left.

It has run a campaign to get the left witch-hunted out of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, and it warns repeatedly against any sharp and open criticism of Kinnock on the war issue.

Gentle words in Kinnock's ear, combined with frantic instructions to the activist left to keep quiet, have long been the strategy of the "soft left", of David Blunkett, Clare Short, Robin Cook, John Prescott, Jo Richardson, Mark Fisher, Chris Smith and *Tribune*. The strategy never made sense. In wartime it is grotesque.

The war has already gone far beyond Kuwait, with Iraq suffering the greatest blitzkrieg in history. Words in Kinnock's ear have no weight at all as restraints on the logic of war.

The blitzing of Iraq

From front page

Iraq has already been bombed back into the nineteenth century. Electricity supply, water supply, telecoms, bridges, and roads have been destroyed. Thousands have been killed by the bombs. Thousands more, young children and old people especially, will die because the destruction from the bombing will deny them fresh water and good medical care.

This is an atrocity: the biggest bombing attack in history, against a small, weak country. Iraq is a small, weak country led by an ambitious tyrant, but a small, weak country all the same.

The US-led coalition has flown 2000 sorties a day against Iraq for four weeks; already more tons of bombs have been dropped on Iraq than on the whole of the globe in World War 2.

Even if the bombs are not aimed at civilian targets, the percentage of error in such an assault is a huge attack on civilians by itself. And many of the bombs are definitely aimed at destroying power supply, roads, water supply, telephone systems and so on — cutting off services to civilians as well as to the Iraqi military.

In the whole of World War 2, some 30,000 people were killed by the Nazi bombing of London. In just four weeks so far of the Gulf war, about six to seven thousand civilians have been killed by bombing in Iraq, according to estimates collected by the former US Attorney-General Ramsey Clark.

Thousands upon thousands of tons of bombs are being dropped directly on Iraqi soldiers, most of whom are young conscripts.

This massacre will not and cannot "liberate" anyone. The war was never about "liberating" Kuwait, but about oil. It will leave Kuwait a bomb-riddled wasteland, but it may — so the US hopes — secure US control over the world's richest oilfields.

This is what the war is about. That is what 750,000 US, British and allied troops have been sent to risk death for. That is what thousands of Iraqi children and adults are being made to die for.

Stop the war now!

Forward to the republic!

Jimmy Greaves, man of the people, has called for the abdication of the Queen. As all the tabloids — and even that stalwart of the British conscience, the *Sunday Times* — are clamouring to point out, the monarchy is not doing its bit for our boys.

The *Daily Star* goes so far as to denounce the Queen for her failure to "lead victory prayers for Gulf troops", commenting acidly that "there have been enough modern hymns with tunes no one knows played by girls on guitars", and insisting "what Britain demands is a traditional service with the full backing of Church and State."

The Royals, apparently, are carrying on with peace time activities as if they didn't know there was a war on.

"Prince Charles joins in a shooting game, and Prince Andrew plays golf in Spain", complains the *Daily Mirror*. *Today* comments that Prince Edward (not one for the military life) is "doing nothing really useful."

The Royal Gulf War (with Fleet Street, or rather Wapping etcetera) is no doubt in part the normal tabloid fare of creating a Royal Story out of nothing in order to provide for their journalists over the next week or so. Queen in Crisis? What Crisis? Shock, that sort of thing.

But there does seem to be some sea change both in popular press attitudes to the monarchy and the public opi-

nion that they reflect, to the extent that they don't manufacture it.

Or could it be that this deeply uninteresting aspect of the war has been cooked up to switch our minds off from the real scandal?

When the body bags start arriving, people in Britain will realise that a serious crime has been committed. And 'disgust' will be a mild word for what they feel.

The press is participating in a conspiracy of silence to keep the real facts of death and mutilation from us.

An ad-hoc Israeli Committee Against the Gulf War was formed on 6 February. Its representative — Adam Keller, editor of *The Other Israel* magazine — will be in Europe between 17 February and 17 March. Groups interested in his participation in anti-war actions can contact him until 16 February at the Israeli phone number 972-3-5565804 and after 17th in Holland at 31-20-410388 (address: c/o Cypres, Heemraadschapsta 33, 1181 TZ Amstelveen, Holland).

War vindicates left press

"Please increase our bundle of papers by 50%", said *SO* sellers in Hull when we spoke to them this week.

"We've been running out of papers after sales at anti-poll tax and anti-war meetings."

With the unanimous pro-war barrage from the established media, and the counter-arguments coming only from the left press, many activists who used to be cynical, regarding the production and selling of left papers as a futile fringe activity, can now see the value and the vital importance of the left press.

Help us spread the anti-war message! If you already take some

copies of *SO* to sell, increase your order! If you don't start taking some!

Yet again this week our fund drive can record a donation — £100 this time — from a reader in Nottingham.

Nottingham supporters have not only kept up a steady stream of one-off donations, but also gathered a good number of regular donations by standing order to our "200 Club".

The monthly £100 prize draw for the "200 Club" was won this month by Pat Markey from Northampton.

Please send donations to *SO*, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Forms for the "200 Club" can be got from the same address.

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Unite the anti-war movement!



In the four weeks since the Allies began to blitz Iraq, many tens of thousands have marched through Britain's streets in protest against the blitz.

They have marched in solidarity with Iraq — solidarity not with the murderous-fascistic regime of Saddam Hussein, but with the victimised people of Iraq, caught between their own murdering state and the murderous bombs raining down on them from the skies.

Yet the truth is that the British anti-war movement remains comparatively small and, compared with the anti-war movement in the US, for example, inconsequential.

There are understandable reasons for this. The people of America remember the Vietnam war and the great anti-war movement they built to stop it. Britain, which had no troops in Vietnam, has had no such experience.

In US politics there was scope for a limited but real opposition to the war in Congress before it started. In Britain, by contrast, the official Labour opposition has been beaten down and demoralised by the Tories and their press, and it has not dared question the wisdom of committing Britain to war on the coat-tails of the Americans. The Labour leaders have acted as drum sergeant majors in this war, and the resultant broad official consensus of opinion behind the war party has inhibited protest.

And anyway, in all wars people tend to give way uncritically to their gut instinct to support their "own" side. "Support our boys" is more than a mere tabloid catchcry. The beginning of a war is always the worst time for opponents of the war, who have to stand up against the first naive waves of patriotism and enthusiasm.

Those are the "objective" reasons why the British anti-war movement is still far from being the force it needs to be. But there are other reasons too.

Since last August, when the build-up to war began, the committees trying to organise resistance to war have been floundering in a chaos of squabbling and needless, unprincipled, faction-fighting. The worst yet came at this week's meeting of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, on 11 February.

On the agenda, and given wide advance publicity by the hostile press, was an attempt by the Committee's office-holders to drive out certain members of the Committee and to close the door more firmly



Photo: John Harris
on others, including *Socialist Organiser*, who have never been allowed to affiliate.

Such was the bureaucratic carrying-on that those opposed to it could only protest by a "sit-in" in the meeting room before they were ejected. Among those joining the sit-in were two of the foremost anti-war MPs, Bernie Grant and Jeremy Corbyn!

Corbyn is not only a foremost campaigner against the war, he has the deserved credibility of one who has for years been at the forefront of campaigning against Saddam Hussein's regime. Three years ago, when the British Foreign Office was still covering up for Saddam, he brought to public attention Saddam's use of poison gas against Kurds within the Iraqi state.

The meeting ended with a decision to defer the whole matter for a week. Then the farce will begin again! The attempt will continue to tie the movement to an elaborately detailed platform — a document suited more to a political party than to the broad anti-war campaign we need to build. (For details, see page 6).

For those who seriously want to build an anti-war movement, the time has come to take stock and to make a fresh start.

Differences of opinion are

unavoidable within any broad anti-war movement. Those who want to build an effective opposition to the war will try to unite and concentrate the anti-war movement despite the differences. Small-minded factionalists, and sectarians who raise slogans more for the sake of private

"For those who seriously want to build an anti-war movement, the time has come to take stock and to make a fresh start."

emotional satisfaction than as tools for mass work, will pursue limited private goals even at the expense of breaking up the movement.

The system of organisation which would allow the broadest anti-war movement is a loose coalition, grouping people who disagree on many things around a minimum adequate programme — right now, "Stop the War!" — and around specific projects, demonstrations, and so on.

With such an approach, people

like *Socialist Organiser* supporters who argue for *Troops out of the Gulf* and *Iraq out of Kuwait* could unite with those who disagree with one or other of those slogans. Opponents of UN sanctions could work together with supporters of UN sanctions, debating the issue but jointly organising protests to stop the war.

To try to limit the anti-war campaign, or its leading councils, to those who can agree on a detailed programme not only for stopping the war but also for the whole Middle East — that is to confuse building a broad anti-war movement with building a sect. Yet that is the approach of the frantically factional cartel of office-holders who now control the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

The situation is rendered all the more poisonous and envenomed by the peculiar fact that some of the key office-holders have one set of politics for their broad committee persona, and another privately. Thus, the secretary of the Committee, Carol Turner, who *witch-hunts* people who call for *Troops out*, is a leading supporter of *Socialist Action* — which supports the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait and is for a full Iraqi victory in the war!

Other leading figures in the Committee are members of various neo-Stalinist factions, including such

Stop the war! The basis for unity.

"tankie-pacifists" as Mike Hicks, secretary of the *Morning Star* Communist Party. (They are "tankies" because they still support the Kremlin when it sends its tanks to repress Lithuania, and "pacifists" because that is what they pretend to be in the Committee).

When you get people like Carol Turner, backed up by the neo-Stalinists and by some CND officials, witch-hunting people like the Socialist Workers' Party for allegedly being too "pro-Iraq" — and Carol Turner herself is in a group far more firmly and sincerely "pro-Iraq" than the SWP she wants to drive out — then you introduce the politics of the madhouse into the anti-war movement. It is close to the sort of "politics" associated with the name of the late Gerry Healy.

A powerful anti-Vietnam-war movement was built in Britain in the late '60s, even though Britain was not at war.

It was built according to the formula we recommend now: a loose and accommodating organisational structure, combined with unity in action around specific projects. Then, too, the movement had to be built despite the obstruction of the then-powerful Stalinist organisation. But it was built. There was always a great deal of in-fighting and squabbling, but it did not disrupt or cripple the movement. The antics of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf will.

We need to set up a broad-based, democratically-organised, and loosely-structured committee, with a programme of organising the biggest possible demonstrations. Different groups must be allowed to argue for their own special ideas — within the common framework and the common drive to organise the demonstrations — or else every serious disagreement (on "Troops out", "Iraq out of Kuwait", sanctions, whatever) will bring splits and loss of effectiveness.

On Monday 11th, Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Grant, both influential individuals in their own right, had to resort to a "sit-in" to make their point. Other influential people, and in the first place Tony Benn, should exert their influence to pull the anti-war movement away from the self-defeating sectarian trajectory on which it is set.

Unite to stop the war!

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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

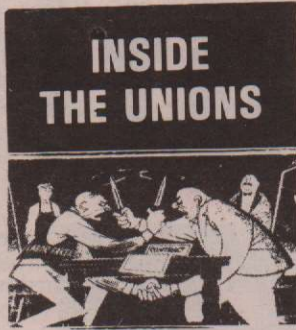
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The 'lesser evil' in the EETPU

Good news seems to be a bit thin on the ground just at the moment, so here's some for you: Eric Hammond is retiring as general secretary of the EETPU. There's bad news as well, of course: whoever replaces him is likely to be just as big a carbuncle on the face of decent trade unionism.



By Sleeper

When the election takes place in June, EETPU members will be faced with a choice between the union's president Paul Gallacher and the Power Supply national officer, Danny Carrigan. Both are very much part of the Hammond machine and any differences they may have are strictly "in the family".

Nevertheless, Gallacher is very much Hammond's man and on the sophisticated principle of "my enemy's enemy is my friend", the left within the union looks set to throw what weight it has behind Carrigan.

Carrigan has been a full-timer for the EETPU for over a decade, which is hardly indicative of a history of principled opposition to the Hammond regime. Nevertheless, he is now posing as something of an "outsider" and describing himself as a "Kinnock supporter" — which in EETPU terms is a bit like coming out as a life-long sleeper for the KGB.

Carrigan recently told the *Scotsman* that he wants the union "to appeal to members across a wider political spectrum who have been dismayed by the union's ostracism over Wapping and its policy of aggressively courting single union no-strike agreements".

Sounds good, huh? But what does it actually mean? It means that Carrigan knows Hammond's grand designs for "going it alone" outside the TUC and creating an "alternative" union federation, have all gone down the pan. It means that Carrigan is aware that the EETPU membership has fallen from 416,000 in 1982 to 370,000 in 1988 and continues to fall at the rate of about 4,000 members per year. It means that Carrigan remembers that a quarter of the members who voted in 1988, opposed Hammond's split from the TUC.

But, come to that, Gallacher too is in favour of getting the union back inside the TUC. Big Eric himself now says the union should be "building bridges" back to Congress House. This is the present EETPU orthodoxy.

The Somnolent One is not necessarily opposed to voting for Carrigan. I deigned to give my powerful backing to Ron Todd against George Wright for general secretary of the TGWU, when to all outward appearances there wasn't a cigarette paper's breadth of difference between them in 1984/85. But that was, in reality, an important left vs right showdown, with the entire future direction of the TGWU at stake. I have yet to be convinced that the forthcoming Gallacher vs Carrigan scrap is in any way comparable.

If Carrigan comes out with some half-way decent statements on such matters as single-union/no-strike deals, scabbing on other trade unionists, sweetheart deals with the likes of Rupert



Eric Hammond

Murdoch, etc, etc, then he may get the benefit of my endorsement. But the desperate fantasy of some EETPU lefts, in which Carrigan represents something approximating principled trade unionism as against the Hammond/Gallacher axis, is simply not good enough.

Our attitude to Carrigan is important, because he could very well defeat Gallacher — especially if he takes a leaf out of Bill Jordan's book and uses the power industry pay claim (coming up in the middle of the election) as an unofficial adjunct to his election campaign.

Of course, the obvious thing for the left in the EETPU to do would be to stand their own candidate. According to *Socialist Worker*, "there is talk of standing a rank and file candidate", but so far there is no sign of anyone on the horizon.

As the SWP were so keen to be the co-ordinators of the 'Campaign for Re-affiliation to the TUC' — the last left initiative in the EETPU — perhaps they can explain why?

Meanwhile, socialists in the EETPU would do well to remember the last time they supported a "lesser evil" candidate (against Frank Chapple): his name was Eric Hammond.



Soviet officer tries to warn off demonstrators in Lithuania

Wildcat capitalism grows as USSR crisis worsens

Boris Kagarlitsky, a leader of the Socialist Party in Moscow, spoke to Mark Osborn

In the Moscow city council there is a very strange feeling. On the one hand people are afraid of an official decree which would attack the council. But on the other hand there would be relief at such a decree.

There is a deep sensation of failure in the council.

There is a situation of stalemate with central government. The central state is withholding resources; the Moscow Soviet is doing likewise. The result is the strangulation of the ordinary citizen.

The shortages in Moscow have been worse than they are currently. But in general the shortages have been exaggerated by the Western media.

The Moscow city privatisation is continuing in a

"wildcat" way. By this I mean individual bureaucrats are opting out and buying up the concerns which they used to manage. This "wildcat" privatisation is the main method at the moment.

Last week a very important strike ended. The strike lasted five days and was led by a

"The Socialist Party has opposed Soviet involvement in the Gulf war."

member of the Socialist Party. The workers were successful in stopping privatisation of their steel plant. This is significant. This was the first ever strike against privatisation in the USSR.

Gorbachev continues to be fantastically unpopular and Yeltsin is losing his popularity only very slowly. I think that the Socialist Party will only get a mass following after people have actually experienced the policies of the

reformers.

We are, of course, for the rights of the Lithuanians, but are opposed to Landsbergis. We have links with those who opposed the Russians when they intervened in Lithuania.

We are currently discussing the idea of a Soviet "Workers' Party". Obviously this is a long-term project. Obviously I would not be against a number of smaller left-wing organisations getting together. But what I am talking about is a mass working class party. The model is not your British Labour Party but the Brazilian Workers Party.

I like your paper. I read it regularly — we also use the term "sub-imperialism" to describe Iraq. The Socialist

Party believes that the allied forces should leave the region and the Arab people should be allowed to solve their own problems.

We do not support Saddam Hussein. We oppose both sides. In recent weeks, emotionally, we have moved towards the Iraqi people who face the bombing of the Americans.

We are in favour of Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. But this is not a job the Americans should be allowed to do. We are opposed to the undemocratic rule of the Emir. We have opposed any Soviet involvement in the war.

The Socialist Party does not have a position on sanctions.



Kurdish victim of Saddam's poison gas

"Kurds don't want this war"

An Iraqi Kurd spoke to Socialist Organiser

The Iraqi government has planned to destroy all the people of Iraq — everything. They tried to shift the Kurdish population.

I think there's no real difference between Saddam Hussein and imperialism. All of them want to kill and

destroy all the peoples of Iraq.

There are a lot of Kurdish organisations. Some of them want to kill Saddam. But a majority of the Kurdish people — here and in Kurdistan — want peace. They hate Saddam, because for 20 years he has tried to destroy Kurdistan and the Kurdish people.

But this war is killing Kurdish and Iraqi people. I am sure a majority of Kurdish people don't want this war.



In recent months there has been a supposed crackdown by Soviet authorities on anti-semitism.

A measure of its "success" is the publication of the cartoon above in the weekly newspaper *Moscow Builder* at the close of 1990.

Moscow Builder is published by the Moscow Construction Committee and the Moscow Central Committee of the Trade Union of Workers in the Building Trade and Building Materials Industry. The paper is a great admirer of the KGB and

the Ministry of Defence. The caption at the side of the cartoon reads: "Are you ready for the market which we control?" The sheet of paper held by the anti-semitic stereotypes and "adorned" with the Star of David reads: "Balance in Bank — A Million Dollars".

The scapegoating of Jews for the current shortages and high prices of basic consumer necessities is thus combined — by virtue of the bank account being in dollars — with the traditional Stalinist anti-semitic theme of American finance capital being controlled by Jews.

Bob Hawke follows in the footsteps of Menzies

Tony Brown reports from Sydney on how prime minister Bob Hawke has dragged the Australian Labor Party into support for the Gulf war

The anti-war demos are growing but so is Hawke's popularity. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) still trails the Liberals [the main conservative party], but Hawke

has now gone ahead of [the Liberal leader] Hewson again. It appears that too many people love a good lickspittle warmonger.

While the news is dominated by reports from the Pentagon and London, some of the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Corporation] current affairs coverage has been very good. The evening half-hour current affairs show — the 7.30 Report — became the Gulf Report for a fortnight. One of their regular commentators was an academic from Macquarie University, Dr Robert Springberg.

He analyses the situation, predicts developments, explains different aspects of the history and politics of the region and individual countries. As a result Hawke has made two vitriolic attacks on him — not by name, but everyone knows who he is referring to.

Hawke called in the heads of the ABC and gave them a dressing down for having Springberg on. So far they say he won't be taken off and he hasn't.

It seems his real crime came last August when he likened Hawke to Robert Menzies [conservative Prime Minister in the '50s and '60s] for offering the US Australian

troops before Australia was asked [as Menzies did in Vietnam].

The whole ALP parliamentary caucus supported sending three Australian frigates to the Gulf last year. Hawke unilaterally told Bush we'd be in the Gulf, then presented it to Caucus as a fait accompli. The left said they'd go along as long as no more troops were committed.

By January Hawke had been forced to recall Parliament for a vote.

Eight frontbenchers told Hawke they didn't like his position. Five MPs abstained in the Lower House, but there was no count. In the Senate, the Democrats opposed the

resolution and three Labour Senators there had their abstentions recorded.

The next day the leader of the Caucus Left agreed disciplinary action should be taken against those three because they had broken Caucus discipline.

Ken Baldwin, the leader of the New South Wales left, of course voted with Hawke. The most stomach-turning display was from Gerry Hand, leader of the more radical Socialist Left in Victoria. Hand broke down in tears during his speech explaining why he would vote for the war even though he didn't agree with it.

Curfew law in West Bank

Ingrid from the Alternative Information Centre, a left-wing civil rights centre in Israel, spoke to SO on 4 February

The curfew in the West Bank and Gaza has been operating for 20 days.

The curfew was imposed in many places on 16 January, right at the start of the war. The rest of the areas had a curfew imposed on 17 January.

It is a total curfew of all the refugee camps, cities and villages. It is for 24 hours a day. Recently, in a few areas, the curfew has been lifted for a few hours. People never know when this will happen.

All productive work has broken down. Transport has broken down. The health service is running badly. There are special permits to doctors to move around, but our information says that this is not "The curfew laws are being used against people they want to arrest."

enough. People who are chronically ill or who fall sick are in danger. It is not guaranteed that they can get help.

When the curfew is lifted there is nothing in the shops to buy. Tomorrow they are giving special permits to merchants from Gaza and some places in the West Bank to supply the shops with food. Now the problem is that the people do not have money anymore, because they cannot go to work — neither in Israel nor in the West Bank.

People do not know how to continue to live.

Some people have been jailed under the curfew laws, it is difficult to know how many. Our information network is under strain caused by the curfew. People cannot get to their offices.

Many people have been arrested. But the curfew laws are also being used against people who the authorities want to arrest. People have been arrested in their homes.

One woman was shot for breaking the curfew. This happened in the Nablus area in the first few days of the war. She went outside, to the balcony of her house. She was holding her baby in her arms. A soldier shot her.

Israeli Jewish people can pass without problem. The curfew does not apply to the Jewish settlers of the West Bank. They move freely.

The soldiers at the road blocks let cars past with a yellow licence plate. Yellow plates are for Israeli citizens. Cars with the blue licence plates of the West Bank are stopped.

People are being arrested under the curfew simply because they carry the new green ID cards. Green ID cards are special ID cards for some people who live in the West Bank and Gaza. People who have these cards are not allowed to enter Israeli territory. These cards are only for Palestinians.

The distribution of these green ID cards was begun in the autumn. It was said that it was a security measure to prevent clashes between Arabs and Jewish people.

They are using the curfew to distribute a planned 20,000 of these cards.

The security forces are very suspicious of people with the green ID cards. If a group is stopped at a roadblock they may well just arrest the one person who has a green ID card. The criteria for green ID cards are people who have been in prison. At the beginning they were only for people with a criminal record. Recently they have decided to give them to Palestinians who have a security record. There are tens of thousands of such people.

Palestinian leader arrested

The intifada is finding it difficult under the curfew. Activists have had their telephones cut. It is difficult to co-ordinate action.

In some places, when the curfew has been lifted, there have been clashes. It has not been the same intensity. People have so little time to buy supplies.

The leaflets of the unified leadership of the intifada are hard to issue. It took a long time for a leaflet to come out about the war.

Just recently, on 30 January, the latest leaflet, Number 67, dealt with the issue of the war. It calls on the Palestinian



A cop guards a homeless man recruited as a scab seller for the Daily News

New York printers fight union-busting

LETTER FROM NEW YORK

By Barry Finger

About 2,300 *Daily News* employees from nine unions struck at America's second largest circulation daily on 25 October. They had been working for six months without a contract.

The immediate cause of the strike was a management provocation. After an injured worker was suspended for not obeying an order to stand

while performing his job, several hundred drivers walked out in sympathy. Within hours management had bussed in replacement workers, locked out union members and summarily fired 60 militants.

The *Daily News* is owned by the Chicago-based Tribune Company, notorious for its union-busting strategies from Chicago to Newport News, Virginia. The six-month period since the expiry of the last contract was characterised by stepped-up shopfloor harassment coupled with continuous demands for labour givebacks.

But "mere" concessions were never management's ultimate goal. It clearly harboured the intention from the outset of eliminating the

unions entirely. To achieve this, management acquired a newspaper plant in New Jersey and readied it to be deployed as a backup once the strike was provoked.

In the meantime, the plant was used as a training ground for replacement workers. Having been struck, management then imported scab reporters from its papers in Chicago and Orlando and assigned the newly trained replacement workers to its main printing plant in Brooklyn. The replacements are paid at half the union scale.

This strike has rapidly gained national attention for two reasons — because New York City is the media centre of the country and because union density here is almost 2½ times the national average. The 40% of New York City's workers who are unionised immediately grasped the crux of the issue.

And that is, in a nutshell, whether permanent replacement workers will be tolerated in this citadel of labour. Employers have, unfortunately, always been free to recruit scabs in order to weather strikes. But until 1981 when Ronald Reagan used permanent replacements to break the air traffic controller strike, employers have rarely employed this weapon. In fact, of all the advanced capitalist nations only the US and South Africa permit the use of permanent replacement workers.

Reagan in effect set the theme for labour relations which has been repeated since

then by Greyhound bus lines, Continental Airlines, the International Paper Company, Boise Cascade and the Chicago Tribune. Just as ominous is the increased willingness of industry to entertain the practice of hiring permanent replacements as reflected in a recent government survey of 132 companies. The present recession will only make this weapon more tempting.

This has inspired an almost unprecedented display of solidarity on the part of the labour movement. On 1 November more than 10,000 city unionists demonstrated in support of the strikers in front of the *Daily News* headquarters. Members of 25 unions have scoured working class neighbourhoods urging readers to cancel their subscriptions. Vendors still retailing the newspaper have been picketed.

Using Transport Workers' funds, volunteers from the TWU and striking unions have purchased copies of competing papers and distributed them for free next to newsstands which refuse to comply. Advertisers have been threatened with boycotts for failing to withhold copy.

Strikers have published an alternative "Real News" paper.

Unions such as the Steelworkers and United Mineworkers have offered organisational and financial assistance in mobilising a nationwide campaign against the Tribune company.

GRAFFITI

Move to purge Committee to Stop War No way to run an anti-war movement

GRAFFITI

The splits and factionalism which have dogged the movement against the Gulf war got worse this week.

At the meeting on Monday 11th of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, Labour MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Grant had to join a brief 'sit-in' as the only way of protesting at the Committee's exclusiveness.

On 4 February the Committee had 'closed' itself to new affiliations. On Monday it excluded even observers from groups which have sought affiliation: the meeting was to discuss further exclusion, namely the exclusion of the Socialist Workers' Party.

The proposal, moved by Mike Hicks of the Communist Party of Britain, was for all affiliates of the Committee to be required to sign a 15-point platform — including support for sanctions against Iraq — as a condition for continued membership. In the end the Committee voted by 20 to 9 to defer its decision, but it looks as if the purge will go through next week.

For the past several months the Socialist Movement, Labour Briefing, Women Against War in the Gulf, Socialist Outlook, LPS and Socialist Organiser have been attempting to affiliate. WAWG and Outlook have had affiliation cheques for £50 cashed.

Yet the affiliations have been blocked. And the way the Committee has been run has worried many activists, from CND and the Greens as well as from the left.

A letter circulated by the Green Party at the Committee meeting on 11 February complains of Committee secretary Carol Turner's failure to circulate minutes and agendas and the fact that votes at previous meetings had included people who should not have been voting.

On top of such irregularities, several times CND chair Marjorie Thompson has tried to swing votes by threatening that CND will withdraw from the Committee. Carol Turner then follows up by accusing those who are about to vote the wrong way of wanting to drive CND out of the organisation.

On 11 February I knew we were in for a bad meeting when I saw Marjorie Thompson and three people from Socialist Action — Carol Turner's group — causing in a coffee bar beforehand. And so it proved.

The proposed 15 points are, in summary:

- Immediate ceasefire;
- Withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, to be enforced by economic sanctions;
- A UN Middle East peace conference;
- A timetable for the withdrawal of US and allied forces from the Gulf, of Iraq from Kuwait, and of Israel from the occupied territories;
- A replacement UN force in the Gulf, with major Arab participation;
- A UN relief fund;
- Ban on exports of nuclear, chemical and biological weapon technology;
- A new UN human rights monitoring agency;
- A stronger role for the UN;
- A stronger nuclear non-proliferation treaty;
- A comprehensive nuclear test ban;
- A ban on chemical weapons;
- Opposition to unduly strict media controls;
- Opposition to NATO extending into the Middle East;
- Political, economic and social reform in the Middle East.

One other point was added: Iraqi self-determination.

The whole idea of basing what should be a broad, non-exclusive movement on such a lengthy platform is wrong. And as lengthy platforms go, the 16 points are not a good one.

For example: if the withdrawal of US and British troops is to be on the same timetable as Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, then, short of miracles, the troops will be there for many years. Is that really what the Committee wants?

It is reasonable that the Committee should want to distance itself from sectarians shouting 'Victory to Iraq!' That is the 'good reason' proposed by Tribune, for example, for a purge. It is not the real reason.

The Committee could distance itself from the sectarians simply by adopting and publicising a policy of 'Iraq out of Kuwait!' It need not and should not purge those who disagree with that policy.

In fact it does have a policy for 'Iraq out of Kuwait!' but its leaflets have never carried that slogan. And the Green Party reps even made a formal complaint about that omission at the 11 February meeting.

Why the omission? Could it be because the secretary of the Committee, Socialist Action supporter Carol Turner, privately opposes 'Iraq out of Kuwait!'?

The proposed purge will divide the anti-war movement further. The Committee will exclude not only Socialist Organiser, Labour Party Socialists and such groups, but also a wider range of Labour left opinion, the SWP, and the left of CND. It will become a narrow pro-UN, pro-sanctions group. Only the narrowest factionalism can justify that.

The purge will also give further aid and comfort to the police in their attempts to criminalise anti-war opinion: on the 2 February demonstration, one marcher, Alistair Green, was arrested for shouting 'Defend Iraq!'

All that is bad enough; and what makes it weird and doubly irrational is that the people at the centre of the Committee — Carol Turner, its Secretary, Marjorie Thompson of CND, and others — are supporters or allies of Socialist Action, a group which privately holds the same 'Victory to Iraq!' line which it wants to exclude others for advocating! How Carol Turner and her friends square it all in their minds I don't know, but the gist of it seems to be that they have two sets of politics, one for private sect-building use, and the other (sanctions, UN, etc) for public political manoeuvres and manipulation.

This business discredits Socialist Action but it can also discredit and confuse the whole anti-war movement. Responsible anti-war activists should call the Committee to order.

Mark Osborn

A new pamphlet from Socialist Organiser



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Another sophisticated liberal backs the slaughter

The reluctant warmonger

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

I don't suppose it would bother him (even if he ever heard about it) but Neal Ascherson has just lost a devoted member of his fan club: me.

I seem to recall once describing him here as the "best columnist in Britain". When he switched over from the Observer to the Independent on Sunday I followed. His grasp of history and ability to make telling analogies is often breathtaking. His understanding of such matters as inter-communal strife, nationalism and Eastern Europe, ought to shame most avowed "left" commentators (even if he does seem to hold the likes of Tom Nairn in rather too high an esteem).

But this Sunday, the Great Man came out as a "reluctant middle-of-the-road warmonger" over the Gulf. His "confession" seems to have been brought on by an article by Paul Foot in the London Review of Books which I haven't seen, but which Ascherson considers lacking in "heaviness" and a "dashing reduction of the whole crisis to an American war for oil" (an analysis, Ascherson concedes, that "has its charm").

Now, I am no fan of Mr Paul Foot either, and having heard him speak at a recent

revivalist rally billed by the SWP as a political meeting, I am quite well aware that a lot of Foot's "arguments" are nonsense from any rational standpoint and, at best, boil down to the profound observation that American presidents tend to be hypocrites when it comes to defending democracy.

But Foot is at least clear in opposing the war and (together with the majority of his fellow Mirror columnists) has said so in print. Foot's crass views on the Middle East question in general are another matter. Neal Ascherson, on the other hand, can

do no better than bleat that "a world which cannot stand up to a tyrant and aggressor like Saddam Hussein will soon become uninhabitable", a widely held and not entirely unreasonable view, but one that comes ill from a writer who then proceeds to destroy his own case by observing that "the costs of fighting him [Saddam] are very great; a brutal and indiscriminate war whose bill in blood will be paid mostly by civilians and helpless conscripts; a probably botched 'settlement' afterwards which will try to impose a new Western hegemony over the Middle

East and which will leave Israel as the unchallenged regional super-power".

Yet Ascherson inexplicably adds at the end of this dreadful scenario: "even those things are less terrible than leaving intact Saddam's conquests and power to conquer".

I suppose the war has simply exposed the main trouble with sophisticated, decent, liberal commentators like Ascherson (and the Guardian's Hugo Young): they're not socialists. Still, I'm genuinely very sad to resign from the fan club.

The lie machine



22,000 refuse to serve with the Gulf task force

THE SHAME OF GERMANY

"Embarrassment", "lacklustre contribution", "cowardice" were the words used by the Mail. It did not even consider the argument that, on the contrary, it is cause for pride that so many young Germans take a stand against shedding blood for oil.



Shock! horror! the Sun comes out against the poll tax! It is horrified by poll tax bills being sent to troops in the Gulf or in barracks in Britain. And what does the Sun say about poll tax bills for the underpaid healthworkers who will be dealing with the wounded from the Gulf?



The Daily Star's answer to the problems of the Gulf: the Queen should pray for victory! It's over the-top screeching — followed up the next day by a front page carrying a call from, of all people, soccer commentator Jimmy Greaves, for the Queen to abdicate — must reflect a dim awareness that the traditional guff about Queen and Country no longer has the grip it used to have.

A kick in the teeth for science

Les Hearn's



SCIENCE COLUMN

With its settlement for the budgets of the Research Councils, the government has dealt what *New Scientist* calls a "death blow to nuclear physics".

While the Medical, Natural Environment, Agriculture and Food, and Economic and Social Research Councils have all suffered drops in funding after allowing for inflation, it is the Science and Engineering Research Coun-

cil (SERC) which has really been stuffed.

Requiring £41 million extra to make up for the 9.3% inflation over the relevant period, it has been given just over £12 million or 2.8%. Coupled with a £7m overspend last year, due to underfunding and the falling value of the pound (this has cost millions over the years in subscriptions to European research organisations), SERC has to find £30m of cuts this year.

Inevitably, the more expensive projects are to be targeted and SERC has just announced the planned closure, next year if no further money is available, of the Daresbury Laboratory, near Manchester, Britain's only remaining nuclear research facility. Thus, nuclear research is set to finish in Britain as a result of government policies.

The Daresbury lab contains a particle accelerator which smashes the nuclei of atoms together at high speed. The result is an explosion of fragments and rays which helps to give information on the fundamental structure of nuclei, providing more knowledge about the matter that we and our universe are made of. No-one can say whether this will be of any use to humanity, but, as a general rule, the more you know, the better. It may pro-

vide clues as to how to get nuclear fusion to operate economically, which would clearly be of immense benefit to humankind.

Daresbury is also the site of a synchrotron, which produces beams of all sorts of radiation and of neutrons, which can be used to investigate the structure of a wide range of molecules, proteins, hormones, drugs, etc, or to investigate the behaviour of materials exposed to radiation. Spin-offs include the development of radiation monitors and medical detection equipment (scanners). Its threatened closure has led to international protests.

Other projects at risk include:

- Britain's role in a Soviet astronomy mission. British scientists are at present building a telescope for this which will be able to detect X-rays from deep space.

- A collaboration with NASA to build what would be the main instrument for detecting ultra-violet rays from the rest of the universe.

- The building of the largest optical telescope in the northern hemisphere.

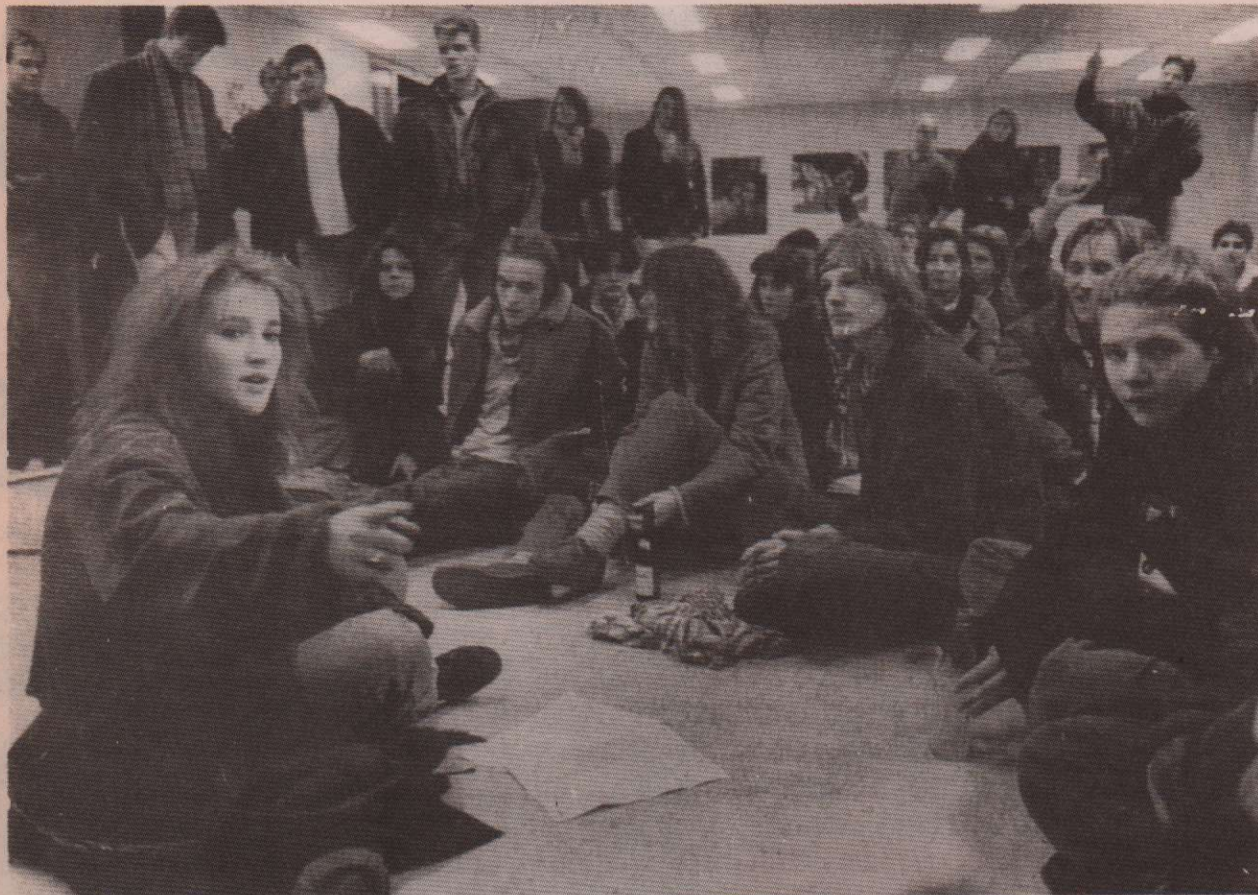
- The building of a gravitational wave detector. This would be crucial in confirming or otherwise Einstein's prediction of gravitational radiation and helping us establish a coherent theory of

the fundamental forces of nature.

- The setting up of a centre for research into simple nervous systems, with implications for developing artificial intelligence as well as for understanding the workings of the brain.

There will also be reductions in research in information technology, engineering design and computing in engineering. "Small" scientific projects in chemistry, physics, biology and medicine will also be affected, as a group of SERC members made clear in a letter to the press. Projects will be delayed, disrupted or cancelled because research workers and students will be unable to be guaranteed salaries, grants or funds. Situations like the MRC's recent freeze on recruitment because they had run out of money will become more common.

The sort of approach that limits research to those areas where an immediate result or application is guaranteed is dooming us to a wider ignorance. "Pure" research frequently has value beyond the wildest imagination. As Michael Faraday said when asked by Gladstone, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the use of his newly discovered electricity: "Sir, one day you will be able to tax it."



School students at an anti-war meeting in Hamburg, Germany. School students have been at the forefront of the anti-war movement in Germany.

Student anti-war campaign widens

By Eddie Goncalves, co-chair, Student CND



The student anti-war campaign is definitely widening out. More people are getting involved. They are from a broader cross section of students. They cover a wider political spectrum.

The problem at the moment is that public opinion is stiffening in favour of the war, now that war has really started.

We are no longer campaigning to prevent a war from starting. Now it is a campaign to stop war in which British service men and women are fighting.

All the official — and unofficial! — hype and propaganda weighs heavily against the peace movement. And within the peace movement itself the biggest danger is needless factionalism and sectarianism. Now we have the tragedy that sections of the anti-war movement are running something like a McCarthyite witch-hunt against other anti-war campaigners.

Nevertheless there is growing local activity against the war.

An interesting case I came across the other day: a baker in Newcastle decided to refuse to pay his war taxes, that is refuse to pay the percentage of his income tax going towards war spending.

I would encourage all tax payers to do this. The anti-war movement should encourage people to do it.

In the student movement the foundations of the Student Federation against Gulf War is an important start.

Students have the opportunity to link the war in the Gulf to issues in British education.

The whole question of the expansion of military research in colleges can be used to bring the issue home. Instead of being seen only as



Demonstrators in Essen. The placards read, 'No blood for oil', 'Yes — develop peace', 'Peace for the whole world', 'Everyone wants peace'

a war 1,000 miles away, we can show it is also being fought in colleges where Tory cuts have savaged education, even while military research has expanded.

The impact of the war on Student CND is very interesting.

Student CND was not an organisation until 1983. Then it got closed down and all its members joined Youth CND.

Student CND was restarted about 12-18 months ago. We found that we had several hundred individual members and a number of affiliations.

Over the last 3 or 4 months the number of individual members and college affilia-

tions has ballooned. So has our activity.

Up and down the country Student CND can boast a lot of Presidents and other student union office holders among our members.

That will increase this year — sabbatical elections in colleges and for NUS Executive may show an even bigger swing toward the CND-Peace Movement left.

I think student anti-war activists should get involved in this way in student unions.

Those are open and democratic structures and are available to us. They provide a forum for debate and pulling others into the campaign.

Councils fall foul

POLL TAX

By Chris Croome

Hundreds of poll tax wage deductions made by local authorities on their own employees might have to be paid back.

This is the opinion of a barrister who has been engaged by Sheffield law centre on behalf of Sheffield NALGO. The barrister has concluded: "It is at least strongly arguable that...the regulations do not enable an authority to serve an attachment of earnings order upon itself."

It is now hoped that the issue can be pursued by NALGO nationally through an industrial tribunal.

Nottingham City's Labour council thinks it's doing pretty well in its attempts to collect the poll tax and combat high non-payment.

It has so far issued over 38,000 liability orders.

Labour councillors defend this, saying they "have to do it" because it's the law.

Yet Liverpool, with an even higher level of non-payment, has only issued 111. Indeed, according to the *Guardian*, Nottingham's figure is the highest in England.

Issuing liability orders, however, is a different thing to getting the money in. A local councillor recently admitted that the response to wage arrestment forms was poor.

The same councillor said he had only had to deal with two poll tax problems at his regular ward surgery — then added that he believed that this was because most people were just not paying it.

The poll tax non-payment movement could find itself with some strange new members next year.

Labour Party right wingers in Sherwood, Nottingham, who have been virulent against the



Islington North's Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn was taken to court this week — by Islington's Labour council, for not paying poll tax. The council is paying a barrister £1,000 a day to prosecute poll tax cases.

anti-poll tax campaign, insisting that "the law is the law and must be obeyed", and have consistently backed harsher penalties for non-payers, are up in arms because this year's non-payment looks set to add up to £50 onto next year's bill.

By law, this amount has to be shown on the bill. So now the canny right wingers are talking about not paying this extra amount!

On councillor told them that, like any other non-payer, they would be taken to court for it. Whatever happened to "the law must be obeyed"?

On 26 January the Leeds Federation of anti-poll tax groups held its second AGM.

It decided to subscribe to, and support the aims of, 3D, the network of independent anti-poll tax activists.

3D members have been active in the Leeds Fed since its inception, and are respected as some of the best activists in the campaign.

Ian Greaves, a regular contributor to 3D's newsletters, was re-elected as Secretary.

The meeting also passed two resolutions opposing the war in the Gulf. The first called on the Labour Party to play a major role in opposing the war and the other called for troops out of the Gulf and affiliation to the Leeds Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

Lambeth's Labour council leader speaks out against the war

The tabloids have been in full cry against Lambeth Council because of its stand against the Gulf war. Council leader Joan Twelves responds

Lambeth council held a special meeting to declare its opposition to the war, and to demand an immediate ceasefire. And our

experience at that meeting is quite important to recount.

It's a cliché that is real, that the first casualty of war is truth and the campaign of vilification we have been subjected to as a council is instructive of that.

Every Labour councillor in Lambeth last week received in their post, at home, a letter from Joyce Gould, the Labour Party Director of Organisation. She told us that the war was not germane to the functionings of Lambeth Council. What's more, she told us that our

anti-war resolution should be withdrawn from the agenda.

If it is not, she added, then councillors were not bound by the Group whip when voting on this resolution. They could vote against Labour Group policy without breaking the rules of the Party.

Gould licensed them to break Group policy, to break the Whip, and to vote for war with the Tories! Some councillors in Lambeth did that. They had not had the guts to speak out in Labour Group, they had not had the guts to vote against in the Labour Group. They then went run-

ning to Walworth Road saying "How do we stop this?" And we had Joyce Gould telling them to break the Whip.

Yet, we won. Despite all their efforts, we won. The position of the national Labour Party on this war is one of the scandals of the war.

The campaign of vilification against Lambeth council started with the *Daily Star* declaring that a motion against the war was actually a motion to discipline workers who may have relatives serving in the forces at war in the Gulf, that it was a motion to stop anyone at all, anywhere

in the borough, putting the front page of the *Sun* up in their windows, that it was all about flags — and we were all traitors.

The Labour Party added its voice to that! The Labour Party leaders put stories in the Sunday papers against us. The story in the *Sunday Times* was a story that came out of Walworth Road!

Our local paper this week, the *South London Press*, has letters in it calling me a traitor, demanding that I be sent to the Gulf, that I be put in jail!

Those stories are being whipped up by the Labour

Party. People who stand up to the Labour leadership need to recognise that if they speak out against the Labour Party's position they could, and will, be subject to the same kind of campaigns we have had to contend with.

Yet we are elected local politicians, chosen to speak out on politics, with the council as a platform. So why the bloody hell shouldn't we use it!

This was part of a speech Joan Twelves, leader of Lambeth Council, made at a fringe meeting organised by Nottingham Against War in the Gulf during the Labour Party local government conference on 9 February.

Lesbians and gays fight back

Liberation means socialism

By Steph Ward

Capitalism controls and oppresses everyone's sexuality. Lesbians and gay men are at the sharp end of bigotry, discrimination and prejudice.

The norm is monogamous, married, child-rearing heterosexuality; other sexualities and lifestyles are subjected to ridicule and disadvantage.

Repression and prejudice hits lesbians and gays, 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 rights to make our own choices.

Lesbian and gay liberation goes beyond the narrow confines of achieving civil liberties for a minority. It demands the liberation of the whole of human sexuality, a liberation that will allow all people the right to decide and express sexuality as we choose.

The achievement of equality before the law for all regardless of sexuality would be a significant step forward but we need more than

laws. We should work for a wholly new sort of society — a socialist society.

The struggle for lesbian and gay liberation shares a common goal with the struggle of the working class for liberation.

The struggle for lesbian and gay liberation must be firmly rooted in the labour movement and the labour movement must be made ac-

"Equality before the law... would be a significant step forward but we need more than laws."

cessible to lesbians and gay men. Our issues must be taken up. We need to challenge the homophobia in the labour movement and make sure the rights of lesbians and gay men to organise autonomously within it.

The labour movement must fight alongside the lesbian and gay community, and involve lesbians and gay men in fighting as part of the labour movement.

While there is a place for everyone in the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation, that struggle must be led by lesbians and gay men organising together. We need to build a strong self-organised lesbian and gay movement capable of taking our demands into the labour movement.

We can fight for and achieve limited gains under capitalism, such as full legal equality, positive images and the right to raise children. However, the society we live in will never allow us to be fully liberated.

We live in a society based on exploitation of one class — the working class — by another — the ruling class.

This class society benefits from the oppression of lesbians and gay men. In order to achieve liberation we need a classless society based on need rather than profit, equality rather than competition, and on common ownership and collectivism. In this socialist society no section of society would materially benefit from the oppression of another.

Only the overthrow of capitalism can create the conditions whereby we can work towards the elimination of prejudice and the real liberation of human sexuality.

Labour leaders duck out

By Kev Sexton

Will a Kinnock government repeal what the Tories have done and legislate for lesbian and gay rights?

Probably not. Neil Kinnock's Policy Review has removed all clear commitments to lesbian and gay rights from Labour leadership policy.

Clause 25 and Paragraph 16 have been allowed to go through

the Parliamentary committee stage with no criticism or changes proposed by the Labour front-bench.

Lesbians and gay men should get active within the Labour Party and should work with Labour Party activists to pass resolutions through wards and CLPs to fight the Tories' new agenda of homophobia.

We need to see Labour Party banners on the demonstrations. We need to force the Labour Party leadership to back us.

Kinnock: Get Out! Get Active! Get Even — Fight for our Future!



Clause 28 protest. Photo: Paul Herrmann

Lessons from the

By Mark Holden

The movement against Clause 28 was large and potentially very powerful. Manchester had the largest demonstration in that city for over 20 years.

Lesbian and Gay Pride has since become a large and very vocal celebration of our increased visibility. The response to the government's banning of the "intentional promotion of homosexuality" and presentation of "pretended family relationships" was an unparalleled mobilisation of lesbians and gay men. Many became political for the first time in their lives.

But Clause 28 became Section 28 and was passed into law. At the time many people made wild sug-

gestions that it could lead to the banning of Oscar Wilde from public libraries and the closing of all lesbian and gay pubs and clubs.

In fact, no-one knew what was meant by the "promotion of homosexuality", the phrase was so woolly and open to interpretation. Section 28's effects have been more insidious rather than sweeping. Oscar Wilde's works are still there in those libraries that haven't been shut by local government cuts.

But the Section has led to self-censorship by local authorities and by teachers who would otherwise be honest about discussing homosexuality in the classroom.

The attitude of the Clause 28 campaign to heterosexual involvement is being copied in the campaign now. The Manchester Clause campaign voted to make the campaign lesbian and gay only.

In Brief

A High Court judge ruled last month that a Newcastle lesbian couple may not adopt a two-year old boy placed with them by social services. A statement by the council declared that the decision had nothing to do with their sexuality.

Whether that is true or not Paragraph 16 makes it more likely that such requests will be refused in future. It also places lesbian mothers fighting custody cases in a weaker position because of the hostility it expresses towards lesbian and gay parents. Local authorities should be pressurised into declaring their commitment to equal opportunities in fostering and adoption policies, and asked to defy Paragraph 16.

The Sun got in a lather recently over a Scene Out article lamenting the lack of lesbian and gay characters in Coronation St. "Gay soap fans are urging TV bosses to change Coronation St to Queer St", they reported.

Granada replied by saying "Coronation St is a family show and we have no plans to feature gays or lesbians."

Granada have a cheek considering the lesbian and gay following the series commands. After the outing of Bet and Alec Gilroy (Julie Goodyear and Roy Barraclough) and rumours about other members of the cast, who do Granada think they're trying to kid?

The families watching have lesbians and gay men as friends, workmates, mothers, fathers, sons,

daughters and neighbours whether they know it or not. Why the hell shouldn't we be represented in a "family show"?

The gutter press showed its true colours recently in its reporting of the brutal murder of William Lyddall — a gay man found clubbed to death and partially burned on waste ground in south-east London.

The Sport reported the story as the "Mystery of Meat Rack Poofster" and the Daily Star and Daily Telegraph both made references to a "poofster". The Sun described him as a "poof".

Such dehumanising and insulting language distances people from this disgusting crime. The tabloid dailies contributed to the queerbasher mentality and have given the green light for bigots to verbally and physically abuse us and even take our lives.



Clause 28 campaign

Similarly, the recently-formed London Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition has decided to exclude straights from decision making.

I can see no good reason why straights should be excluded from the campaign.

Lesbians and gay men do have the right to organise autonomously and there should be space within the movement for this to happen. It's inevitable that lesbians and gay men will be at the forefront of the campaign. But it would be wilfully stupid to deny ourselves access to the resources of heterosexual supporters.

If we're ever going to achieve lesbian and gay liberation it will require the active participation of thousands of heterosexuals in our campaign.

In this campaign more than any other we need to reach out beyond the confines of the commercial gay scene. The people most affected by Paragraph 16 and Clause 25 will be the most marginalised or closeted members of lesbian and gay community, people who go cottaging or whose childcare commitments keep them out of the pubs and clubs. We need to find ways of involving them and getting straights to participate fully in the campaign.

The Women Against the Clause groups set up around the country made a valuable and indispensable contribution to the Clause 28 campaign. Very often they were the driving force behind more imaginative actions than the broad campaign and involved women who might otherwise have felt excluded.

It's important that we fight both against all the attacks we face and that Paragraph 16 isn't marginalised in a campaign focused on Clause 25. Women's autonomous organisation within the campaign is vital to make this happen. Without

that involvement we could see two separate sets of campaigns — a male-dominated one focused around Clause 25 and a women's campaign that is left to raise the issue of Paragraph 16 alone.

Both issues affect lesbians and gay men. Lesbians could be prosecuted for procuring homosexual acts between gay male friends, and many gay men as well as lesbians wish to be considered for the adoption and fostering of children.

Paragraph 16 can be defeated using a combination of approaches. We should demand that it is dropped from the Children's Act guidelines, but we can also get Labour Party and trade union branches to pass resolutions of support. These could concentrate on demanding that local authorities issue equal opportunities statements on fostering and adoption and agree to defy Paragraph 16.

Getting organised in East Europe

By Ed Whitby

Under the old order in Eastern Europe, the legal status of lesbians and gay men was often better than in the West.

But the law books did not reflect a sexually liberated society. One of the first acts of the Bolsheviks after the 1917 revolution in Russia was to legalise homosexuality. This was part of a programme to end all oppression. The Stalinist counter-revolution reversed that programme. Homosexuality was re-criminalised; so was abortion; women's rights were eroded.

And it wasn't just a matter of the law. The USSR and in Eastern Europe became bitterly repressive and bigoted societies, like the West in the depths of the '50s.

But in some countries of central Europe a loosening-up started before the revolutions of 1989.

In East Germany a lesbian and gay movement has been in existence for several years. Some groups have been sheltered by the Protestant

church.

In 1968 East Germany legalised homosexuality and some groups gained a degree of state approval. Since 1989 a number of groups have started to organise openly and independently from the church and the state.

Other East European states were more rigid. In Hungary the first legal lesbian and gay group did not emerge until 1988. In Yugoslavia two republics equalised the age of consent in 1977, and an annual lesbian and gay festival was started in 1987.

In Poland groups began to organise in the mid-1980s. A sexual minorities conference with representation from across East Europe was held in Estonia last year.

The collapse of the old Stalinist states has created great openings for sexual liberation campaigns. But at the same time the far right groupings have also emerged — which attack lesbians and gay men.

It's vital that the lesbian and gay activists in this country work with the fledgling groups in the East.

An uneasy relationship

By Clive Bradley

The relationship between the modern lesbian and gay movement and socialism has always been an uneasy one. But the socialist tradition, prior to the 1930s, did take up the question.

A number of isolated socialists in Europe and the USA raised the need for gay liberation as they then conceived it from the 1880s onwards. The overall ideological climate was, of course, appalling, with homosexuality regarded as at worst a crime against nature and at best a disease or deformity of the mind. Socialists on the whole remained dominated by these views. Most of them were silent; those who spoke, like Engels, simply expressed the reactionary prejudices of their time: he condemned the "perversion of boy love".

One or two visionaries, like Edward Carpenter, had some influence, and the new psychology (especially Freud) began to produce a more liberal and enlightened view within the intelligentsia.

But the only real political campaign was in Germany. With some limitations, the German SPD took up the issue and campaigned for the abolition of the law which outlawed homosexual behaviour. The renowned German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who was gay, was an SPD member.

It was from the SPD rather than directly that the Bolsheviks adopted the liberal sexual policies which followed the revolution in Russia. For a brief period of a decade or more a more liberal attitude prevailed in Russia though there were no statements on the question, so far as we are aware, by Bolshevik leaders and those of them who were gay stayed firmly in the closet.

The dark reaction was simultaneous in Germany and Russia. The Nazis abolished Hirschfeld's institute and burned his effigy and outlawed homosexuality; later they were to consign thousands of homosexuals to the concentration camps and gas chambers. In the USSR Stalin's 1934 law outlawed homosexuality again. He too sent many homosexuals to lifelong imprisonment and death.

From this moment on there doesn't seem to have been any statement by a socialist condemning this persecution. Trotsky, for instance, does not mention it in *Revolution Betrayed*.

In 1969 the gay resistance and liberation movement began with the anti-police riots at the Stonewall bar in New York. Beginning in the USA there was a mushrooming of "gay liberation" groups.

This movement was heavily influenced by feminism and the civil rights movement and in its early phases had a quasi-revolutionary

flavour. Early experiments like the Gay Liberation Front tended to disintegrate (rather acrimoniously, and often over the perennial question of the relationships between lesbians and gay men).

The movement has never been as strong in Britain as in some other countries, most obviously the USA, but also some southern European countries and the more industrially developed parts of the Third World (for example, Mexico). You only have to compare the relatively small "scene" in London (never mind the rest of Britain) with a city like Barcelona to see how true this is.

In part, the strength of the lesbian and gay movement in the

"There now exists in Britain a network of groups... a fragmentary movement. Often their relationship to the labour movement has tended to be financial — dependent on unreliable grants from Labour authorities. A new kind of relationship needs to be developed."

USA, in particular, is due to the existence of large "ghettos" in major cities like San Francisco. The lesbian and gay community, if community is not too strong a word, in Britain has always been more dispersed.

But there have been some important developments. The annual "Pride" march, although increasingly apolitical, is these days a big event, ignored, however, by the media. The miners' strike of 1984-85 saw a small but significant campaign of solidarity which had some impact on the thinking of the labour movement; the NUM, not known before as one of the most progressive unions on the question, voted for the lesbian and gay rights motion at Labour Party conference in 1985.

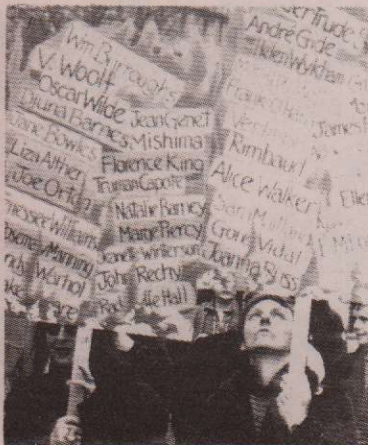
Smaller support groups have been formed for other big strikes, like the printers'.

Defensive struggles, like the one over Clause 28, brought forward a powerful movement, the main effect of which was to demonstrate visibly the extent to which thousands of lesbians and gay men are "out of the closet" and determined not to be re-criminalised. The current campaign could prove as powerful. And even if not successful, as the campaign against Clause 28 was not, the extent of the protest certainly has an effect in limiting the impact of the reactionary laws.

There now exists in Britain a network of groups, newspapers, centres and a commercial scene which links together large numbers of lesbians and gay men in a fragmentary movement. Often their relationship to the labour movement has tended to be financial — dependent on unreliable grants from Labour authorities. A new kind of relationship needs to be developed.

The lesbian and gay movement has had an effect on the climate within the Labour Party and the trade unions. Caucuses exist in some unions, and some have had good paper policy for lesbian and gay rights.

Struggles for sexual liberation need to be knitted together with the broader struggle for human freedom.



The story of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmens Union

When a leg was worth £1.87½p per week

By Raymond Challinor

Soldiers are naturally apprehensive as they wait to go into battle. They wonder whether they will be killed or injured. If the worst happens, they fear that proper provisions may not be made for their families.

Equally, if they are maimed for life, they are worried that they may have to eke out the rest of their painful existences on the poverty line.

All these misgivings were also present in the Second World War. This was particularly true as the troops awaited the opening of the Second Front. That, they knew, would entail immense casualties.

But a staggering fact confronted them: war pensions were lower than they had been in the First World War. Translating the figures into current decimal currency, the loss of both legs, the loss of sight, facial disfigurement in 1943 led to a weekly pension of £1.87½p; in the First World War the figure had been £2. Similarly, for loss of an arm or below the shoulder, the award had been reduced from a weekly £1.60 to £1.50 in the Second World War.

In 1943 Jimmy Maxton, the Clydeside rebel MP, told parliament that injured soldiers were actually receiving smaller amounts of compensation than they did in the Crimean war.

How was it that pensions were so inadequate? At the end of the First World War, Britain reaped a grisly harvest. It had to face the problem of how to deal with the enormous number — three quarters of a million men — who had been wounded. Obviously pensions were going to be a burning issue.

For this reason, JT Murphy, one of the leaders of the Shop Stewards' Movement, fought the minister responsible for pensions at Gorton in the 1918 general election. He was not concerned about winning. What Murphy sought to do was to spread the message that the war had primarily been fought for profits; it was out of profits that adequate pensions should be paid.

The minds of some members of the armed forces were moving in the same direction. In the closing stages of the First World War, the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmens' Union was formed. This trade union had three main aims: first, to improve the pay and conditions of serving personnel; second, to hasten the demobilisation of the overwhelming majority who wished to return home; and, third, to fight for adequate pensions for the families of those who had been killed and also those who had been maimed.

The authorities clearly were alarmed by the creation of the

Ray Challinor is the author of several books on labour history including *The British Bolsheviks*

Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmens' Union. In the immediate post-war period, they were witnessing the unprecedented wave of industrial unrest that had distinctly revolutionary overtones. The question was whether they could rely upon soldiers to smash demonstrations and break strikes if they themselves belonged to a trade union linked to the organised working class movement. They were also alarmed at the prospect of mass campaigns for higher pensions led by limbless ex-servicemen. Forceful language might be used to contrast their pitiful poverty with the immense wealth accumulated by capitalists as a result of the war.

Naturally, the authorities wanted to strangle the new trade union before it grew and became a threat. Dr David Englander, an historian at the Open University, has done some first-class research on how this was accomplished. In *Labour History*

"The authorities recognised there was a need for ex-servicemen to have a voice. Therefore, they encouraged the formation of the British Legion in 1921."

(April 1987), he describes the immense amount of surveillance conducted by the intelligence services on the armed forces throughout the First World War. All letters from soldiers at the front were opened and read. Not only were the authorities concerned to monitor soldiers' morale, they wished to weed out any signs of disaffection. These techniques, Dr Englander says, were extended when the challenge came from the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmens' Union. His article in *History Today* (March 1987) entitled "Troops and Trade Unions, 1919", describes how this was subsequently extended. The raid on SSAU offices of 5 May 1919, coupled with the targeting of leading activists, extensive demobilisation and pre-occupation of ex-soldiers with industrial struggles, led to the organisation's demise.

Nevertheless, the authorities recognised there was a need for ex-servicemen to have a voice. Therefore, they encouraged the formation of the British Legion in 1921. Though ostensibly meant to represent the interests of ex-servicemen, the British Legion quintessentially was a friend of The Establishment — its leadership coming from the upper echelons of society and having over-riding con-

cern not to embarrass the powers that be.

This even extended to the administration of its own funds. Despite the relatively small number of officers compared to other ranks, and the exceedingly high pensions they received, the Legion's benevolent fund discovered the officers had a disproportionately large number of needy cases. Widespread anger among the armed forces was aroused when soldiers discovered that the British Legion Benevolent Fund had, between its inception in 1921 and 1943, given more than 40 per cent of its money to officers. In that time its total expenditure had been £6,333,734; out of which officers had been given £2,889,432.

Since the Second World War, the British Legion has retained its apathetic indifference to the welfare of soldiers and their families. In the 1950s, for example, many servicemen were deliberately exposed to radiation at the nuclear tests in Australia. Subsequently, many have developed various forms of cancer, particularly leukaemia. But the campaign to secure compensation for the men and next of kin has not been led by the Legion. Rather it has depended on an ad-hoc organisation, largely run by victims, aided in Parliament by Bob Clay MP. Likewise with the scandal of the war widows that only secured settlement two years ago: the Legion did nothing to bring to the public's attention the plight of these poor women.

The present conditions may make it propitious to think again on the subject of organisation. Councils in the North East, like Gateshead, have been pressured to make up the incomes of its staff who have been sent to the Gulf. Obviously this is a non-starter: local authorities, many rate-capped, have insufficient funds to maintain essential services, let alone for extra payments to soldiers. Yet it does raise once more the question not only of pay and conditions of members of the armed forces but also of the pensions of their dependents. The struggle to improve these needs to be integrated with the organised working class.

In recent years, we have witnessed a concerted onslaught of hostile governments upon the trade union movement. Established freedoms have been stolen from workers. In places like GCHQ at Cheltenham, they have even had their right to be trade unionists taken away while in education teachers' organisations have been denied the right to collective bargaining.

In the present climate it may be appropriate to recall a military adage: attack is the best form of defence. As the John Major-Neil Kinnock coalition presses ahead with Desert Storm in the Gulf, perhaps union storm should be launched here in Britain, a campaign to organise all workers, including those in the Territorial Army.



By Liz Millward

Warmongers love bombing — at least they did in the last world war, the Vietnam war and the Russo-Afghanistan war (1979-88).

From the point of view of an attacking army, bombing makes a lot of sense. Rather than wade in with infantry against entrenched positions in unknown territory — begin any campaign by blasting and weakening the enemy from afar or from above.

Bombing has two stated aims, and one big advantage. The aims are to weaken the enemy by destroying useful installations — armaments factories, for example — and to demoralise the civilian population. The advantage is that the destruction and the casualties suffered by those on the ground will always (in theory) be higher than those in the air.

The problems are not in the theory, but in the practice. The things an enemy ideally wants to bomb are usually

- (a) difficult to spot from the air (especially at night), and
- (b) the best defended.

Bombing of easy-to-spot, undefended "targets" (ie. cities) has the result of hardening civilian resolve rather than weakening it, and does the aggressor no good in the eyes of the world.

All the technology in the world has not solved these problems for La Billiere and Schwarzkopf.

The problems facing the "allied" forces in the Gulf are essentially the same ones that faced the allies in World War 2.

World War 2 British bombers had to fly at night, because daylight raids across Europe were too dangerous. Fighter aeroplanes did not have the fuel to provide cover all the way to Germany, and the bombers were too slow to escape German fighters. Even the American Flying Fortresses with their superior defences suffered heavy losses in daytime raids.

Night flying meant that the bombers often missed the targets

The

altogether, or didn't do the damage necessary to put them out of action. Allied policy was originally to bomb "targets" like munitions factories, oil and synthetic oil plants and communications.

These were supposed to be "precision" raids but they were largely unsuccessful. For example, on 17 April 1942 a daylight raid on Augsburg's MAN diesel engine factory caused some damage to the works, but did not seriously affect production. Of the 12 Lancaster bombers which were involved in the raid, seven were destroyed, and the rest damaged.

The British also favoured "area bombing" which overcame the problems of not being able to hit the target. Policy never entirely switched from "precision" to "area" bombing because the decision makers could not agree amongst themselves.

The "compromise" was large



London in the Blitz



Poverty after the war: over a thousand people queue for potatoes in London, 1947

Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it



Over 100,000 people died when the Allies bombed Dresden on 13 February 1945 — more than in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

surrounding area creating winds which are so strong that they can pull people into the fire.

The fires also take all the oxygen out of the air, making it impossible to breathe.

"There was not a house anywhere in the street which had not turned into a blazing firebrand. Above the sea of flames, a glowing cyclone raged over the town; and whenever it caught the bodies of people in flight, it shrivelled them in a second to the size of a child, and the next day they lay all over the streets, hardly burnt, but like mummified children.

"I kept to the edge of this burning hurricane, but at one time had to clutch at a tree with both arms to avoid being swept into a burning house by the draught..."

(Contemporary account of the bombing of Darmstadt in 1944).

In Britain in 1940 during the Blitz 60,000 civilians were killed. Raids on towns like Coventry did not result in the destruction on the scale of Dresden, but even so death and homelessness struck London's East End on an unprecedented scale.

People spent every night for months in cellars, shelters and underground stations, and came out in the morning in the hope that their home would still be standing. Even the shelters were no defence against a direct hit, and there were many casualties amongst firefighters, air raid patrols, and other auxiliaries.

It may be that Schwarzkopf and the others are genuinely trying to avoid bombing civilians and residential areas, but we can't judge because we are only given propaganda. What they say now is what they would say even if the truth were the direct opposite. But the longer the war drags on, and the longer the Iraqi people hold out, the more likely it is that area bombing will be used against Iraq's towns and cities.

These people are already without fuel, and food and water supplies are low. All the bombing raids of World War 2 (on both sides) hardened the resolve of the civilian populations. *Far from causing a drop in morale, the evidence is that people on both sides worked harder and for longer hours — and hated the enemy more.*

Even if the "allies" bomb Iraq into submission they will not be welcomed as liberators.

blitz last time

scale bombing of industrial cities, like Hamburg, where an estimated 42,000 people were killed between July 24 and August 2 1943. Firestorms were created; Hamburg was left in ruins. But of 791 planes involved in the first night of the bombing, only 12 were destroyed and 31 damaged.

By contrast the fantastically accurate "Dam Busters" raid two

"It will probably be 30 years before we have the truth about the last few weeks."

months earlier *did* breach the Möhne and Eder dams. Parts of the Ruhr were flooded and large numbers of people drowned. But the German war economy was hardly affected; and only 5 out of 19 planes came back undamaged.

Even with hindsight it is impossible to say whether "area" or "precision" bombing was the more "successful" in terms of allied war aims. Precision bombing, even when largely unsuccessful didn't help the German war effort, and mass destruction of people and buildings on the scale of the Dresden raids must have made the civilians hate the allies, and probably didn't help the war effort. The Blitz may have helped unite the British people, but the damage to London's docklands, factories and warehouses must have harmed the British economy.

The bombing of Iraq is currently shrouded in secrecy. In Britain at least, it will probably be 30 years before we have access to the truth about the raids of the last few weeks. Reading between the

lines of propaganda and disinformation, it would seem that "precision" raids are being tried again and, as in World War 2, they are not quite as precise as the politicians who front for the soldiers and air forces would have us believe.

"Area" bombing is not the allies' stated strategy, but many of the alleged military targets are suspiciously close to city centres. Saddam Hussein is blamed for the civilian casualties because Iraqi military "installations" were built near centres of population.

But if the same "installations" were to be bombed in Britain, they too would be found to be close to centres of population — for example, tanks are built almost in the centre of Newcastle, Britain's major chemical and oil works are all close to big cities.

How much easier it would be to declare a whole area to be a target! Flattening the whole of Baghdad is much easier (and safer for the pilots) than "precision" raids — and would be bound to hit the "military" installations as well as the residential areas.

In Britain, the equivalent would be to bomb the whole of Newcastle from a great height, rather than risk expensive planes trying to hit the only Vickers plant, which would be properly defended.

It is quite possible that the US and British airforces are already carrying out "area" bombing raids, or that they will start to do so in the near future.

Dresden was the victim of such a raid in February 1945. Upwards of 100,000 people were killed in the worst firestorms of the war,

and 1,600 acres of the city were flattened.

The firestorms in Dresden created by incendiary bombs are now used as a "model" for working out the consequences of nuclear war.

Firestorms occur when a fire feeds itself on oxygen from the



Funeral pyres burning in Dresden's city squares



A stone figure above the City Hall looks down on the ruins

The arguments about "Iraq out of Kuwait!"

Workers of the world unite?

THE POLITICAL FRONT

By Patrick Murphy



A familiar and essential idea of Marxism is the assertion that "the workers have no country". It sets us the task of convincing our class that we have no interest in nationalism and patriotism, that we have more in common with workers in other countries than our own bosses, and that ultimately we want to see the end of national boundaries.

Nations have no great attraction for us. Why then, the more cynical often ask, do you all make such a fuss when nations are invaded? Why are you constantly marching for national rights for this group, self-determination for that, when it really doesn't make any difference to workers which country they live in?

First there is the matter of democratic rights. Nationalism, like religion, might be a wholly wrong-headed answer to humanity's problems, but the forcible repression of such beliefs is not the best way to convince people of this. Secondly, nationalism, at certain times, has played a progressive role in human history. The creation of larger national units from fragmented states was a big step forward.

In 19th century Europe and the 20th century world the nationalism of oppressed nations has been the desire to remove an occupying power, the desire for a parliament of their own, more democracy, self-rule. These things can never end the oppression of workers — that exploitation is conducted first by their own 'national' bosses — but they do change significantly the conditions under which that oppression takes place.

Recent arguments arising from the Gulf war, however, suggest that a healthy dip into the Marxist tradition would work wonders for the British left.

Alongside the main argument — that Western forces should get out of Kuwait — *Socialist Organiser* has consistently raised the demand that Iraq should pull out of Kuwait. In a discussion with a supporter of *Militant* I was confronted



Iraqi tanks roll into Kuwait, August 2 1990

with the following "logic": "...Iraq shouldn't have invaded Kuwait, but now that they have it would be a mistake to call for

"The slogan 'Iraq out of Kuwait' is part of the programme with which the working class of the region and internationally should respond to the whole Gulf crisis."

their withdrawal." Why? Well, first because "it would add comfort to the arguments of the warmongers, and reinforce their declared

war aims, and second because we favour Arab unity. Saddam has removed a national division between two Arab states which is exactly what we want to do. OK, it hasn't happened in the way we would want but to undo it would set back international unity and should be opposed".

The most worrying part of that argument is the indifference about how Arab unity is achieved. This is the reverse of the approach I outlined earlier. Here "Arab national unity" is the primary concern, the consent of the workers, the conditions for them, their involvement, all democratic considerations are entirely secondary. For us these things are central; who unified, for what reason, and with what practical results for the working class.

This connects with the other main objection I've heard recently. *Socialist Organiser* don't believe that Kuwait is a "nation" at all, we have said that if it were annexed by a socialist or even democratic

Iraq our attitude would be different, "but not by this murderous Iraqi regime". This is petty moralising, I am told (by a supporter of *Socialist Action*). *SO* has no significant reasons for making a major issue of Kuwait, no reason of national rights, only the "liberal" concern that Iraq has a murderous regime. Once again this appears to miss entirely the place of democratic concerns in working class politics.

The ability of trade unionists and socialists in Kuwait to organise freely, to act independently, and to struggle for their own interests will be worse so long as they are under occupation by the Iraqi army.

Not only that, but the task of *Iraqi* workers will also be much harder so long as their regime forcibly occupies its neighbour. That occupation strengthens the military and Saddam's dictatorship, as was his intention.

The slogan "Iraq out of Kuwait" is part of the programme with which the working class of the region and internationally should respond to the whole Gulf crisis.

The fact that Kuwait is not a nation is neither here nor there. There are all sorts of groups, national and religious minorities, who are not "nations" but have the right not to be conquered forcibly by aggressors. Socialists would always uphold this right. The people who lived in Kuwait did not invite Iraq in, there was no democratic or socialist movement which sought assistance, Saddam did not intervene to install democracy. It must, therefore, be part of our programme that Iraq should leave and the people of the area should decide the future of Kuwait.

The rich and democratic tradition of our movement has been ditched in favour of much cruder guidelines. Instead of having no country and always advocating the most democratic relations between peoples and nations we are advised to be guided by hostility to certain countries. Hatred of the US or British interests (understandable as an instinct) is paramount. Anything that gets in the way of this gut anti-imperialism, anything that "gives succour" to or even addresses the same concerns as these governments must be silenced, whatever its own merits.

This is what Trotsky once called the politics of pluses and minuses. Instead of working out independently what is in our class interests, we start with our enemy's position and simply say no where they say yes. It is socialism defined as the negative of capitalism. If it continues to grow in our movement then not only will the working class have no country, they will have no politics either.

The beginning of war in 1914

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Leon Trotsky



Buchanan, the former British Ambassador to [the Russian capital] St Petersburg, speaks with exaltation in his memoirs of "those wonderful early August [1914] days", when "Russia seemed to have been completely transformed".



Viennese crowds cheer off the Austro-Hungarian troops, 1914

All the European capitals were having equally "wonderful days" in August. They were all entirely "transformed" for the business of mutual extermination.

The patriotic enthusiasm of the masses in Austria-Hungary seemed especially surprising. What was it that drew to the square in front of the War Ministry the Viennese boot-maker's apprentice, Pospichil, half German, half Czech; or our greengrocer, Frau Maresch; or the cabman, Frankl? What sort of an idea?

The people whose lives, day in and day out, pass in a monotony of hopelessness are many; they are the mainstay of modern society. The alarm of mobilisation breaks into their lives like a promise; the familiar and long-hated is overthrown, and the new and unusual reigns in its place. Changes still more incredible are in store for them in the future. For better or worse? For the better, of course — what can seem worse to Pospichil than "normal" conditions?

I strode along the main streets of the familiar Vienna and watched a most amazing crowd fill the fashionable Ring, a crowd in which hopes had been awakened. But wasn't a small part of these hopes already being realised? Would it have been possible at any other time for porters, laundresses, shoemakers, apprentices and youngsters

from the suburbs to feel themselves master of the situation in the Ring?

War affects everybody, and those who are oppressed and deceived by life consequently feel that they are on an equal footing with the rich and powerful. It may seem a paradox, but in the moods of the Viennese crowd that was demonstrating the glory of the Hapsburg arms I detected something familiar to me from the October days of [revolution in] 1905 in St Petersburg. No wonder that in history war has often been the mother of revolution.

Like revolution, war forces life, from top to bottom, away from the beaten track. But revolution directs its blows against the established power. War, on the contrary, at first strengthens the state power which, in the chaos engendered by war, appears to be the only firm support — and then undermines it.

Hopes of strong social and national movements are utterly groundless at the outset of a war. In September 1914 I wrote: "The mobilisation and declaration of war have veritably swept off the face of the earth all the national and social contradictions in the country. But this is only a political delay, a sort of political moratorium. The notes have been extended to a new date, but they will have to be paid."

From My Life



Meryl Streep and Shirley Maclaine play daughter and mother

A heartwarming sense of survival

Cinema

Edward Ellis reviews

Postcards from the Edge

Postcards from the Edge, based (apparently very loosely) on Carrie Fisher's semi-autobiographical novel, is primarily a vehicle for the formidable talents of Meryl Streep and Shirley Maclaine.

Alcoholic mother and cocaine addict (now "rehabbing") daughter, products of Hollywood's frenetic lifestyle, the film charts their relationship through some of the sharpest and funniest dialogue I have heard in years.

Saved from death through overdose by one-night stand Dennis Quaid, Fisher/Streep — reduced to acting in an unbelievably tacky cop movie — can only get insurance if she moves in with a responsible person, ie. her mother.

This is a mother you would not want to live with! She is an old star of '50s musicals (when

she arrives at the hospital she is stopped by a man who has wanted to be her since he was 14 and does her in his drag act: "You know how the queens love me", she says), coping dubiously with the success of her daughter.

Says Streep: "We can't compete; one of us might win". She has unbearably single-minded thought processes and a complete addiction to glitz, not to mention whisky.

Being film stars, they sing a lot. Meryl Streep has a surprisingly haunting singing voice, and Maclaine — both in character and no doubt in fact — enjoys stealing the show with a marvellous version of Stephen Sondheim's "I'm Still Here" (in D flat, she tells her party pianist imperiously, after pretending not to want to sing), which for my money would make this a movie worth seeing even if the rest of it was rubbish.

The song, indeed, is the movie's keynote: "I've run the gamut A to Z, three cheers and damn it, c'est la vie, I lived

through all of last year and I'm here. Lord knows at least I was there".

This is not a profound film. The relationship between the two women is stereotypical and caricatured, as are all the secondary characters: womanising director Dennis Quaid, camp

and insincere director Simon Callow, Ethel Mermanesque grandmother.

Yet it is more than straight comedy. Although its ending is dangerously sentimental, it manages to achieve a heartwarming sense of survival. I recommend it.

Celebrities against the war?

The first signs of opposition to the war are surfacing in the world of celebrities.

Lisa Stansfield — voted best female singer in the Brits awards show — called for an end to the war: "I'm really happy to get this award, but I'd feel a lot better if the war stopped right now."

This was of course cut by the BBC in the interests of censorship. Lisa's act of unpardonable rebellion was followed by Kylie Minogue's boyfriend and INXS singer Michael Hutchens daring to make a peace sign.

The camera immediately cut away from Hutchens. Does Hutchens' political militancy bode



Lisa Stansfield

ill for his relationship with Kylie who, when asked what she thought about the situation in South Africa replied, "Yes, isn't it terrible what they do to the rhinos"!

Strange meeting

On November 4, 1918, Wilfred Owen was killed by machine gun fire as he supervised his company's crossing of the Sambre Canal. Among his papers was found the following poem, *Strange Meeting*

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groined,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless,
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained:
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
'Strange friend', I said, 'here is no cause to mourn'.
'None', said the other, 'save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,

But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For of my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery;
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint,
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now...'

Big city and glasnost blues

Television

By Jean Lane

The first part of a series called 'The Land of Europe' was shown on Saturday night (Channel 4). It focused on various parts of British country life. A woodcutter, miles from anywhere in the south of England, was asked if he found his work lonely. No, he replied, I find going to London lonelier.

In a country village everyone might know your business, but at least it's not possible to be dead in a flat for weeks before anyone discovers you.

The woodcutter's comment brought to mind a news item years ago when I was little. A car driver in America had broken down on a very busy road. The weather was terrible and he was desperately cold. After several hours of trying to get someone to stop for him he ran a pipe from the exhaust into the car and switched the engine on. He left a note saying: "I don't wish to live in a world where no-one has the time to stop for someone in trouble." I'm sure many of London's and other cities' homeless will know what he meant.

It's ironic that as barriers between European countries are coming down the individual amidst millions of other individuals feels increasingly lonely.

This is not an argument for keeping the barriers up, or going back to small country communities. Even in big cities the conditions can be created where people have the time to stop, the reason to care. Only not in this society.

I've always felt that of the loneliest people in the world, many of them must be married women — isolated in their homes providing an impossible service to a single unit and internalising all the fear and guilt when they fail.

Judging by the Media Show on Sunday 10, Channel 4, this cannot be more true than in Russia under Stalinism where any discussion of sex and sexuality was impossible making one of the 'services' married women are expected to provide a very depressing experience. Also, homosexuality amongst men is a praiseworthy offence and amongst women, certifiable.

Glasnost, according to the programme, has led to an explosion of erotica and pornography, in literature, the media, rock concerts etc. Some of it, by anyone's standards, is foul stuff, and no wonder, considering the length of time sex and sexuality has been suppressed. But a comment from one of the TV presenters in danger of suffering from the coming crack-down in Russia struck home. The suppression of this literature, he said, is being done by the right wing — by the people who will also suppress other literature as well as all of the rights of the peoples of the Baltic states. We cannot let them do this.

'We told you so' is not a very gratifying statement to make, but, in all the discussions about the banning of porn in this country, we did.

Charlie Murray defends Ken Loach's film making

But is it art?

WRITEBACK

Of course I agree with Sean Matgamna that bad politics can make bad art (SO 47) and I am pleased to note that, by referring to Marx's views on Balzac, Matgamna also agrees that bad politics can make good art, although not consciously so.

As Matgamna points out, Zhdanov was responsible for reducing all art to the question of what was good for Stalinism. I do not for a minute believe that this was Matgamna was about in his review of Ken Loach's *Hidden Agenda*. But it is the priorities that count. Matgamna writes off the film because he does not agree with its politics. But, and this is the question which should have been addressed first, he does not give any real consideration as to whether it worked as a film.

In my view, although there are certainly improvements that could have been made, the film does work as a film. It is a thriller dealing with the question of corruption and the liberal democratic state. The central character, a John Stalker-like policeman, is faced with the dilemma of an

"honest cop" who finds that he is defending not democracy but a state where the army and extreme right wing politicians call the tune to a significant extent.

The film's politics flow from this. It is a sort of "it can happen here" movie. My criticism of Loach's politics is not that he is soft on republicanism but that Ireland is essentially a backdrop to wider issues here. So while *Hidden Agenda* is billed as a film about Ireland it ducks the Irish Question to a considerable extent.

Does this make *Hidden Agenda* bad art? I think not. It does mean however that it is not as useful for revolutionary socialists as it might have been. Regrettably there is no guarantee that someone with a 100% ideologically correct line on Ireland



"Zhdanov reduced all art to what was good for Stalinism."

(about which Matgamna, Loach and myself would no doubt disagree anyway)

would make anything better. Charlie Murray North London

TV detectives and oddballs

BJ Siddon (SO 474) says that TV versions of detective stories level them down "into a glossy sameness".

Agatha Christie's *Poirot*, which Siddon cites as an exception to this rule, seems to me on the contrary a prime example.

Detective stories have a conservative bias because

they must tend to assume a world put awry by individual villains and put right again by individual saviours. Yet they also tend to gain some critical bite because the villain will be an apparently respectable person (while the more villainous-seeming are innocent), and the detective will usually be a maverick, an outsider, an incongruous figure.

Despite Agatha Christie's personal politics — very orthodoxly conservative, as far as I can make out — her stories have that sort of critical bite.

The twittering little old lady (Miss Marple) or the blathering travelling salesman (Montague Egg) turn out to be more use in a crisis than the high and mighty.

Poirot, too, is meant to be a ridiculous, incongruous figure. Yet the TV series, on the evidence I've seen, makes him only slightly eccentric, less ridiculous than Hastings or Miss Lemon.

Poirot is short, a pipsqueak; David Suchet, far from being "perfectly cast

for the role" as BJ Siddon would have it, is a rather imposing figure.

Why did Agatha Christie make *Poirot* a Belgian? She made him a foreigner to spice the stories, and if she made him French-speaking his verbal foibles would be familiar and comprehensible to her readers.

But why Belgian rather than French? Because by conventional prejudice the Belgians are a dim, slow, provincial, dull, small nation: that is how they figure in the conventional humour of the French (in contrast, of course, to the supposed metropolitan wit of the French themselves).

All that dimension is lost in the TV version — and, unless they have picked exceptional duds from Christie's work, most of the cleverness and pace of her plots too. Instead we have a self-indulgent parade of "period" settings — in a phrase, "levelling down into a glossy sameness".

Alan Gilbert Islington

SWP: anti-semitic in practice

The SWP says it is for broad campaigns, including all sorts of people opposed to the war.

If this is the case why have the SWP in Nottingham tried to deny speaking rights to Jewish socialists opposed to the war? That's different comes the SWP's stock reply — they're Zionists who support Israel's right to exist.

But the PLO officially support Israel's right to exist as

do many others on the left of the Palestinian movement. The SWP blocks none of them from speaking. In practice, the SWP's broad based campaign is anti-semitic, because only Jews who support Israel's right to exist are blocked from participating.

Interestingly the Jewish socialist in question supported troops out of the Gulf and the Palestinian right to an independent state. Where is the SWP going?

Liam Conway Nottingham

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 14 February

"Resist the war", Socialist Organiser meeting. Canterbury Tech, 4.15
"Where we stand", Socialist Organiser meeting. Kent University, 7.30

Friday 15 January

Peoples Assembly Against the Gulf War. Parliament Square, 7.30-9.30
Anti-war meeting organised by Davyhulme Labour Party. Flixton Girls School, Flixton, 8.00
"Ireland: beyond the slogans", Socialist Organiser meeting. Vanburgh College, York University, 1.15. Speaker Nick Denton

Saturday 16 February

"A strategy for the Labour Left", London LPS Conference. Camden Town Hall, 10.00-5.30
Anti-war demonstration at Portsmouth Naval Base. Assemble 12.00, Guildhall Square
Anti-war demonstration, Oxford. Assemble 2.30, The Plain, St Clements
Get Up! Get Out! Get Even! Demonstration to oppose Clause

25, Paragraph 16 and Operation Spanner. Assemble 12.00, Embankment, London. Called by Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition

Monday 18 February

Troops out of the Gulf meeting, organised by Riverside Labour Party. Hardman St TU Centre, Liverpool, 7.30. Speakers include Bob Parry MP
"Fighting for lesbian and gay liberation", Sheffield SO meeting. Sheffield Poly Students Union, Mandela Building, 7.30
"War in the Gulf: issues for the anti-war movement", Manchester SO meeting. Manchester Town Hall, 8.00. Speaker Pat Murphy

Tuesday 19 February

"Crisis in the USSR", Socialist Organiser meeting. Manchester University, 1.00
Anti-war teach-in organised by the Campaign for Non-Alignment. Central London Baptist Church, 7.00. Speakers include Tony Benn and Bernie Grant

Wednesday 20 February

Day of student anti-war action: "Welfare not warfare" called by the

Student Federation Against the Gulf War and Student CND
"Israel/Palestine: what's the solution?" Oxford Poly, 2.00. Speaker Mark Osborn

Anti-war meeting, Bolton Institute, 4.30. Speaker Mark Sandell
Luton Campaign Against War in the Gulf meeting. Methodist Church Hall, 7.30

Thursday 21 February

Anti-war meeting, West Sussex Institute, 7.00. Speaker Mark Sandell

Friday 22 February

Ireland: Geoff Bell debates Austen Morgan. Jacksons Lane Community Centre, 271 Archway Road, London N6, 7.30. Organised by Pluto Books
North West Labour Against the War meeting, Manchester Town Hall, 7.30
CND Lobby of Parliament Against the Gulf War

Saturday 23 February

Sheffield Socialist Organiser day school: "Gulf war — the issues for socialists", 12.00-5.00

Monday 25 February

Workers Liberty Forum: "Lesbian and Gay Liberation: the socialist agenda", LSE, Houghton St, 7.30. Speakers include Peter Tatchell and Janine Booth

Tuesday 26 February

Student anti-war lobby of parliament, Central Hall, Westminster, 12.00. Organised by Student CND and NUS

Wednesday 27 February

Anti-war lobby of the TUC. Assemble 8.15, Congress House, Great Russell St, London. Called by NUJ Book Branch

Thursday 28 February

"Israel, Palestine and the Gulf War", Leeds SO meeting. Packhorse pub, Woodhouse Lane, 7.30. Speaker John O'Mahony

Saturday 2 March

Workers Liberty dayschool. St Mary's Centre, Middlesborough, 11.00 start
Anti-war demonstration in London called by the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf

Monday 6 March

Anti-war meeting, Brighton Corn Exchange, 7.30. Speakers include Tony Benn and Bruce Kent

Friday 8 March

International Women's Day anti-war action. Meet 5.00, Albert Embankment, march to St Thomas's Hospital to highlight health cuts. Vigil: 6-7 in Parliament Square. Women only

The left, Iraq and Israel

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Clive Bradley

The bulk of the far left in Britain has — in effect — supported the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel.

The Arab states, they say, have the right to hit Israel, which is an oppressive settler-colonial outpost. Support for Iraqi missiles landing on suburbs of Tel Aviv is indeed the logical result of the "democratic secular state" programme held to by most of the left as a solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict.

This formula is supposed to provide the only consistently democratic answer to Palestinian national oppression. Its advocates argue that a smaller Palestinian state next to a Jewish one cannot give the Palestinians justice: they will by definition be excluded from the Jewish state (at least to the extent that Jews maintain a majority). A single state, within which all citizens will have equal rights, is the only programme socialists could support. Such is the argument.

There is a version of this attitude which argues that the "democratic secular state" cannot be achieved by a purely bourgeois nationalist struggle. There will have to be a working class, socialist struggle.

Many Middle Eastern revolutionary socialists would add that this in turn entails joint struggle by Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish workers. (Some socialists prefer a different formula to "democratic secular state", but maintain the idea of a single state in Palestine.)

Joint socialist struggle by Jews and Palestinians is not the same thing as a blitzkrieg from the air by the most brutal and repressive regime the Arab world has ever seen. How is it, then, that many on the left think there is at least some similarity?

The connection depends on a viewpoint in which Saddam Hussein's military gamble is imagined to be a kind of primitive, lower level expression of the same basic struggle. Socialism, from this perspective, is merely a preferable form of Arab nationalism. It would be nice if the struggle — or the war — against Zionism was waged by a class-conscious workers' movement; but wars waged by bourgeois Arab states — against not just Zionism, but the entire Israeli Jewish people — will do in a pinch.

Suppose Saddam's war stood a real chance of defeating Israel. Unless, during its course, the preferred socialist movement came into being, a full military victory for Saddam — the smashing of Israel, the declared aim of "anti-Zionism" — would clearly result in a state that would be neither democratic nor secular, if any Jews were left alive. It would not be democratic for the Palesti-

nians either.

Support for Iraq against Israel therefore depends on the assumption that somehow Iraq's war will bring about a socialist revolution: a bourgeois war to impose undemocratic rule on the Palestinians and the Jews will of necessity, in fact, result in a socialist struggle uniting all the peoples of the region

(including the Israeli Jewish working class) against imperialism and Zionism.

So the Iraq attack now is justified not in terms of existing class forces, current issues or real political objectives, but in terms of hypothetical future class forces: forces which do not yet exist.

It is a stark example of scenario politics, constructing a line of development from current reality (which would depend on a wide range of factors over which we have as yet no control), allowing only for a "good" outcome, and then reading backwards to give to the events of today a character which they plainly do not have.

When *Socialist Organiser* objected to the democratic secular state formula that in practice it could only be achieved by the bourgeois Arab states conquering Israel, the formula's socialist supporters insisted that they did not support the bourgeois Arab states.

Yet support them — in this case, Saddam Hussein — they do: "critically", though critical of what, in this instance, is not clear.

From a socialist point of view the Iraqi attacks on Israel are indefensible.

If our objective is working class unity against all the ruling classes of the region, and imperialism, the Iraqi attacks are self-evidently (to put it mildly) counter-productive. In what magical way are Scud missiles landing on residential quarters of Tel Aviv to be translated into the united workers' struggle on which any socialist future depends?

The only standpoint from which it makes sense to support the missile attacks is undiluted Arab chauvinism: a nationalism in which the enemy is seen not as specific capitalist class relations, including those which exist in Israel, but the Israeli Jewish people as such.

These indeed are the real politics behind the attacks. Saddam Hussein is an Arab chauvinist: ask the Kurds. His decision to attack Israel has absolutely nothing to do with liberating Palestinians. ("Liberating" "Palestine" — as a hunk of territory — perhaps; but socialists are concerned with people, not bits of land.)

The left's support for the Scud attacks (logically, even if the Scuds had chemical warheads), supposedly in the name of the democratic secular state, shows what formula means in the real world. It is an Arab chauvinist programme, whatever the intentions of the Palestinians who thought of it, which leads in practice to support for completely reactionary actions by a completely reactionary regime.

Southwark trades unions in historic united strike action

10,500 council workers in Southwark, south London, struck for the day on Wednesday 6 February against attacks by the Labour council on their work conditions. All 13 council unions backed the strike, and will ballot for more action in March if the council does not back down. Roy Webb (chair, Southwark NALGO) and Henry Mott (DLO stewards committee) report.



Council workers won't accept Labour councils passing on Tory cuts

NALGO took two days of action on Tuesday (5th) and Wednesday (6th), with all the other unions taking strike action on one day — 6 February.

Council proposals include:

- New redundancy code which would allow those regarded as "surplus to requirements" to be offered a minimum of 4 weeks notice and then make no guarantee of any future offers of employment, and no guarantees of protection of earnings for those redeployed even if you are lucky enough to find another job.

- Sickness procedures which insist on medical certificates for as little as a single day of sickness, and threatens disciplinary action against those who are off sick for more than 5 days in one year. As well as this managers can visit your home to check if you are sick!

- Disciplinary code which allows you to be sacked instantly without a hearing, and allows managers to write to you com-

plaining of what they think you've done wrong and what punishment you'll get at the same time.

- Scrapping of all existing trade union agreements that apply to the way in which departments are reorganised, leaving anyone having to move job with virtually no protection at all. In any reorganisation no one would be sure of finding another job in the new structure, or that this job would be at the same rate of pay.

All the unions balloted their members and were united in calling for strike action. NUPE Manuals Branch polled over 90% in favour of strike action. TGWU claimed a massive 100% in favour, while NALGO voted two to one for the strikes, with 64% of the union in favour. UCATT returned similar figures and even NUPE APT&C branch announced a narrow yes vote for the strike action — the first time in its history that the NUPE Officers branch had ever decided on strike action.

All was set for a massive set of council-wide strikes on days that had been fixed in advance. The day after the ballot results were announced the council im-

mediately approached the unions with an offer of talks on the issues. This was the first time that there had been any indication that the council might be willing to talk at all. Up to then the attitude had been to simply impose new policies against the known opposition of the unions and then say there was nothing to talk about.

Now there was an immediate move to talks. The unions' unity looked threatened for a moment, as some of the unions felt it was necessary to hold off the action to see what the outcome of the talks would be. At this stage

nothing was on the table and no indication had been made that any of the policies that the unions were complaining of would be withdrawn. Nevertheless, the unions then one by one called off the first two rounds of the planned strike action in order to ensure a space for negotiations to begin.

This proved to be more difficult than at first thought, as the management refused to ensure that adequate time was available for talks to be held. Although the union side said they were willing to meet all day every day, including weekends, the management only offered a few hours of talks! After massive joint protests from the unions this was increased to about 18 hours, of which the management then proceeded to waste at least six, saying they had other more urgent meetings!

The talks quickly went nowhere. The strikes would now definitely go ahead. On the 5th NALGO and NUT refused to cross NALGO picket lines after NALGO members had refused to cross the teachers' picket lines on their day of strike action on 29 January. Many NUPE, UCATT, TGWU, GMB, EETPU members refused to cross NALGO picket lines and in some cases joined them. There was a festive mood on the picket line.

On the 6th the strike was solid. All unions are now committed to ballot for further action. A ballot for this will take place in March if the dispute is not settled by then.

Take the fight into the Labour Party!

In the Labour Party things have moved as well with the local parties and the Local Government Committee all voting to support the action taken by the unions and calling on council members to concede their demands.

The Labour council is acting as the Tory party front man in putting the blame for its financial crisis on the workforce and refusing to campaign against the

Tories and what they are doing to local jobs and services. A campaign to save our services would have massive popular appeal right now, and be a great springboard for the next general election.

The government has found millions to fund the war in the Gulf. A tiny proportion of that would solve all the problems of local government. A campaign to win back that funding is possible, is winnable, and has never been more necessary than now.

Keep the unity — build for an all-out strike

The whole strategy of the management so far has been to try to split up the historic unity between all the unions, and this must be resisted. Keeping the joint action going is the key to victory.

Yet, within that unity, activists in all the unions need to be using the current widespread anger and frustration of the workforce to go for the one form of action that is likely to win this dispute quickly, that of all-out indefinite strike action.

There are problems about this immediately, especially among some of the lower paid manual workers, whose unions will not be able to pay strike pay, but the mood is there, and the argument has to be that an all-out strike now would win this dispute quickly.

Those unions that do pay strike pay should discuss contributing to a hardship fund for all the unions.

All the unions need to have strike committees that involve their members directly in the dispute and in the decision making of the strike — what action to take, how to respond to management's proposals and tactics, and so on.

With all the unions acting together this means union reps to the trade union joint coordinating committee need to be mandated to represent their members' views, and there need to be forums in all unions which meet regularly during the strike period, to make decisions and organise around key issues.

Already the strike looks like spawning a couple of rank and file groups. One is called Council Workers Against the War and the other is going to be an anti-deportation, anti-racist campaign linked to the issues of the Gulf War, deportations and violence and racism in the communities.

Stop the war:

Lobby the TUC February 27!

By Mac Clarke NUJ Book Branch

Support is growing for our lobby of the TUC called to protest at the General Council's support for the war.

It's vital for trade union activists to raise the issue as soon as possible. Get your branch or steward's committee to back the lobby and bring your banners.

The lobby can be used to get a discussion going at work and in your union on the war.

For instance TGWU activists at Ford Dagenham have already got their branch to support the demonstrations against the war, but they are rediscussing the issue so as to get full branch support for the TUC lobby.

Raise the lobby in your workplace. Assemble 8.15am.

Called by the NUJ Book Branch

Initial sponsors so far include:

Tony Benn MP

Jake Ecclestone, Deputy

General Secretary NUJ

Kyran Connolly (NUJ

Executive)

Jim Boumelha (FoC Pergamon

Strikers, NUJ Executive)

Andy Smith (FoC Taylor and

Francis strikers,)

Krysia Maciejewska (NUJ Exec)

Johnny Byrne (TGWU

Executive)

Leeds Teachers' Salaries

Conference, representing 33

local NUT associations

Tony Lennon President BETA

Andy Dixon (NUT Executive)

Anita Dickinson (NUT

Executive)

Barrie Frost (NUT Executive)

Nic Gavin (NUT Executive)

Dave Harvey (NUT Executive)

Mary Hufford (Deputy General

Secretary NUT)

Ian Murch (NUT Executive)

Bernard Regan (NUT

Executive)

Howard Roberts (NUT

Executive)

David Roper (NUT Executive)

Marion Shirley (NUT

Executive)

Mark Slater (NUT Executive)

Colin Tarrant (NUT Executive)

Roy Lockett, Deputy General

Secretary ACTT

Martin Spence (ACTT

Executive)

North East Area National

Union of Mineworkers

Len Brindle AEU District

Secretary Preston, CSEU

District secretary:

Dave Gough, AEU District

Secretary Liverpool, AEU

Presidential Candidate 1990

Jim Fitzpatrick (FBU Executive)

NCU Westminster branch

Alec McFadden, Wirral Trades

Council

Wear & District Trades Council

Newcastle upon Tyne Trade

Union Council

UCATT Crook Branch, Co.

Durham

Apex Holborn

Tim Cooper, secretary Notts

County NALGO

Brian Gardner, secretary

Islington NALGO

Mickey Fenn (victimised Tilbury

Docks shop steward)

Tom Cleary (Gen Sec, Leeds

NUT)

Brian Halliwell (Division

Secretary, Notts NUT)

Alison Miles, chair West End

MSF, MSF regional executive

Liam McQuade, branch

secretary LOMO/C&CS, UCW

Rod Finlinson, London

Divisional Committee AEU,

AEU Ford Dagenham

John Bohanna, senior steward

TGWU Metal, body and

stamping plant Ford Halewood

Joan Bohanna, Convenor

SATA B74

Bob Trueblood, General

Secretary Bolton NUT

Crompton Cornthwaite,

Assistant Secretary Bolton NUT

Mike Greenalgh, Past President

Bolton NUT

Dick Davis, Secretary South

Trafford Natfhe

All in a personal capacity

Contact NUJ Book branch:

314-20 Grays Inn Road,

London WC1X 8DP. Phone

081 801 2841.

BREL jobs threat

BREL, the railway rolling stock manufacturer which was privatised three years ago, is to shed 1,200 of its 8,000 workforce, and London Underground is planning to sack 1,000 workers

BREL says it is short of orders from BR and London Underground, while London Underground itself is suffering from a financial crisis that has left it £40 million short this year.

The BREL sackings will be embarrassing for the government, as they come less than a month after outdated BR rolling stock was blamed for the Cannon Street accident.

Full report next week.

NUCPS DSS strikers set to go back

By Steve Hughes, NUCPS Wallasey DSS

Early last week NUCPS nationally called all 15 striking DSS offices to return to work by 18 February after they'd accepted a new offer made by management.

Originally, we'd been calling

Jaguar cuts 1,000 jobs

By Gerry Bates

One thousand jobs are to go at Jaguar in the West Midlands.

for an extra 4-5,000 permanent staff to deal with shortfalls brought about by computerisation and new work duties. The offer that's been accepted will mean the DSS getting an extra £9.5 million to spend on staffing.

The money is to be split three ways between the new Social Security Centres, offices with the worst staff levels, and the rest to be applied generally. We've calculated it should mean 2,500 new jobs — about half of what we were asking for.

8,300 workers at Castle Bromwich, Browns Lane and Radford are to work just one week in three.

There has been little resistance at rank and file level to the redundancies which are composed of early retirement and voluntary redundancy.

The unions at the 3 plants appear to have accepted these latest attacks as a fait accompli. There has certainly been little national lead given beyond some fiery rhetoric from Bill Morris of the TGWU and Roger Lyons of MSF.

These job losses should be seen as part of a wider crisis in the car industry. The Jaguar redundancies are the single biggest attack so far, coming on top of 2,000 redundancies in total over the last year. Jobs have also gone recently at Fords, Austin Rover, Land Rover and Peugeot.

A united fightback is needed across the whole of the motor industry.

(More on this next week).

But we also got other concessions — part of our original claim was for 500 new posts to deal with extra work brought about by the introduction of the staff appraisal scheme two years ago. Management have made a commitment to review the whole system and it looks likely it will be completely scrapped — that was seen as a real bonus and pleased people. There are also other smaller concessions — on a number of issues management will now have to consult the union where previously they didn't.

Overall people seem fairly pleased with the offer and feel the dispute was effective, especially as the Department had started out saying there'd be no talks while people were on strike. I thought people might have been unhappy about not being balloted on the offer, but it doesn't seem so. It might have

been difficult if, say, Wallasey had voted to reject whilst everyone else accepted. Although the offer's been accepted it's not at all clear whether there will be a return to work on the 18th; that's because of what's happened in the Wallasey office. Management locally are recommending disciplinary action be taken against three pickets. We know nothing happened to justify that and it's just a clear case of victimisation.

We're meeting management on Wednesday and unless they drop the charges we won't be going back. The other striking offices have also agreed to stay out and we've got full support from the union.

• CPSA Wallasey voted last week to return to work after a revised offer of more permanent jobs and promotions was made by management.

Support the 'Open Left'

The ending of the NUCPS dispute tells us something about the way the 'secret left' leadership of the DSS Executive works.

With no warning to the strikers about what was on offer and without any return to work ballot the strike was called off. The cynical disregard for the views of the members reminds us of the politics of the Secret Left in NUCPS.

British Airways cut 4,600 jobs to pay for the war

4,600 jobs are to go at British Airways as war and recession takes its toll on the international passenger airlines.

An additional 2,000 workers are to be stood down on half pay. Jobs are also under threat at Pan Am and US Air.

If TGWU National Airlines officer George Riley

is to be believed it looks like the national union leadership are not going to put up much of a fight over this. "Staff would understand the depth of the problem" he said.

Shop stewards from Heathrow meeting this Thursday need to look at the options for stopping these job losses including all-out strike action.

The bosses should pay for the Gulf war not the workers.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Stop Clause 25 and Paragraph 16!

Lesbians

and gays fight back



An anti-Saddam Iraqi asks:

How can you justify bombing my people?

I feel angry that the US and Britain chose to fight Saddam as though he is the Iraqi nation rather than one criminal hated by the vast majority of Iraqis.

I see Iraq as a prison, with the Iraqis as hostages to Saddam for the last 20 years and now having their "prison" and their sources of supply bombed by the Allies in an attempt to punish Saddam.

I feel that my family in Iraq have faith in me to tell the world that the Iraqis do not support Saddam and do not deserve to die from Allied bombs, from disease or from starvation — when the Western governments themselves admit that the quarrel is with Saddam not the Iraqi people.

I feel helpless and depressed as I am just one small person in this aggressive and powerful world — and I feel guilty for being so weak and helpless.

I feel that, although my mother (who is 76) wants to die as soon as possible to escape this horrid world, she wants to die in peace and to be buried in one piece, and that she wants her soul to go in peace to the other side rather than to be lost here, frightened by the sounds of the bombs even after her death.

I feel sad for the 18 million people living in Iraq (Iraqis, other Arabs, Asians and Africans) whose voices cannot be heard — because neither Saddam nor the Allies care to listen to them.

I feel sad that after all the Iraqis have suffered from Saddam's brutality over the last 20 years they now have to suffer from the West's vast military aggression. If the American government had

really wanted peace they would have got it.

I feel frustrated that, even though more and more British people are beginning to suspect that the government and the media are hiding vital and perhaps unpleasant information from them, so many still accept the war as a must — instead of listening to other opinions, analysing the many contradictory statements by politicians and the military, and only then trying to make up their own minds.

I feel surprised that, with all their rights of free speech, so few British people ask the simple ques-

**"I am
British and
Iraqi!"**

tion: "If our quarrel is with Saddam rather than with the Iraqi people, how can we justify the bombing of the Iraqi people and their supplies?" And I find myself wondering whether the British people would accept this war if the people living in Iraq were British.

I feel surprised that the peoples of the "third world" are accused of being brainwashed, barbaric and fanatic — while Western leaders are trying to brainwash their own people into accepting the need for barbaric bombing of innocent Iraqis in order to punish the Saddam that almost all Iraqis hate and fear.

Allied politicians and military men assure us that they're "minimising" the number of civilian deaths, yet on their own admission they have no idea how many civilians have died in the bombing. Can they tell us *now* (before the true figures are revealed) what they would regard as "minimal"? 1,000? 10,000? 60,000 (one for every sorties)? 500,000?

And will they include in this estimate the hundreds of thousands who will die from disease, cold and starvation — the indirect result of cutting their essential supplies of water, electricity, gas, fuel, food and medicine? Meanwhile, the Allies proudly inform us how well they are "pounding" or "softening" the Iraqi soldiers; yet most of these are conscripts (ie. civilians) forced to take up position in Kuwait.

The Iraqis suffered so much when Saddam was allied to the Western governments — and now they suffer simply because Saddam and the West fell out over Kuwait and its oil.

I cannot see any way in which this war is against Saddam himself. I see it as a war against Iraqi civilians, because the bombs are deliberately cutting their essential supplies and "accidentally" destroying the people and their houses. Had the US simply wanted to stop Saddam's aggression they could have allowed time for the Iraqis to get rid of him — especially as the sanctions against Saddam included the long-overdue removal of the CIA protection which had saved him from hundreds of Iraqi attempts at coups and assassinations.

By Janine Booth (NUS women's officer) outlines the issues

Paragraph 16 singles out lesbians and gay men as not being fit to foster children.

Last year's Embryology Bill restricted lesbian access to artificial insemination by donor. The message is clear: the Tories do not want us to bring up children.

Clause 25 attempts further to criminalise consenting and victimless gay sexual behaviour.

It seeks to equate "indecent behaviour between men" (what they use to convict men who cottage — but can also mean public shows of affection), "solicitation" (which could include winking or chatting someone up), and "procurement" (which could mean introducing someone to one of your friends) with sexual offences like rape and sexual abuse. It does not write new criminal offences into the law, but it does provide for increasing penalties for these so-called offences.

All these attacks add up to a concerted attempt to re-criminalise homosexuality through the back door. The Tory message is clear: they don't like lesbians and gay men.

They consider all lesbian and gay sex revolting. They don't like our visibility. If they could get away with it they would try and re-criminalise us altogether. They are not able to do it because lesbians and gay men are fighting back.

The campaign against Clause 28 may not have stopped the clause becoming law, but it did make it

more difficult for the bigots, and in reality the Section has not been used to achieve what many thought it might lead to.

The campaign against the latest attacks has to be built nationally, not just in London. We must pressurise the labour movement vigorously to oppose these attacks, both through the Labour Party and through the trade unions.

And what we need now more than ever is a lesbian and gay movement that establishes itself, a movement that can sustain and develop itself after we have defeated these current attacks. We need a mass fighting lesbian and gay movement that can fight for our rights and our liberation.

We're fighting back!

More on centre pages



Janine Booth