

The failure of
Thatcherism

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For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!

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Hamlet

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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The lesson of Monmouth

Labour must take the gloves off!



Campaign for a general election!

The Tories are split on Europe!

The Tory Party is openly split on Europe! The Thatcherites are in open revolt against Major.

It was the relationship of Britain to the European Community (EC) which triggered the Tory moves to ditch Mrs Thatcher. Thatcher had become more and more strident in her criticisms of the EC and assertions that Britain would keep its sovereignty.

with the policies of the dominant section of British big business. Already in a panic over the next general election, the Tory MPs took the opportunity to change the leadership.

When Major replaced Thatcher he rigidly changed gears on Europe. Britain is once more in step with the EC.

Now a hundred and five Tory MPs in the Commons, including prominent Thatcherites like Nicholas Ridley and Norman Tebbit, have

put down a House of Commons motion. It seems to have been organised by the Thatcherite Bruges Group.

Plainly it is intended to be a "warning shot".

They warn Major not to accept a Single European Currency or a Central European bank: "The ultimate power" on such things, they say, "must remain with the Westminster parliament."

Fear of the electoral consequences of a big Tory split on Europe, which Mrs Thatcher's attitude looked cer-



tain to create, was one of the reasons they forced Thatcher to retire.

For six months it looked to have been a smooth Tory success. The apparent decision of the anti-Europeans

to fight changes all that.

It must undermine Tory credibility in the pre-election period we are now in — and it might tear the party apart.

More power to Thatcher's friends!

The lie machine



Just for once, the tabloids got something right: this week "Mr Windbag" finally got around to banning the killer dogs.

Those who think the appearance of such dogs on Britain's streets during the '80s was a suitable symbol for the Tory jungle we now live in will probably see the ban as just another piece of Major cosmetic surgery in the run up to the general election. First Thatcher, then the pit bull terrier. But the Tory jungle remains.



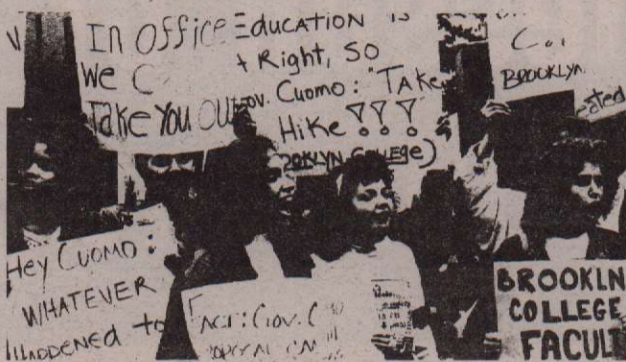
Poor old Gazza. The overgrown boy who is good at football put his arms around Mrs Thatcher not so long ago, so it is tempting to wish him ill. But everybody else seems to love him fervently.

From the Mirror's back page you'd think it was something from a Barbara Cartland romance: "Ill wait for you darling, says Lazio..."

But don't come back too soon, Gazza. Give us a break, lad!



How do you spice up stale tosh about prostitutes? Find an "angle" "linking" it to the most popular TV star in ages!



US students demonstrate against education cuts

Angry New York workers and students march on governor's office

By Barry Finger

100,000 government workers joined by state college students, marched through New York City's financial district on 30 April to protest against Governor Mario Cuomo's budget cuts.

The rally was endorsed by over 400 community, labour and student organisations.

This rally capped a period of intense activity on the public — state and city — college campuses. Cuomo's proposed \$96 million in budget cuts to the city university system coupled with a \$500 tuition hike and \$400 cut-back in student loans prompted a student takeover of City College campus in Harlem.

This sparked a wave of takeovers in 18 of 21 city campuses, and protests at four upstate colleges.

The student strikers won widespread trade union support especially in the government sector, where Cuomo's proposed budget slashing threatens 20,000

with unemployment and the remainder of the state's workforce with a three year wage freeze.

Cuomo proposes draconian cuts not only in education but also in transportation, health care and housing programmes. All this is necessary so as to leave unthreatened the \$3.2 billion in state tax breaks enjoyed by New York's corporate elite in 1990 alone.

According to recent studies, income from 1980-88 rose 68% for New York's richest 5% while their tax bill fell by 27%. Working class residents took a 26% fall in their income during the same period while their taxes increased by 14%. In fact, New York's businesses contribute only half of the portion of the state's general funds today that they did in 1965.

The advocacy by Tony Mazzocchi, secretary of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, of a Labor Party, has already found a measure of resonance in New York City's labour movement and is the subject of a series of public discussions and debates. It is a hopeful development on an otherwise bleak political landscape.

Background brief:

The issues in the Northern Ireland talks

By Jack Cleary

Do the talks on the future of Northern Ireland have any chance of leading to an agreement between the Catholic and Protestant communities on some sort of 6 Counties Catholic-Protestant power-sharing?

Have things "on the ground" changed sufficiently during the long years of impasse and stalemate (it is exactly 17 years since a Protestant general strike destroyed the last attempt at power-sharing)?

The signs so far are not encouraging. If the public uproar about where they would meet is any indication, mutual accommodation is a long way off.

In Northern Ireland the Protestant two-thirds of the population — one million — say they are British and want to retain the link with Britain.

This Protestant bloc is divided

between those — Paisley and the Democratic Unionist Party — who also want some form of local Northern Ireland self-government and those — Molineaux and the Official Unionist Party — who want "integration" with Britain, to be governed directly from London.

The Catholic half-million want to be part of a unitary Irish state ruled from Dublin. These goals are incompatible. The root of the prolonged Irish war, supported by a fluctuating part of the Catholic population — at its highest point in the early 1980s, Sinn Fein got 1 in 3 Catholic votes — lies here: in any head-counting democratic procedure the Catholics cannot win.

They reject the 6 Counties state and a democracy based on it in the name of something they consider more important, their Irish national identity. The proper unity for majorities and minorities, they say, is the whole of Ireland, which should not have been partitioned back in 1921.

If the Protestant one million

were forced against their will into a United Ireland, they would have the same attitude, rejecting the state, asserting that the UK is the proper unit for majorities and minorities. Some of them would fight an IRA-like military campaign.

In 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed by the London and Dublin governments, one in effect acting for the 6 Counties Catholics, the other for the Protestants, though Protestants vehemently rejected it. It gave Dublin and effective political voice in how Britain runs Northern Ireland.

Today, the question is: can the agreement now be supplemented by Belfast Catholic-Protestant power-sharing? Would the Irish government and the 6 Counties Catholics give up Dublin involvement in return for a guaranteed place in a Belfast power-sharing government?

It is these substantial questions which give meaning to the shadowy arguments about symbols and about where meetings will take place.

Gorbachev faces west

Gorbachev is taking advantage of the end of the miners' strike to win back Western support and attempt to set back Boris Yeltsin's popularity.

Changes to Russian emigration laws are a return to the earlier strategy of winning international support.

Gorbachev will be further boosted if his campaign — run at arms length — to diminish his

rival Boris Yeltsin's big victory in the June 12 Russian Presidential election is successful.

Nikolai Ryzhkov, Gorbachev's former Prime Minister, is being backed by the CP for the Russian Presidency, and has concentrated his campaign against Yeltsin.

Both men have chosen CP colonels as running mates, thus highlighting that the struggle is between different wings of the bureaucracy.

Solidarnosc on strike

The Solidarity trade union has called a day of protest for Wednesday 22 May against the Solidarity government.

The protest is against the

rapidly rising rate of unemployment and the corresponding decline in the Polish economy.

Wage controls now limit pay rises to 60% of inflation increases. 20,000 copper miners in the south have just ended a one week strike for 100% increases.



FOR ALL VICTIMS OF THE ARMS TRADE

Major and Bush's talk during the Gulf war of limiting the international arms trade was nothing more than something to sell the war.

Only weeks after the war ended a three-day Arms Fair was held in Birmingham. Birmingham people demonstrated their opposition

Reviving Labour's youth wing

By Paul McGarry

Manchester Polytechnic Labour Club is hosting a conference for Labour student activist on 15 June.

The conference will be an open forum for students who are unhappy with the orientation of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), and will focus on three issues: inter-

national NOLS democracy, campaigning for the forthcoming general election, and the wider development of Labour's youth movement.

Discontent with NOLS is at an all-time high, and not just on the hard left. Many of the soft left have become increasingly dismayed by incompetence and lack of campaigning in NUS.

For more information contact the Labour Club, Manchester Polytechnic Students Union, Mandela Building, Oxford Road, Manchester or ring Dave on 061-227 9004.

The left must organise!

Campaign for a general election!

There is one simple lesson in Labour's victory in the Monmouth by-election, where the Tories lost a seemingly safe seat.

It is a lesson that, learned, can most likely ensure a Labour victory in the coming general election. Learned, it can stop the Tories benefiting from putting the election back a year.

The lesson is this: when the fight is taken to the Tories, the Tories can be beaten: Labour must take the gloves off and go after the Tories.

The Tories know how vulnerable they are. That is why they have been squealing like stuck stock brokers since Monmouth.

They know that a vigorous, campaigning Labour Party could have shifted them long ago. They know they have always been a vulnerable minority-supported government which has been able to carry through the tremendous Thatcherite counter-revolution of the 1980s *only* because the main opposition was led by the bunch of timorous, cowed and spiritless creeps who head the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The systematic Tory demolition of the health service won Labour the Monmouth by-election. Yet Labour decided to focus on that issue only at the last minute in a piece of inspired electoral opportunism.

But Labour in Monmouth went for them. People listened. The subsequent bare-knuckle tabloid outcry seems to have done Labour little damage: people know who the liars are!

The labour movement needs more than inspired flash-in-the-pan bits of electoral opportunism: we need a systematic anti-Tory campaign.

Think what could have been achieved by a Labour Party that had campaigned vigorously, unafraid of the reflex mud-storm of Tory-inspired abuse which the media throws, as an octopus throws ink, when the Tories are under attack.

Think what could have been done



The 1988 healthworkers' dispute. Photo: Ian Swindale

around the poll tax. Think what could still be done around the poll tax, which is still in operation, and will remain in operation all through the run-up to the general election.

Contrast the lesson Monmouth teaches with the record of Labour in opposition.

Keep quiet, stay respectable and uncontroversial, and hope the Tories trip themselves up: that, even after Monmouth, remains the Labour leaders' strategy.

But Tory fortunes may recover in the next year. The Labour Party should *not* continue to wait passively for the Tories to die a natural electoral death. There is nothing inevitable about a Labour general election victory. Remember the stroke the Tories pulled six months ago when they ditched Thatcher? Their popularity increased dramatically. The wait-and-hope strategy assures Labour of nothing in a general election. All it has ensured in the last decade is a succession of avoidable Tory victories.

The Tories are in trouble, but the Tories can choose the time of the General Election; they don't dare to go to the country now. They have enough wit to choose a time when interest rates (and mortgage payments) are relatively low, and things look relatively good for them.

The wait-and-hope strategy has also meant Labour proposing no policies which can even start to come to grips with decaying British capitalism. It means that a Labour government, if elected, will preside blandly and inactively over continuing unemployment, rundown public services, and social misery.

Labour under Kinnock is the party of the modest and humble "little" — the little improvement on

the Tories, here and there. And little hope for the future.

With such policies it will do nothing for its working-class supporters. It will build only demoralisation, disillusionment, and the basis for a return of even more vicious Tory rule. The Labour Government will be a re-run of 1974-9, or worse.

"Wait-and-hope" has stopped the Labour leaders speaking out against the Tories on *anything* serious. Instead of confronting the Tories with alternative policies, they nip at them with minor parliamentary point-scoring about their "style" of government or their internal divisions.

During the Gulf crisis and the Gulf war, "wait-and-hope" kept Neil Kinnock in lockstep with John Major and George Bush, not daring even to criticise the secondary details of American imperialist policy. This slavish warmongering demoralised and alienated thousands of Labour supporters.

Electurally, socialists must support Labour one hundred per cent. Despite all Neil Kinnock's betrayals, the General Election will be a confrontation between the labour movement and the chosen party of the ruling class, and socialists must be on the side of the labour movement.

But we must also argue our own, socialist, ideas, and for two reasons especially. We want to rally trade union and campaign activists who, disgusted and demoralised by Neil Kinnock's performance, will otherwise turn away from politics altogether.

And we must do what we can to prepare the working class fightback against a pro-capitalist Labour government.

That is why the decision by Labour Party Socialists to launch a "Socialists for Labour" campaign is so important. The campaign will prepare statements backing Labour, but also calling for full trade union freedom, restoration of public spending, and opposition to imperialism in the Middle East; for activists to use in canvassing support among trade unionists and others.

It will produce broadsheets outlining the case for Labour from a socialist viewpoint, and hold rallies and meetings in the run-up to the election campaign where those socialist ideas are discussed. It will seek affiliations from a range of left groupings in the Labour party.

It will act as a focal point for the left in the run-up to the election, and for all those Labour activists who want to start campaigning for the General Election now, but want to do it on the basis of positive alternatives to the Tories. In short, it can provide a socialist voice within Labour's official election effort.

Above all, it will urge the labour movement to learn and apply the lessons of Monmouth: aggressive anti-Toryism pays off!

We should not have illusions about the difficulties we face. The level of confidence in the labour movement is much lower than it was in 1978-9 when a "Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory" was able to get quite broad and enthusiastic support on the left, and even to get its leaflets taken as official election literature by a number of Constituency Labour Parties.

Both the overwhelming desire to get rid of the Tories at any price, and fear of the witch-hunt inside

the Labour Party, will limit us.

But we cannot afford to let them *paralyse* the left. Above all, we cannot afford to do that after the Gulf war. That war made it plain beyond doubt that Neil Kinnock's road is not one that approaches agreed objectives — nuclear disarmament, economic equality, civil liberties, restored public services — more slowly and surely, but a road that leads to different goals altogether.

The Gulf war could not be opposed slowly, piecemeal, bit-by-bit: it had to be opposed then and there, or not at all. Kinnock opposed it not at all. He nailed his colours to the mast of capitalist greed and capitalist war.

The left must nail its colours to the mast, too.

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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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When exceptions become the rule

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Rolls Royce's plan to sack its entire workforce, re-employing them only if they accept new contracts and a six month pay freeze, could prove to be just the first of a whole series of similarly "exceptional", "temporary" measures across manufacturing — if they get away with it.



INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

After all, times are hard, order-books are empty, we've all got to make sacrifices. And just to prove it, Rolls' chairman Lord Tombs has agreed to freeze his own pay for the duration (mind you, he's on £180,064).

According to the CBI, the number of "frozen" or "deferred" wage settlements have risen from 10% of total settlements in the first quarter of the year, to nearly 25% in the second. Meanwhile, average pay settlements in manufacturing have fallen from 9% in December to 7% in April.

Given rising unemployment and falling inflation, a decline in average pay settlements is no great surprise. What is more worrying is the willingness of national union officials (and sometimes local stewards) to go along with pay "freezes", "pauses" and "deferments". At Michelin, Hoover and (earlier this year) Rolls Royce, national officials joined forces with management in urging such arrangements on the workforce.

The arguments were always the same: to prevent job loss, to keep the company competitive, to allow a temporary "breathing space" before coming back for a decent rise in a few months, etc, etc. At Rolls Royce in January, the unions agreed to "defer" 7% of their 12% wage claim until June, by which time it was hoped that the company's economic situation would have improved and the full claim would be re-submitted. So much for wishful thinking.

All of this should be setting alarm bells ringing for any trade unionist familiar with the "give back" phenomenon that swept through American industry during the 1980s.

It started with the Chrysler corporation which, by late 1979, was facing bankruptcy. The leadership of the United Auto Workers responded by agreeing to a six month wage freeze, the surrender of six paid holidays and the deferment of pension increases. The deal was sold to UAW members in Chrysler on the basis that it was a "temporary", "exceptional" concession, necessitated by the "desperate" plight of the company. Within two months, the UAW accepted the loss of seven paid holidays, and the indefinite delay of all pay rises at Chrysler. A year later, the union backed an additional "concessions" package worth \$673 million.

In fact (as the respected US socialist Kim Moodie points out in his book, *An Injury to All*), the initial wage and benefit concessions did little to solve Chrysler's fundamental economic problems: labour costs are about 25% to 35% of total costs in most manufacturing industries and isolated concessions make little difference to a large corporation. Only when concessions become generalised throughout the entire economy do they start making a real difference.

Thus it was that the Chrysler deal, from being a "one off", became a precedent for a whole series of "give backs". Profitable manufacturers like Ford and General Motors obtained similar deals from the UAW. By the mid-'80s, "give backs" had become the norm in steel, meatpacking, chemicals, airlines, coal and trucking. Employers in the service sector, who were not experiencing anything like the problems of the auto industry, began to try their luck in demanding similar settlements.

At the same time, national "pattern" bargaining of wages and conditions went out of the window as deals were negotiated on the basis of company performance and the competitiveness of individual plants.

It became a wholesale assault upon the most fundamental traditions of union solidarity, presided over by the leaders of once-great industrial union, like the UAW and the Teamsters. And its effects continued long after the worst of the 1980s recession was over.

Now, don't panic. Nothing on that scale is happening here. Yet. But there are some worrying signs: the increasing frequency of wage deferments, the abolition of the national engineering negotiations, and the willingness of union leaders to recommend "efficiency" packages. It's all "temporary", "exceptional", "one off", of course. But "desperate" deals, negotiated in "desperate" times, have a nasty habit of sticking.

INTERNATIONAL

US talks with Feisal Hussein

Will the US push Israel?

Adam Keller reports from Tel Aviv

The big debate now on the Israeli left is: can you or can you not expect serious American pressure on Israel to make peace with the Palestinians?

In fact the left has been waiting for American pressure since 1967. Every time a new American president is elected, people hope for US pressure.

The central issue is the \$10 billion in loan guarantees from the US government. Israel wants this money to finance the housing of the Soviet immigrants.

If the US Congress decides not to give the money unless Israel moves towards peace, that would be a revolutionary change in US-Israel relations.

The request for the \$10 billion is to be presented in September.

The US is talking to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, with Feisal Hussein. They are not talking to Arafat.

Husseini makes it clear that he has official authorisation from the PLO to talk to Baker, and that the positions his delegation presents are the positions of the PLO.



Israeli border police guard Palestinians during an ID check

"It is clear that the US wants to break the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories away from the PLO."

There is a very big debate among the Palestinians about these discussions. Only Fatah endorse the talks with Baker. The Communist Party, the Democratic Front and the Popular Front oppose the talks.

It is clear that the US wants to break the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories away from the PLO.

The Israeli Labour Party and part of Likud also have this policy. They say they want to talk to the Palestinians but not to the PLO.

This is a foolish position. Firstly, it will not work. The Palestinians are very sensitive on this issue. The most dirty word for the Palestinians is "alternative leadership" — an alternative to the PLO. Any Palestinian who comes forward as an alternative to the PLO would be finished politically.

Secondly, it is not in Israel's interests. If Israel talked to non-PLO Palestinians and came to an agreement, the PLO would refuse to be bound by it. We would be no further forward.

Politically, Hussein's delegation is Fatah. They have been very sharply criticised by the Palestinian public. They have to continually underline that they are acting for the PLO. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of Palestinian suspicion.

Also, if they want to continue with these talks they will have to show some results. The concrete question is the issue of the settlements. I think that they will not be able to keep talking for long unless Baker can give them some hard guarantees on the West Bank settlements.

The issue of talks is delicate. In May 1989 Shamir's plan for talks was adopted by the government. Shamir made the offer not because he wanted it but because he had to offer something.

The Shamir plan offered

elections in the Occupied Territories to elect representatives who would negotiate with the Israeli government. The PLO accepted it in principle.

However, many practicalities were not settled: whether the elections would be monitored by an international agency — and if so, by whom — who will be allowed to be a candidate; who will be allowed to vote, especially if the Palestinians of East Jerusalem will be allowed to vote; will candidates be allowed free activity and freedom from arrest during

the election campaign. The Israeli government stated that it was not prepared to let the Palestinians of East Jerusalem vote or to allow international monitoring.

In order to solve the outstanding questions there had to be negotiations. Then there was the problem of who would negotiate for the Palestinians. A year ago the Israeli government fell on exactly this question.

After this the Shamir government was formed. They were due to take up the issue again when Saddam invaded Kuwait and the issue was buried.

Israeli peace campaign grows

Since the end of the Gulf War *Peace Now* has increased its opposition to the settlements in the Occupied Territories.

I attended a demonstration on Saturday 4 May. Several hundred people travelled to settlements by bus. It was not called a 'demonstration', because a demonstration required an army permit. It was called a 'tour'.

The settlements are built to a very high standard. The demonstrators concentrated on the social element: the fact that the Housing Ministry spends 20% of its budget on the settlements, when the settlers make up just 2% of the Israeli population, and there are acute housing problems in Israel.

The settlers also get much official and unofficial help from the government. For instance, they get better mortgages than people living inside Israel.

A group of Russian im-

migrants participated in this protest.

The government is trying hard to get the Russian immigrants to join the settlements.

Everyone in Israel knows that the Russian immigrants could be the decisive factor in the next election. They are getting immediate citizenship. And they could form 10% of the electorate by the time of the election in 1992.

The Russian immigrants who came to Israel in the 1970s were mostly right wing. The current immigrants are coming because of the economic and other problems in the Soviet Union. Many would prefer to go to America, and many of the Russians suffer very bad conditions in Israel. You see them going to the market places and taking rotten vegetables from the garbage.

They are being given jobs far below their skills, and working for wages below the minimum.

It is possible that the Russian immigrants will form

their own party. One Russian who came to Israel during the 1970s — a right-winger living in a West Bank settlement — has announced that he will form such a party, and it will be for a Greater Israel and for separation of Church and State. That is an unusual combination for Israel.

A big new peace campaign has been organised, called *Time for Peace*, by *Peace Now* together with Labour doves who do not normally work with *Peace Now*.

They plan a massive drive round a petition calling for territorial concessions in exchange for peace and accepting the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. The petition does not mention the PLO.

We in the *Progressive List for Peace* are helping with this petition drive, although we say Israel must talk to the PLO.

Right wing organise special student conference

More attacks on democracy

By Paul McGarry

The right wing in the National Union of Students (NUS) are attacking democracy — again.

The Kinnockite Labour Students (NOLS) have combined with the higher education bureaucrats club, the Organisation of Non-Aligned Executives (ONE) to push for an extraordinary NUS conference.

They want the special conference to discuss NUS "Reform" — the internal restructuring of the student movement.

The conference is due to be held in

July. They talk about democracy, but this is a cynical anti-democratic manoeuvre, designed to exclude the majority of ordinary students from participating: July is right in the middle of the summer vacation.

This manoeuvre follows their defeat on the "Reform" proposals at the recent NUS conference. A majority of delegates there supported a Left Unity motion to extend the role of local area organisations.

We want democracy; the Kinnockites want a special conference when most students will be away on holiday!

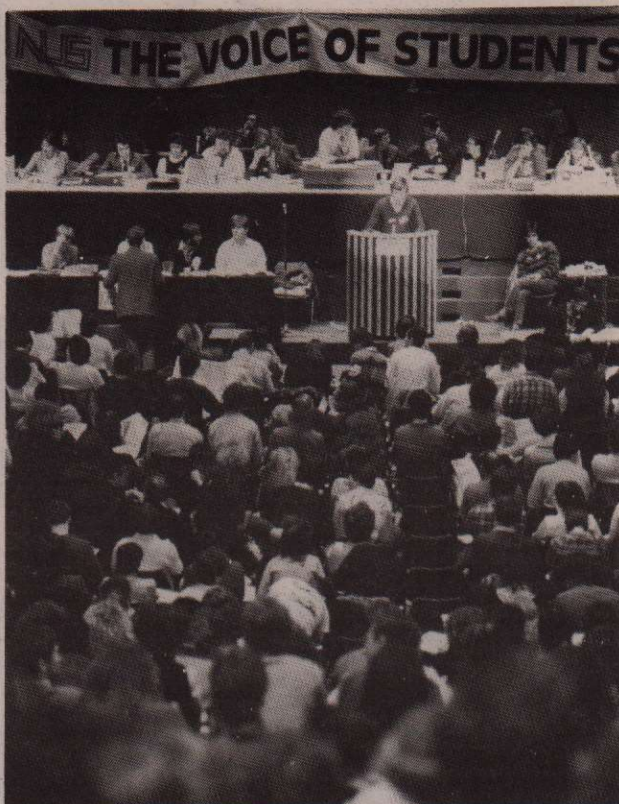
NOLS and ONE, who claim to be in favour of more

democracy, are here attempting to circumvent democracy because they have failed again and again to win a majority of activists to their elitist "Reform" plans.

Conference rejects them? No bother! These democrats will organise a conference which won't reject them, in the middle of the summer holiday!

Left Unity supporters are organising to try and prevent the sham July conference taking place. Failing that, we will build the biggest pro-democracy contingent at the conference.

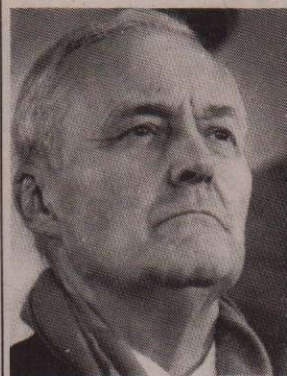
A statement condemning the conference is being circulated, and a co-ordinating meeting is planned for the first week in June.



NUS under the control of right-wing Labour has never been the voice of students

For more information about defending NUS democracy ring Paul on 071 639 7967.

A new kind of democracy



Tony Benn has presented to Parliament a Bill in which he outlines proposals for a new democratic constitution for Britain. This is what the Bill proposes

This Bill provides for the establishment of a democratic, secular and federal Commonwealth of Britain.

There would be an elected President, a Commonwealth Parliament made up of a House of Commons and a House of the People.

There would also be National Parliaments for England, Scotland and Wales, and a Charter of Rights.

Each constituency would be represented by one man and one woman and the voting age would be reduced to 16.

The Commonwealth Parliament would have powers over the Government, including the work of ministers representing Britain at the United Nations and in the European Communities and would be required to approve the stationing of all foreign forces in Britain.

There would be a High Court, and provision for the confirmation of Judges and the election of Magistrates.

Local authorities would acquire general powers, subject to statute.

The Church of England would be disestablished and religious freedom for all would be entrenched.

British jurisdiction over Northern Ireland would be terminated.

The constitutional status of the Queen and the House of Lords would end, members of the Royal Family would enjoy all the rights of citizenship, including the right to stand for Parliament, and would receive pensions and accommodation.

There are four schedules setting out the text of the Charter of Rights, a new Constitutional Oath, the powers of Local Authorities, and providing for an annual report to Parliament by the security services.

Before its introduction the new constitution would have to be put to the electors in a national referendum, and a choice of the electoral system to be adopted would be included in that referendum.

Councils can't enforce the poll tax

By Lesley Smallwood

Councils can't enforce the poll tax; that is why they complained to the Department of Environment this week.

Despite the armoury of weapons at their disposal — bailiffs, wage and benefit arretments, committal proceedings — the councils still can't force people to pay. 80% of non-payers are refusing to be intimidated, and refusing to pay.

That 80% relates only to the two million summonses already issued. Latest Audit Commission estimates suggest another 7.5 million summonses will have to be issued to cover all the non-payers for 1990.

Millions more non-payers will surely join the existing 14 million next year. With opposition like this, councils will find it impossible to chase up non-payers. More and more people will escape the net.

Liability orders, the councils assumed, would frighten people into paying up. The reality is that hardly anyone has bothered to fill them in and return them.

Bailiffs' attempts to seize people's goods are meeting with little success. In many places, they are chased away by local anti-poll tax campaigners and forced to retreat empty-handed.

And, thanks to the information put out by local campaigns up and down the country, many people are now aware of their rights in refusing the bailiffs entry.

Direct deductions from benefits and wages have not become commonplace as originally feared.

Many companies are reluctant to comply, partly because of the administrative expense involved, but also, in some cases, out of fear of a union fight back.

In the few instances where benefit deductions have been made, the small amounts collected are outweighed by the administrative time and expense this process takes.

The councils want more concessions from the government, to up their collection rate. They are asking that

students, and those on benefits, who are currently expected to pay 20% of the poll tax, be exempted altogether. It just isn't worth the bother of collecting the small amounts, they have belatedly come to realise. But the Tories won't be willing to backtrack even further on the poll tax.

Indeed, the Department of the Environment is still insisting, against all the evidence, that the collection rates are "encouraging". It is obvious to everyone else that more people paid the rates than pay the poll tax.

The Tories might have conceded abolition in 1993, but in the meantime they are determined to enforce collection. And Labour councils are willing to do that job for them, as well as implementing savage cuts that result from the poll tax.

The admission by the councils of the huge difficulties they face in collecting the tax should give a boost to the anti-poll tax campaign, and encourage people to stand firm in their

opposition to it.

The Tories' have done a massive U-turn in promising

to abolish it, but it remains in operation for at least another two years. We must continue

to fight to get the tax scrapped now, and to finish off the Tories for good!

"Council tax" is a swindle

By Chris Croome

When they scrapped the poll tax, the Tories admitted that it was unworkable because it was unfair.

The new council tax, they promised, would be more equitable, reflecting — at least in part — ability to pay.

But a closer look at the figures shows this to be untrue. Heseltine's new tax will be the most regressive major tax in Britain, certainly more regressive than the old rates.

In drawing it up, Heseltine has followed the same principle as the poll tax — protect the richest, tax them less, and tax the worst off more to compensate.

Take the banding system: the highest band is set at homes worth £160,000 or more. So those living in million-pound mansions will pay (assuming there are two adults living there) only around £668 on Tory figures — about 2½ times more than someone living in a £30,000 home.

The lowest band starts at £40,000, so those in homes worth less than that — mainly in working class districts in the North and Midlands — will be penalised.

For instance, Heseltine himself will pay only £227 on his luxury home in Westminster, less than any couple in any of England's poorest areas.

A couple in the smallest terraced house in Barrow, by comparison, will pay £477 a year — just £43 less

than a family in a mansion in Kensington. In Barrow, a marginal Tory seat, 60% of houses fall into the lowest bracket.

As with the poll tax, those on the lowest income will pay proportionately more than the wealthiest.

In an attempt to wriggle off the poll tax hook, the Tories may have damaged themselves further. Some of the main losers under the new council tax will be the middle class Tory voters in the South. In Chris Patten's Bath constituency, 54% of households will pay more than under the poll tax.

The Tories haven't changed tack: it will still be the working class, the least able to pay, being forced to cough up to line the pockets of the super-rich. The only way to stop them is to kick them out!

National activist conference called

Tottenham Against the Poll Tax is calling for a national anti-poll tax conference in the autumn to bring together activists from groups across the country to discuss the way forward for the movement.

At a time when we've won a resounding victory by forcing the government to scrap the poll tax and its principles, to admit that it is uncollectable and to abandon a register as unworkable, we all know that the struggle continues.

Millions still face threats, courts, bailiffs and possible jail, and our response must not only be to continue our basic protests and solidarity work, but also to demand a

total amnesty for non-payers — all debts to be written off now!

Savage cuts in local services continue. We need to demand the poll tax is scrapped immediately, not 1993/4 or whenever. And, finally, let's remember those imprisoned for defending our demonstrations — free them now!

The conference has, to date, been sponsored by Tottenham Against the Poll Tax, SW England APT Regional Federation, Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign, Harrogate APT Federation, 3D bulletin collective.

There will be an organising meeting on Sunday 26 May, 2-6pm, Leeds Trades Club, Saville Mount, Leeds 6. For more details phone Ian on 0532 623822.



80% of non-payers are still not paying

GRAFFITI

King Rat — and he won't need make-up

GRAFFITI

Derek Hatton, Darriviste, has landed himself a nice little Xmas earner: the role of King Rat in the pantomime *Dick Whittington* in Manchester. He will appear with such glitterati as Paul Daniels's son and Rusty "Gourmet" Lee. Derek was chosen for the role because of his charisma and his sense of humour.

No wonder the man laughs! He is currently on bail charged with fraudulent practices during his time as deputy leader of Liverpool City Council. The resultant scandal has caused the collapse of his PR firm, says Delboy.

The problem remains of how he'll be able to pay for his nice suits up until the box office receipts start coming in. Touring the country making after-dinner speeches — rat's tales? — is how. At least Lester Piggott could ride a horse.

Millions of pounds have been 'stolen' from the public purse as a result of the National Bus Company's privatisation.

It was Nicholas Ridley as Transport Secretary who organised the sale and in doing so allowed the new owners to sell assets such as bus stations at a great profit.

In fact out of the 1,500 properties put on the market by the new owners taxpayers have benefitted from only 18.

In the Lake District bus stations in Keswick, Workington, Maryport and Carlisle have all been sold, or are about to be sold, for commercial and shopping developments.

Keswick bus station, given a £55,000 valuation by the government, was later sold for £750,000, and Workington, valued at £165,000 was subsequently valued at £1 million.

Those bus stations that do survive have been heavily criticised as contributing to Britain's town centre wastelands.

12 town centres were studied by the Gulbenkian Foundation to see what social and cultural activities were available at night.

Basingstoke bus station was described as windswept and neglected and Reading bus station was an 'offence'. Few stations had waiting areas or cafes.

In Manchester's Piccadilly BR station all bars, cafes and information points are closed by 10.30pm.

The study concluded that pubs now dominate evening social life and as a result they have become virtual no-go areas for many groups of people who are threatened by pub culture or who for various reasons ignore alcohol.

Unlike many European cities town squares are not places to meet, talk and relax. Public entertainment is rare as are children enjoying their parent's after work time by either playing or eating.

Town planners, architects and those responsible for urban planning need to shoulder much of the blame.

Less than two years after France celebrated 200 years of *égalité* and *fraternité* (and liberty) the first woman Prime Minister



has been appointed. Not quite so remarkable after Britain, Israel, India, Pakistan and Ireland have all elected women Prime Ministers or Presidents. Well that is until you remember that French women didn't even have the vote until 1945! In Switzerland women have just won the vote in the last canons holding on to male only suffrage.

Attempts to outlaw abortion in Poland are not proceeding as smoothly as planned by the right wing of Solidarnosc and the Catholic Church.

Solidarnosc is trying to make abortion a punishable crime again. However members of the Democratic Union have moved to amend the proposal by jailing doctors and accomplices for two years and leaving the woman free unless she performed the abortion herself. There would be no exceptions for rape, incest, ill health or poverty.

There is little doubt that one of the proposals will be carried if it goes to the vote as the CP deputies have said they will support the new penalties.

The real problem for all the parties is the large scale opposition to the proposal among Poles. A new opinion poll shows 31% want abortion to remain legal on demand, and 49% in specific circumstances. Only 19% are flatly against it.

The poll also found that 76% were in favour of a referendum on the issue and 56% said contraceptives were not sufficiently available.

As Australia moves from recession to depression more startling revelations come out of the Royal Commission into the business activities of the Western Australian Labor Government.

Last week Lord McAlpine, former Treasurer of the British Conservative Party, was found to have donated A\$100,000 to the ALP's election campaign. McAlpine, who has huge property holdings in WA has made no secret of his good relations with the ALP in general and the right wing WA branch in particular.

"I'm apolitical in this country. I am the treasurer of the British Conservative Party... I have very strong conservative philosophies. I don't find those philosophies incompatible with the Labor Party in Australia."

The combined effect of the Commission's exposés which have implicated Hawke, and the rapidly deteriorating economy has increased speculation that Hawke could soon be joining Thatcher in unemployment and in the search for meaning to life.

Perhaps *Vanity Fair* should book an interview now.

The big whinge backfires

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Conservative Central Office had its response to the Monmouth by-election result all worked out in advance: accuse Labour of being liars.

Now, I could have told Chris Patten that this was a mistake. It smacks of petulance and foot-stamping. No-one likes a sore loser.

Anyway, papers like the *Express* and *Mail* duly plastered "Liars!" over their front pages and loyally reported the complaints of Messrs Patten and Waldegrave, to the effect that Labour had told porkies about the government's NHS plans during the Monmouth campaign. But the hoped-for response (a tidal wave of public outrage at Labour's scandalous mendacity over the NHS) never came.

The Tory press knows a flop-aroo when it sees one. By the end of the week the *Mail*, *Express* and even the *Sun* were openly ridiculing the "liars" campaign.

Saturday's *Daily Mail* asked: "Do the Tories harbour a death wish? One might think so to judge by their response to the humiliating defeat in the by-election. To whinge after the damage has been done and the election has been lost is not only graceless, but pathetic. Such pompous posturings suggest they have been rattled by a



Huw Edwards celebrates Labour's victory in Monmouth

brilliant Labour propaganda coup."

The *Daily Express* warned "Mr Major's chums" that "there are no votes in moaning". Best of all, the *Sun* described Health Secretary Waldegrave as a man who had "lost control of himself. He called the Socialists liars 13 times in a few minutes... Mr Waldegrave is a senior member of the Cabinet. He should know politics is a rough game. Maybe Mr Waldegrave is not yet ready for the men in white suits. But if he goes on in this foolish, undignified manner, John Major may have to send in the removal man."

This unaccustomed sarcasm — savagery, even — from the most loyal bastions of the Tory press, has a

precedent: the treatment that Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home received in the early '60s. The Tory press has an almost infallible nose for imminent defeat.

Some things never change. Robert Maxwell, one-time apologist and hagiographer for such enlightened friends of democracy as Nicolae Ceausescu and Erich Honecker, has telephoned President Turgut Ozal of Turkey "to apologise on behalf of the British press" for the behaviour of Robert Fisk.

Fisk if the respected Middle East correspondent of the *Independent*, who was recently deported by the Turkish government. His

"crime" was to have filed reports describing Turkish troops mistreating Kurdish refugees and stealing relief supplies.

Cap'n Bob was, apparently, outraged by these slurs upon the reputation of Turkey and its highly-disciplined army. He told President Ozal, "that through his personal experience he judges *Independent* reporters by the company they keep and the way they misrepresent and distort matters about him every time they have the opportunity."

If I was President Ozal I might be slightly worried by this declaration of solidarity from the Cap'n: look what's happened to most of the previous recipients of Maxwell sycophancy.

The brainwashed and the self-starved

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

I like eating. In particular I like sandwiches with lots of butter and mayonnaise (the filling is incidental).

I like chocolate ice cream with hot chocolate sauce and chopped nuts, topped with whipped cream. I like bread. I like chips (with lots of salt). I like black coffee made extra strong. I like cheese sauce, high fat cream cheese, biscuits, crisps, Trebor mints, MacDonalds fishburgers, doughnuts, bananas.

Most women like some or all of these things. But I am surrounded by women who talk incessantly of how guilty they feel about eating them. Who talk about how *fatten-*

ing these things are, and thus how terrible. Such women cannot eat a single chocolate digestive without promising to miss dinner.

Weight Watchers made £5.8 million profit last year. Weight Watchers is owned by Heinz, purveyors of high-sugar, high-fat, high-salt products.

Under the Weight-Watchers label, Heinz will also sell you low-fat, low-sugar, low-salt, calorie counted foods. Heinz advertise (during children's telly time) products like tinned spaghetti which will (they hope) addict children to sugary tastes. During "adult viewing" the same company advertise products which will help you diet.

Heinz are very sensible. They are very profitable. The stupid part is that women fall for it. But that is not all.

For grown up women to spoil the pleasure of eating for themselves is OK I suppose. The chances are that their weight loss will be offset by a subsequent weight gain

and unless they learn the lesson they will begin an unhealthy cycle of dieting leading to such stupidities as the Cambridge Diet, a very low calorie diet, also known as semi-starvation.

The awful part is that children are now being encouraged to join in.

70% of 9 year old girls in San Francisco are on some kind of weight reducing diet. As a result some of those girls will die of starvation via eating disorders like Bulimia and anorexia. Some of them may learn to eat normally. But the majority will probably spend the rest of their lives worrying about food.

My first paragraph is a reaction to the prevailing diet culture amongst many women. If I indulged my desires for high fat, sugary foods I would quickly get sick of them (in every sense).

Humans have a natural ability to provide themselves with a balanced diet, which is easily distorted. Distortions can occur through such things as sugar addictions

and also ideology. The dominant ideology is one of praise for thin women who have beaten their own bodies into submission.

I am not advocating obesity or pretending that blubber is beautiful. I am in favour of women being fit and healthy. But what shape a fit and healthy woman is is up to her, not Heinz.

The "half-starved is beautiful" ideology cannot be beaten by individual women deciding not to diet. Companies like Heinz are part and parcel of capitalism which can only be overthrown by collective action.

But socialists male and female must be aware of ideological issues like women's body image. Dieting can kill, just as surely as industrial "accidents". Both are by-products of a sick society, "tragedies" for which no one is held to blame. Capitalism's drive for profits is to blame, and as long as profit rules, women's lives and happiness will be sacrificed needlessly.

Come to Workers' Liberty '91! East European socialists speak out

The crisis of Stalinism

Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Political Centre, a member of the Socialist Party from Moscow, and Adam Novak from the Czech Left Alternative, will be in Britain for Workers' Liberty '91.

The socialists from Eastern Europe will be discussing the unfolding crisis as Gorbachev manoeuvres in the USSR and the rest head for the market.

- Highlights include:
- Russian and Polish socialists debate the crisis of Stalinism.
 - Milka Tyszkiewicz looks at the Polish revolution of 1980-81.
 - Adam Novak examines the Eastern European revolutions of '89 and looks at the privatisation process.
 - Two years on from Tiananmen Square, Cheung Siu Ming takes a look at the rulers — where is China going?
 - Branca Magas analyses the roots of the current conflict in Yugoslavia.
 - John O'Mahony examines our theoretical heritage: Trotsky versus Shactman?



Striking miners in Bulgaria

Introducing Marxism

Two courses at Workers' Liberty '91 are aimed at introducing Marxist ideas.

On Friday 28 June Simon Mohun will outline Marx's economic thinking in a series of four accessible lectures.

Over Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 a course of five interlinked sessions will provide the basics of Marxist political thinking.

For a reading list, write to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.



Jeremy Corbyn

The struggle at home

As the next general election draws nearer, what are the prospects for Labour? And if the Labour Party forms the next government what will it do?

As unemployment rises, what are the prospects for industrial struggle? And to what extent has twelve years of Tory rule shifted the agenda?

- Highlights include:
- Jeremy Corbyn MP, Joe Marino from the Bakers' Union and John O'Mahony from *Socialist Organiser*: "After the Tories — the Socialist Alternative".
 - Alan Johnson questions just how far the Tories have won on the ideological front.
 - Cate Murphy looks at the resistance to the Poll Tax and what the Tories plan next.

and lots, lots more

- Peter Tatchell on the Lesbian and Gay agenda.
- Robin Blackburn on the Black Jacobins.
- Terry Eagleton on Oscar Wilde.
- A course on modern revolutions.
- Al Richardson on Trotskyism during World War 2.
- Bob Fine and South African guests on the crisis of apartheid.
- Should we ban pornography?
- Speakers from Ireland discuss the prospects for peace and workers' unity.
- Ruth Cockroft: the politics of identity.
- Gail Cameron from *Socialist Organiser* examines the roots of black nationalism.
- A course on Marxist economics.
- A course to introduce Marxism.
- Much, much more



Peter Tatchell



Milka Tyszkiewicz

Their new world order

Workers' Liberty '91 will debate the working-class response to the ruling class attempt to reorder the world.

The US-led coalition bloodily beat Iraq — now will they win the peace?

As German and Japanese capitalism rise to meet an America in crisis, will trade wars follow the Gulf war?

- Highlights include:
- Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Political Centre, a member of the Socialist Party from

Moscow, Adam Keller, editor of *The Other Israel*, and *Socialist Organiser* discuss Bush's New World Order.

- A Kurdish socialist examines the history of his people.
- Adam Keller discusses the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The politics of poverty in the underdeveloped world.
- Martin Thomas from *Socialist Organiser* looks at the US's economic crisis.

Workers' Liberty 91

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Before 26 June: unwaged £6; students/low waged £10; waged £14. These prices are for three days; tickets for Saturday and Sunday only are £5, £8 and £12.

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Unite to defeat the right:

CPSA: unite the left!

The annual conference of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), held last week in Bournemouth, saw the extreme right wing "Moderate" group confirmed in power yet again, and the left divided. Meanwhile, back in the DSS offices there are now more people involved in local strike action than at any other time in the union's history.

A step towards left unity

By Steve Battlemuch
DSS South Notts

At last the left in CPSA is starting to work together and talk to each other.

It was standing room only last Wednesday 15 May as well over 200 delegates and observers attended a very important fringe meeting. They listened to former DE Section Chair Ian Leedham, and Mark Serwotka from Rotherham DSS start up a vital debate: where now for the left in CPSA?

The overwhelming mood at the meeting was that the time has now come for the left in the union to unite. We need to find ways of overcoming old rivalries, defining genuine issues that need to be debated, and uniting in struggle in defence of members' interests.

Ian Leedham pointed to the fact that there was no really effective opposition in the union. Divisions on the left have allowed the right wing to create a one party state.

Mark Serwotka focused on the need for us to unite around things that really matter: support for members in dispute and opposition to political witch-hunts in the union.

The debate from the floor was

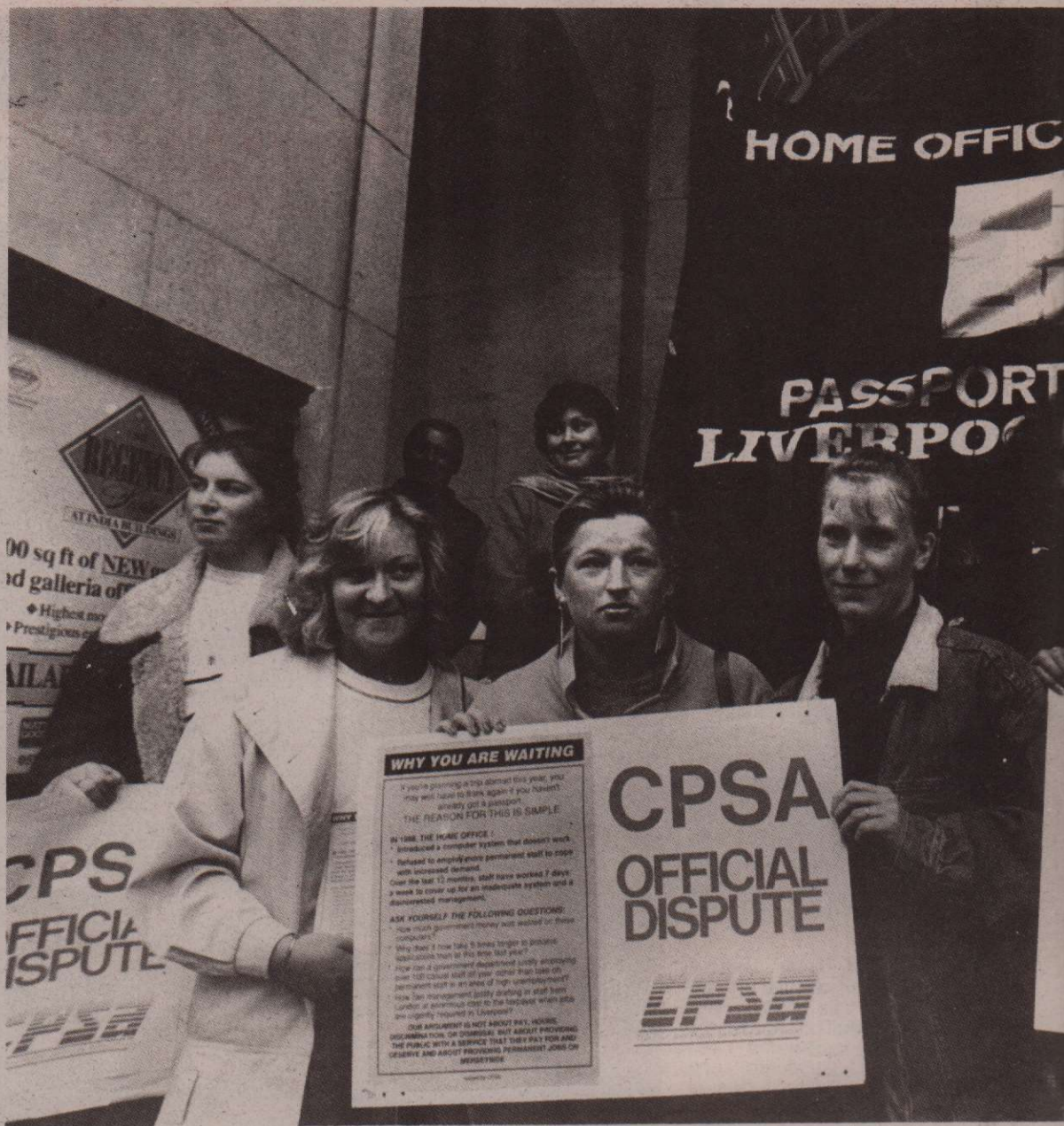
wide-ranging and interesting. Huw Lloyd from C&E hit the nail on the head when he argued that it is vital to go out to the membership: "We need to build from below, not from the top down".

Ideas raised at the meeting included the production of an open left newsletter that would expose the right wing and encourage debate, and a united campaign around pay in 1992.

The main point of controversy arose when some Broad Left members tried to argue that BL'84 dissidents and former members had to rejoin the Broad Left, cap in hand, before we could discuss unity on the left. Thankfully, the general mood of the meeting was against such an approach. Trudy Saunders from DH HQ gave voice to this mood by saying that what was most important was not digging up the past but which side you are on in the here and now.

We need to find ways of working and debating together: we do not need ultimatums from any quarter. To this end a planning meeting is to be organised for all those who are interested in developing the debate on left unity.

As one delegate remarked on the way out of the meeting: "That was like a breath of fresh air".



There is nothing 'Moderate' about these extremists The leadership that's elected by ten per cent of the members

By Trudy Saunders
DH HQ

Annual CPSA conference is always an embarrassment for the right-wing faction in the CPSA, the National Moderate Group.

For it is at conference that it is revealed that they have negligible support amongst union activist and members in the branches.

The right wing have run the CPSA since 1988. They were re-elected to power again this year.

This, they claim, is proof of support amongst the membership. Yet only 25,000 (the "Moderates" received 11-12,000, the Broad Left 7,000) out of a membership of 125,000 voted on elections run by a home-postal ballot system whereby members receive details of the three main factional slates in the union headed "Moderate", "BL84", and "Broad Left/Militant".

No-one knows there are Tory Party members on the "Moderate" slate, nor that there are *Morning Star* supporters on the "BL84" slate.

Discussion in branches around

elections is non-existent except in left-run branches. Every year the right run a red-scare campaign in one of the dailies, usually the *Evening Standard*. Such manoeuvres by the right wing seek to ensure their victory. However, the fact is most members do not vote, and only 10% vote for the Moderates.

Annual conference is far more representative of members' views. Members have had a chance to be involved in discussions and debate to mandate their delegates. The split between the right-wing National Executive Committee and conference delegates was more

Divisions on the left that help the right

By Mark Serwotka,
Rotherham DSS

How can a membership, young and potentially radical, based largely in understaffed benefit offices, dealing every day with the problems of Tory Britain at the sharp end, elect such useless, strike-breaking, no-good leaders?

The key to this mystery is to be found in the disarray that the left in the CPSA finds itself in.

Once the CPSA boasted the largest Broad Left in the country. Now it is smaller, and less influen-

tial than ever before. Though the official union is unable to protect its members from attack and the situation cries out for an active, radical, left opposition, we have instead a small, sectarian, unrepresentative "Broad" Left.

There are a number of reasons for this.

The experience of holding power in the union helped the Broad Left. In 1982/3 a Broad Left-dominated executive bludgeoned 1,100 DHSS strikers in Birmingham and Oxford back to work. The strikers were told to keep their powder dry for a battle over pay that never materialised.

Not surprisingly the right won at the next election. Again, in 1987-88 a Broad Left-dominated NEC failed to carry out its own policies: in fact the BL national committee did

not even meet for four months — in effect the Broad Left was paralysed at a time when it needed to mobilise the membership for a fight over pay.

The old Broad Left, which at the beginning of the '80s numbered in excess of 800, split in 1984. Broad Left '84 (BL84) was formed: the core of this group has drifted to an extraordinarily right-wing position, and the once-dominant Communist Party is reduced to a tiny rump.

Hostility to the factional boneheadedness of the *Militant* was all that really united those who made up BL84. The "politics" for this organisation was provided by former left wingers galloping to the right to fall in behind Neil Kinnock.

The Broad Left carried on, still

over 500 strong, with most of the activists willing to fight for a strong union. Though still dominated by *Militant* it also had other factions, and many independents.

The Broad Left was the body that most members and activists looked to for a strong union. It attracted 20,000 votes in elections. It controlled the union on a number of occasions, at various levels.

How different it all is today! BL84 are now an appendage of the "Moderate" group; their "left" has no influence.

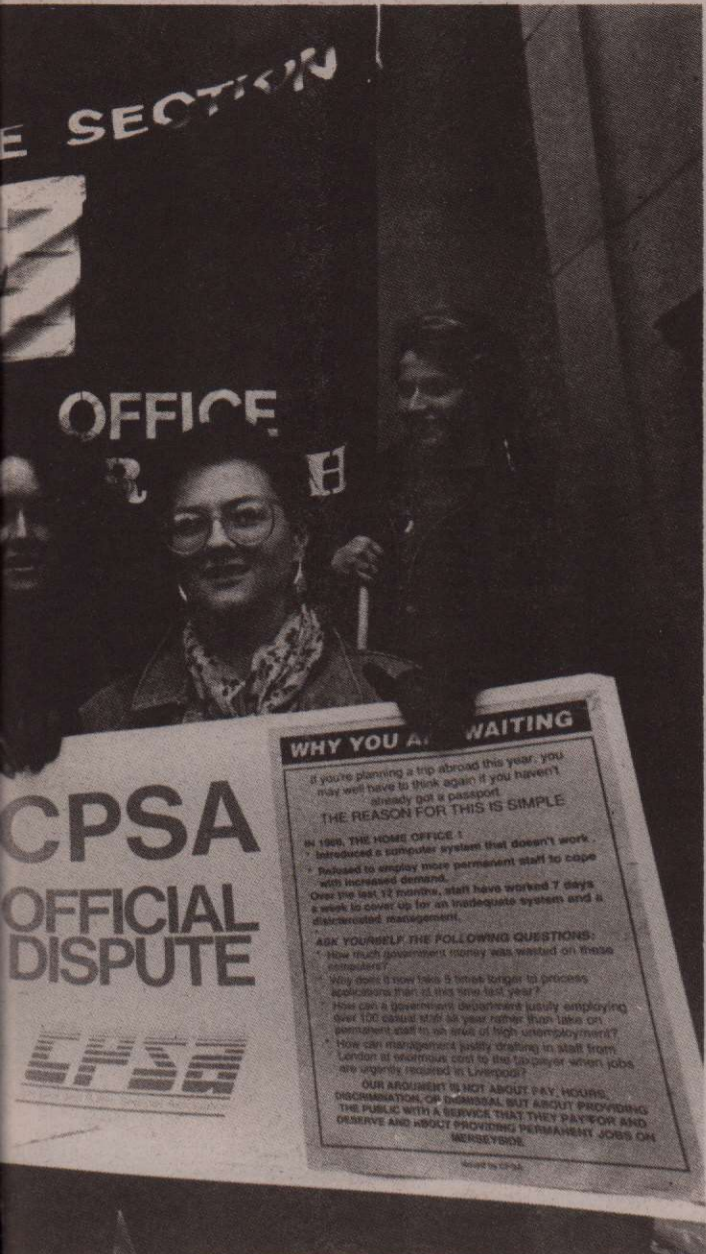
The Broad Left is now only 250 strong. King in the ruins, *Militant* runs the show in a dogmatic and sectarian way. There is little room for dissent. Many members have left. Union activists no longer look to the Broad Left as a credible alter-

native leadership.

It gained only 7,000 votes in last year's election, and only a fraction more this year. It is unable and unwilling to organise any action outside of electioneering.

CPSA needs an opposition capable of ridding the union of the right wing, and able to organise rank and file activity. Such an organisation can only be built if it is non-sectarian, democratic and broad-based.

The CPSA desperately needs a realignment to create a body able to do all of this, one that can unite not just the left of BL84 and the serious independents and Broad Left, but one that draws in big new layers of members and activists who currently refuse to go anywhere near the existing groups.



President: Chambers



General Secretary: Ellis

worked than ever this year. It is no longer the right wing are pushing bi-annual conferences. If they don't get their way they'd do away with the conference altogether!

So far they haven't needed to. Since 1988 the right-wing NECs have made a habit of ignoring every conference decision they don't like. Their utter contempt for the democratic decision-making process of the CPSA is an outrage, as is the manner in which President Marion Chambers (known as El Presidente) runs conference.

This year, when a delegate pointed out that John Ellis was not taking to the resolution in question she replied: "it doesn't matter I've got to listen to him, he's the general secretary."

Despite this, the left dominated conference and won a number of key debates. On the issues of networking and Agencies right-wing motions, which would have been disastrous to the membership, were defeated. Unfortunately, a right-wing Standing Orders Committee had ensured that left motions on this issue would not be heard due to lack of time.

Other left motions were also carried on the issues of fighting the Employment Act, the Birmingham Six, Lesbian and Gay rights and the plight of the Kurdish people.

The biggest victory for the left came over the issue of DSS recognition.

The right-wing-controlled DSS Section Executive Committee had planned to reorganise the Section in such a way as to make organising more difficult for activists. In each DSS office some members would be in a local branch, whereas those working on contributions would be in a separate national branch. Motions had been moved from DSS Section Conference to the national conference in an attempt to "lose" them. After a fierce debate, motions calling for the SEC's plans to be stopped were carried overwhelmingly.

The right-wing NEC will no doubt continue to sit back this year and refuse to implement policies they do not like. This will continue as long as they have power. It is vital that the left unite to build from the base of the union, organising and reaching out to the 100,000 members who do not even bother to vote.

Our aim must be to build a strong enough force to fight management and the Tories and at the same time wrest the union machinery from the grip of the right wing.

Strikes spread across DSS see page 15

Letter from Czechoslovakia

The trade unions begin to stir

Adam Novak from the Czech Left Alternative discusses the economic crisis as Czechoslovakia heads for the market



Adam Novak

In the period since the democratic revolution at the end of 1989 living standards have fallen 25-40%. Unemployment, starting from a low base, is increasing at 30% per month, and now stands at 3%. At the start of 1991 food prices were increased by 30%.

Although maximum prices are still set for goods, the maximums are rising all the time.

To some extent the cost of living has been held down by the cheap cost of housing. There is still no market in housing, although even here prices are beginning to move slowly upwards.

One effect of increased prices is that importing goods is now more viable. For instance, it is now just about profitable to import clothes from the West. Western clothes are still a little more expensive, but they are of a better quality.

At the start of this year the unions negotiated with the government to have prices indexed beyond a 40% annual price rise. In the end the government reneged, saying they could not afford even this compensation.

After 1989 the unions were purged. New people occupied the old offices. People had seen the old state-controlled unions' role as just that of dividing up the compulsory overtime among the workers. Now there is some small move, particularly in heavy industry, to regard unions as something which can defend workers.

The unions still have weak structures, and almost any worker who does become active in the workplace is virtually assured of a shop stewards position, or some such role.

The unions still present themselves as anti-strike but I think there is a growing perception that there will have to be strikes and struggles in the future.

One idea which has been raised recently in union circles is the creation of a workers' party.

The big bulk of the economy is still in state hands under bureaucratic control. There are a few exceptions: Volkswagen has bought Skoda and most of the enterprises connected with car production. As for the rest of industry, managers have been given until 1 November to write privatisation plans.

Carpet-baggers are coming in from Germany and Austria to discuss with the managers, and to pick up bargains. The Western capitalists are demanding that the state wipe out enterprises' debts before privatisation. Therefore the state is not likely to make money from the privatisation of the economy. The best bits of the economy will be taken and the most unprofitable bits will be left with the state. The whole process could take a very long time.

As part of the privatisation plans citizens will receive 2,000 Crowns worth of coupons representing a "stake" in privatisation. These are savings certificates rather than ownership. The certificates will be put into funds controlled by banks. The banks will then control investment, pushed by the market into the search for profits. Most of the

left to back the liberal, Havel, against the right-wing threat from Klaus. The "capitalism now" people have a base among students and the intelligentsia who believe they will find a place in a new comprador bourgeoisie.

The Slovak Communist Party has had an overhaul and has been renamed the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL). The Czech Communist Party has changed a lot less. It may be possible for the left to work with some of the platforms emerging within the CP.

On the left, Left Alternative are still attached to Civic Forum. Left Alternative has two wings, a left and a right. The right have a majority to keep the Left Alternative as part of Civic Forum and to give support to Havel against Klaus.

We on the left want a group capable of opposing the attacks that are being made on the working class. For this the right denounce us as "social demagogues". The right have removed the editor of our paper, *Polarity*, for, among other things, printing an article attacking the government.

Unfortunately, the best known Charter '77 left winger, Petr Uhl, is seen as giving support to some government policies. Uhl spent many years in jail under the old regime and could have been central to the building of a left in Czechoslovakia. Uhl is still a maverick member of Left Alternative, but plays no role in the organisation.

He currently heads the Czech media organisation, CTK. Uhl has lost friends on the left and he is also attacked by the right. When CTK produce any anti-government programmes Uhl is blamed as a "self-admitted communist".

In Slovakia nationalist feelings are rising. The Slovaks are worried that the Czechs will bring in the market and the Slovaks will pay for it. Retail prices are higher than in the Czech republic and unemployment is nearly double. 20% of the Slovaks want independence and the bulk of the rest want a looser federation.



November 1989. The velvet revolution. Now things aren't going so smoothly for the workers

John McIlroy starts a new series:

The failure of Thatcherism

By John McIlroy

In March 1991, several months after her fall, Mrs Thatcher told a US interviewer that her "greatest disappointment" was her failure to control the economy.

That was, if she had thought about it, an admission of total failure for, in the end, the economy was the main part of the story.

If many would sum up Britain's lost decade of Thatcherism in the formula "Electoral success, economic failure", the former was merely a means to an end, an end the Conservatives failed utterly to achieve.

Thatcherism was based on the belief that the market works better than the state. The job of government was to use the state to restore a free market. This would be achieved by an attenuation of state intervention and financial subsidy

to industry, a return of publicly owned industries to the private sector, an application of market forces to the remaining public sector and, above all, by the opening up of UK capital to the pressures of world competition through the removal of exchange controls on the movement of capital.

An essential weapon in restoring

"Mrs Thatcher told a US interviewer that her 'greatest disappointment' was her failure to control the economy"

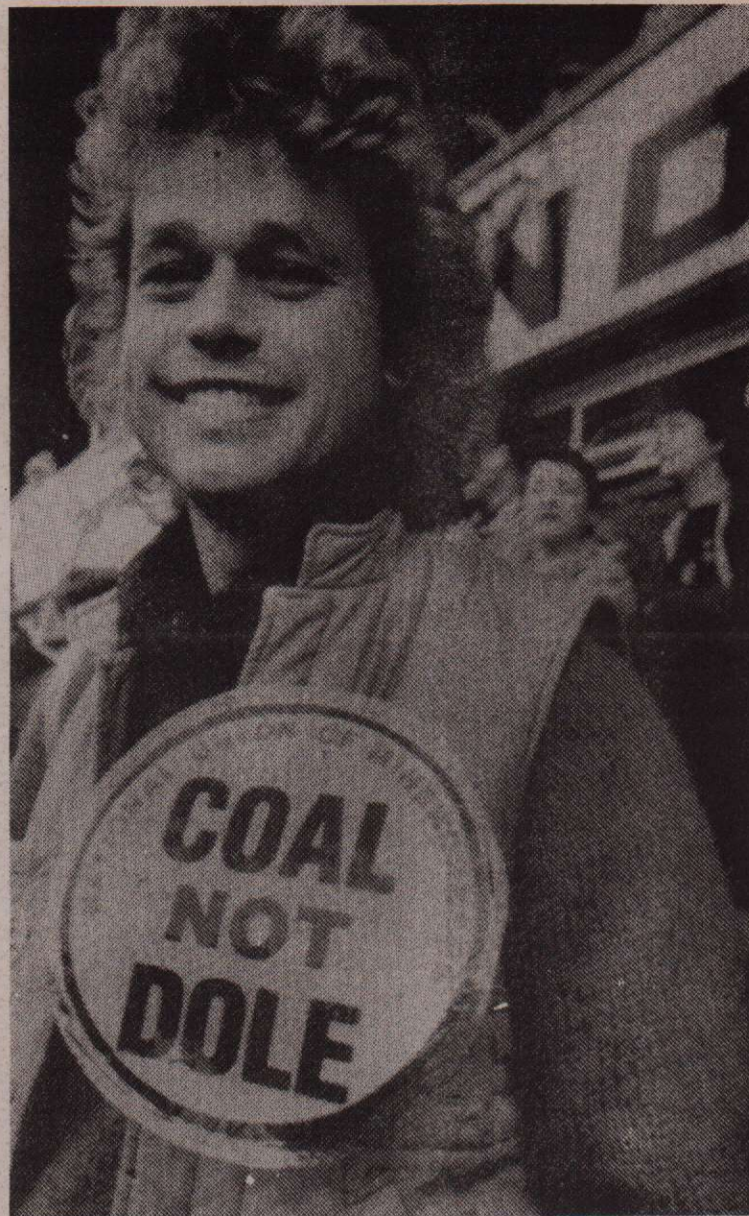
the market and choking inflation — the touchstone of the success of economic policy — was the control of the money supply through higher interest rates and reductions in state expenditure. As borrowing became more expensive firms would be unable to afford it and would be forced to become more competitive,

reorganising production, shedding labour and assaulting the unions to force down wages and intensify exploitation.

The "monopoly power" of the unions would require a specific reduction through legislation.

Capital would re-emerge slimmer, fitter, more profitable, with weakened trade unionism and a new culture of thrusting independence and entrepreneurialism. The government would encourage this and it would, in turn, intensify the replacement of the swollen welfare state by a residual safety net apparatus.

Before examining the overall economic record, that is the failure, of Thatcherism it is useful to say a word or two about what are sometimes seen as the success stories of Thatcherism — her policies towards the unions, public expenditure and the welfare state — policies that were seen as intrinsic to economic regeneration.



1984-85 miners' strike

The economy

But if Thatcher achieved partial success in certain areas of extended economic policy these were intended to be the sinews of economic regeneration.

Employment legislation might have been a success viewed in isolation. Viewed as one ingredient in a wider strategy of political economy aimed at decreasing wages and increasing productivity and profitability its success or failure has to be measured in relation to the aims of that strategy, and its success or failure.

Put crudely, Thatcher got certain secondary things right. She got the primary thing — the economy — wrong, as a brief scrutiny will demonstrate.

Jim Prior, looking around the room at Thatcher's first Cabinet, felt that "none of them had any experience of running a whelks stall, let alone a decent-size company. Their attitude to manufacturing industry bordered on the contemptuous. They shared the view that we were better suited as a nation to being a service economy and should no longer worry about production. I could not see how this could be reconciled with the employment of a potential workforce of around 23 million on a small island."

Throughout the decade the government continued this emphasis deplored by Prior, and the "one nation" Tories who, like Pym and Gilmour, exited one by one from Thatcher's Cabinet.

Thatcher virtually ignored manufacturing, relying on the test of survival of the fittest and in expansion of the service industries to maintain a viable base.

The havoc wrought by the recession of 1979-81 was never repaired. Investment was given low priority and so were the stimulators and ancillaries of production — education and infrastructure, communications, roads, railways, drainage, all were starved of finance with the government emphasising that finance for renewal should come from capital itself.

Through the 1980s, for example, more than 50% of all government expenditure on research and development went to the defence industry. The sections of financial

and industrial capital which did well out of Thatcherism were those that were internationally based and those like defence on the one hand, and agriculture on the other, which enjoyed state protection.

The recession of 1979 was the worst since the early thirties, and was catastrophic. Output in manufacturing fell by almost 20%, investment stopped and unemployment moved towards the 3 million mark. Output remained below the level of the government-imposed 3 day week of 1974 until 1985.

It was only in 1987 that it approached once more the levels of 1979.

The recession has its roots in the world economic downturn and the

major rise in oil prices in 1979, which deflated international demand and increased industrial costs.

The situation in the UK was seriously exacerbated by the impact on the "weakest link" in the advanced capitalist economies of Thatcher's policies of high interest rates, strict monetary targets and a strong pound — its value against the dollar pushed up by hot money attracted by the high interest rates and the increase in oil prices.

Thatcher's policy was to finance the balance of payments deficit caused by the collapse of manufacturing with the surplus in the oil balance and the inflow from the massive flight of overseas invest-

ment generated by the removal of exchange controls. However, as the world economy came out of the recession — recovery stimulated by deflation in the USA and the general capitalist upturn, not by monetarism — there were new problems.

The oil balance, as the price of oil fell, and the continuing deficit in the manufacturing balance, as imports were pulled in by the recovery, produced a serious overall deficit.

Trade in manufactured goods saw a £5 billion surplus in 1979 transformed into a £5 billion deficit by 1985.

The consequent expansion of industry which took place between

1985 and 1989 with manufacturing growing at 8% a year was based on the general world upturn, accelerated by a government-orchestrated expansion in personal consumption.

This was fuelled by the total deregulation of the financial institutions, the removal of credit controls, easy credit and a vast increase in lending and debt.

The increase in investment remained below that in other countries — investment per capita was 60% of that in Japan and 80% of that in Germany — and failed to redress the destruction of the early eighties.

Inflation, which had been controlled by the shake-out and by sustained unemployment, now began to accelerate once more, rising from 3% in 1986 to 9% by 1989.

Inflation, emphasised by Thatcher as the key index by which to measure successful economic management, was 10% when Thatcher entered Downing Street and 10% when she exited.

By 1988 the failure of her economic policy was apparent on all other indices as well. The government quoted figures to show that from 1981-88 productivity was growing at around 6% in manufacturing and 4.5% overall.

But as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development pointed out, this was a once-and-for-all gain produced by the destruction of two million jobs in 1979-82, rather than a long-term transformation produced by changes in culture, organisation and technology.

Comparison with the UK's international competitors was the crucial index and output per head in manufacturing in Britain was by 1986 only 60% of that in Italy, 56% of that in Japan and France, 48% of that in Germany and only 37% of that in the USA.

Company profits as a share of GDP recovered from a low of 11% in 1981 to 19% in 1985. However, by 1989 they were again plummeting downwards towards 12%.

By that time the "Lawson boom" with its financial deregulation tax cuts and easy credit had created excess demand which the UK's weakened manufacturing in-



Disused pit in South Wales



Thatcher's third term election 1987

dustry was incapable of answering and a current account deficit on the balance of payments of nearly £21 billion.

The UK had a trade deficit with 18 out of the 21 top industrial economies.

If the economy was leaner and fitter it meant that service industries now employed three times as many people as manufacturing and the

UK's share of the world market in manufactured goods had been cut to around 8%.

It was, however, not just financial capital that did well out of Thatcherism — oil, electrical engineering, agriculture, communications, all benefited in terms of profitability, and other sectors such as food, drink and tobacco performed reasonably.

The close links between the financial sector and industry increased whilst many multinationals are, of course, themselves major dealers in the financial markets and generate large profits from lending.

The government stated time and time again that Britain's overall record of growth in the 1980s was superior to that of any other European country. However, OECD

figures, taking 1979 as the base year, show that in terms of the rate of growth of per capita Gross Domestic Product, Britain was rated 11th out of 19 OECD countries.

With a rate of growth just below 2% the UK trailed behind, amongst others, Belgium, Turkey, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Finland and had the same growth

rate as Germany and France.

From recession to boom...and now as the 1980s ended, into recession again. Mrs Thatcher, despite all, was no nearer to solving the deep rooted problems of the UK economy.

Indeed, even in terms of halting economic decline, economic performance was no better than that attained in the much-maligned 1960s.

Welfarism: the Tory target

Attempts to control public expenditure and cut back the welfare state have been less successful. The government White Paper on Public Expenditure published in November 1979 announced "Public expenditure is at the heart of our current difficulties".

The Tories were not concerned with public expenditure as such — the state needed to spend, spend, spend on the police and the army, for Thatcher was determined to maintain Britain's military role externally and extend it internally — but with spending on industry which distorted the market and, crucially, with welfare spending.

At the heart of their strategy was the view that such spending was economically disastrous as it fuelled inflation, government borrowing, and must be slashed and so must taxation, which fuelled inflation as workers sought to compensate for tax losses through wage increases.

What the government was saying essentially was that the role welfare spending played in reproduction, in accumulation — through providing capital with a healthy, skilled, compliant labour force — and in the legitimisation of the capitalist system, by demonstrating that the state looked after people who could not look after themselves, would be discarded in the interests of slashing inflation and increasing profitability.

Welfarism took resources in terms of labour and investment

from the productive private sector. It did not work — look at the failures of the education system or the NHS.

Government intervention had created a political market in which the parties were forced to outbid each other to increase state spending to buy the votes of the inflated labour forces in the public sector and others dependent on state expenditure.

Government overload set in as governments tried to do too much and too many things the market did better. Inflation soared and had to be paid for by more taxation and government borrowing, stimulating the money supply and stoking up further inflation. The consequent dependency culture made people even more demanding and gave the process yet a further twist.

Geoffrey Howe's first budget set the pace in June 1979 as he put up prescription charges, cut income tax, announced £1.5 billion reductions in public expenditure and promised to reduce the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement.

The National Enterprise Board was gradually abolished and 57 of the quangos which had flourished under Labour were wound up.

But the recession made things difficult for the government. Social security for strikers was undermined, earnings related supplements were abolished, benefits were taxed, and pensions and other benefits were, from 1980, only increased in line with the annual increase in

prices not wages. Prescription charges increased from 45p in July 1979 to 70p a year later, and had soared to £1 by December 1980.

Local government's grants were slashed. Council house rents were increased and charges for school meals were hoisted. Regional budgets were cut and the squeeze on education began.

But much of this "good" work was undone by increasing social security payments as unemploy-

"For most of the decade the Conservatives' ambition to reduce the tax burden went unrealised for all except the rich"

ment reached new post-war levels and increases in spending on the military and the police, as well as the need to buy off certain public sector unions.

By the end of the first Thatcher government public spending had not decreased, indeed, on some figures, the "good" work of the 1974 Labour government was undone and public expenditure increased to 46% of GDP.

With faster economic growth and a stabilisation and decline in unemployment during the second Thatcher government, public expenditure as a proportion of GDP fell to around 40% as compared with 43% in 1979

Nonetheless it still increased in absolute terms so that again, whilst there was success, it was very limited success.

As late as 1985 spending on "law and order" had increased 29% on its 1979 level, social security had increased by 28%, defence by 23%, industry and employment by 17% and health by 17%.

The only real cuts were in education and in housing where there was a massive 55% cut — the consequence of the blitz on council housing. Since then these figures have increased as the government has come to grips with the restructuring of education and the NHS.

The picture is, however, a complex one: in education, for example, demographic changes meant that "demand" on the schools were reduced whilst, because of the greater numbers of old people, demand on the NHS was increased, and, of course, the annual cost for treatment of the old are far greater than the cost for treating the young — and expenditure is also pushed up by the soaring cost of new technology.

For most of the decade the Conservatives' ambition to reduce the tax burden went unrealised for all except the rich.

By 1987 the tax paid by a married couple with two children on five times average earnings had declined by 6% and the tax paid by a similar couple on 10 times average earnings had declined 15%. But a similar couple on average earnings were

paying 2.5% more than in 1979 and a similar couple on half average earnings were paying an extra 4.2% in tax.

The restructuring of social security, the introduction of the Social Fund, the changes in education introduced by the Education Reform Act and the introduction of the market into the NHS, would be seen as important achievements by the Tories. They do represent progress for the broad privatisation approach.

The Tories' policies have not been simple failures. But they have to be balanced against the fiascos of the Housing Action Trusts, and the "pick a landlord" schemes. Despite this, the Tories have succeeded in destroying council housing and increasing homelessness — and in seriously weakening local government in relation to the national state. But even here their achievements have been contradictory.

The poll tax, the final move in the slogging match with local government since 1980 — a match Thatcher entered not because of any antipathy towards local government but because of its potential to foil centrally determined programmes for the restriction of public expenditure — was the final throw of the dice that brought about her fall.

And as we enter the second Thatcherite recession all the problems of the first, this time reappearing in more severe form, will inhibit the public expenditure project.

The collapse of Stalinism and the left

Kitsch "Trotskyists"

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Chris Reynolds

Militant (Revolutionary Socialist League, the Grant faction) was dimmest of the left factions in the 1960s. But in the early 1970s they grew substantially.

They were in the right place — the Labour Party Young Socialists — by inertia rather than by good judgement, but they were there, at a time when all the other left groups were, to one extent or another, continuing ultra-left illusions generated by their elation around 1968. They offered an apparently stable, serious perspective, while the other left groups wavered and zig-zagged in their attempts to adjust and reorient.

Later they were able to extend their growth from the LPYS into some trade unions, notably the CPSA; and they got a big boost from the enormous publicity they had when the Labour Party first started witch-hunting them, in the early 1980s.

But their successes led them into fiascos. Their successes led them into positions where they could no longer just repeat their propaganda and wait for their "perspectives" to come true. They won the leadership of the CPSA and a leading role in Liverpool City Council. Now they had to lead struggles, not just predict them. They showed a miserable lack of nerve, judgement, and capacity to learn from mistakes. They were timid, bureaucratic, dishonest.

During their time in the leadership of the CPSA they tried hard to damp down the major struggles which actually took place, saying they were "premature". In Liverpool

they ended up decreeing 24,000 redundancies as a "tactical move", making cuts, and allowing an unscrupulous buffoon like Derek Hatton to become their chief representative. Such fiascos followed logically from their "perspectives" in which everything was always getting better in the best of all historical processes: if indeed the future was always rosier than the present, then why risk established positions and opportunities for propaganda by taking chances in "ephemeral" struggles? Why not always delay, temporise, postpone?

Despite some successes they have had in the anti-poll tax movement, *Militant* has visibly declined in recent years. And now the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe has shattered their world view, more drastically than it has shaken the SWP's.

The alleged economic successes of Stalinism, about which *Militant* used to write so enthusiastically, were for them the outward and visible proof of the secret truth they cherished: that capitalism was helplessly declining, and a new order irresistibly moving forward. But now it is Stalinism that declines helplessly! Its alleged successes were Potemkin villages, facades behind which there was emptiness and decay. The supposedly automatic forward movement of history — propelled by the basic needs of the productive forces, no less — has somehow gone into reverse.

Militant today is like a chicken continuing to run around with its head cut off... Like the SWP, it has an apparatus, a public profile, an established momentum which will probably keep it going for a long time, and even enable it to grow. But, like the SWP and indeed more so, it is moribund.

The IMG current have also had their world view demolished by the collapse of Stalinism, though their



Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

Beginning on 17 July 1936, General Francisco Franco led an armed rebellion against Spain's Republican government. The far right, the church and the old order rallied to the generals. The armed working class rose to back the government against the fascists, then, radicalised, began the struggle for power behind the Republican lines.

The two million-strong anarchist movement and the socialist left, the POUM, were caught between

fascism and their deadly "ally", the Stalinist Communist Party. Betrayed and murdered, the workers rose in Barcelona in May 1937 and were put down. The anarchist leaders split, some joining the bourgeois Republican government and Durutti, on the left, marching off to fight, leaving politics to the liberals and the Stalinists.

Eventually, in 1939, the fascists won out. The working class had suffered a terrible defeat.

view, more flexible, gives them some chance to regroup and rationalise.

In late 1989 Ernest Mandel, addressing a *Socialist Outlook* conference, described the revolutions in Eastern Europe as processes which could lead either to a progressive, liberating workers' political revolution or to a foul, reactionary capitalist social counter-revolution. Both of these culminations, he argued, were far off: the workers were in political disarray, Western capital was cautious about moving into Eastern Europe, and the emerging private capitalist forces within Eastern Europe were weak.

This last argument surely underestimates the speed with which private-profit enterprise is growing from the "black economies" and on the fringes of government-owned business in Eastern Europe, as well as forgetting that government-owned business can be capitalist too, but the essential point was that Mandel foresaw a long period before either a socialist or a capitalist decision.

What would happen in that long period? What was the character of the overturns which had already taken place and of the new regimes in Eastern Europe? Mandel was silent. The present was an undefinable limbo between the "deformed workers' state" past and the either-socialist-or-capitalist future.

Almost 18 months later, that is still the dominant view of the neo-Trotskyist spectrum of opinion represented by *Outlook*. And they reach this conclusion because it is the only way they can square their good impulses (leading them to welcome the East European revolutions as opening the way to

"Though [Outlook] are less vehement than the SWP, they still deny national rights to the Israeli Jews. Though they are more willing to entertain political criticism of Sinn Fein than Socialist Action they have argued for British trade unions to withdraw from Ireland."

the free development of workers' movements) with their bad theory (which logically should lead them to condemn those revolutions as horrible regressions to capitalism).

Some of them yield to the pressure of the bad theory. Oliver Macdonald (a maverick

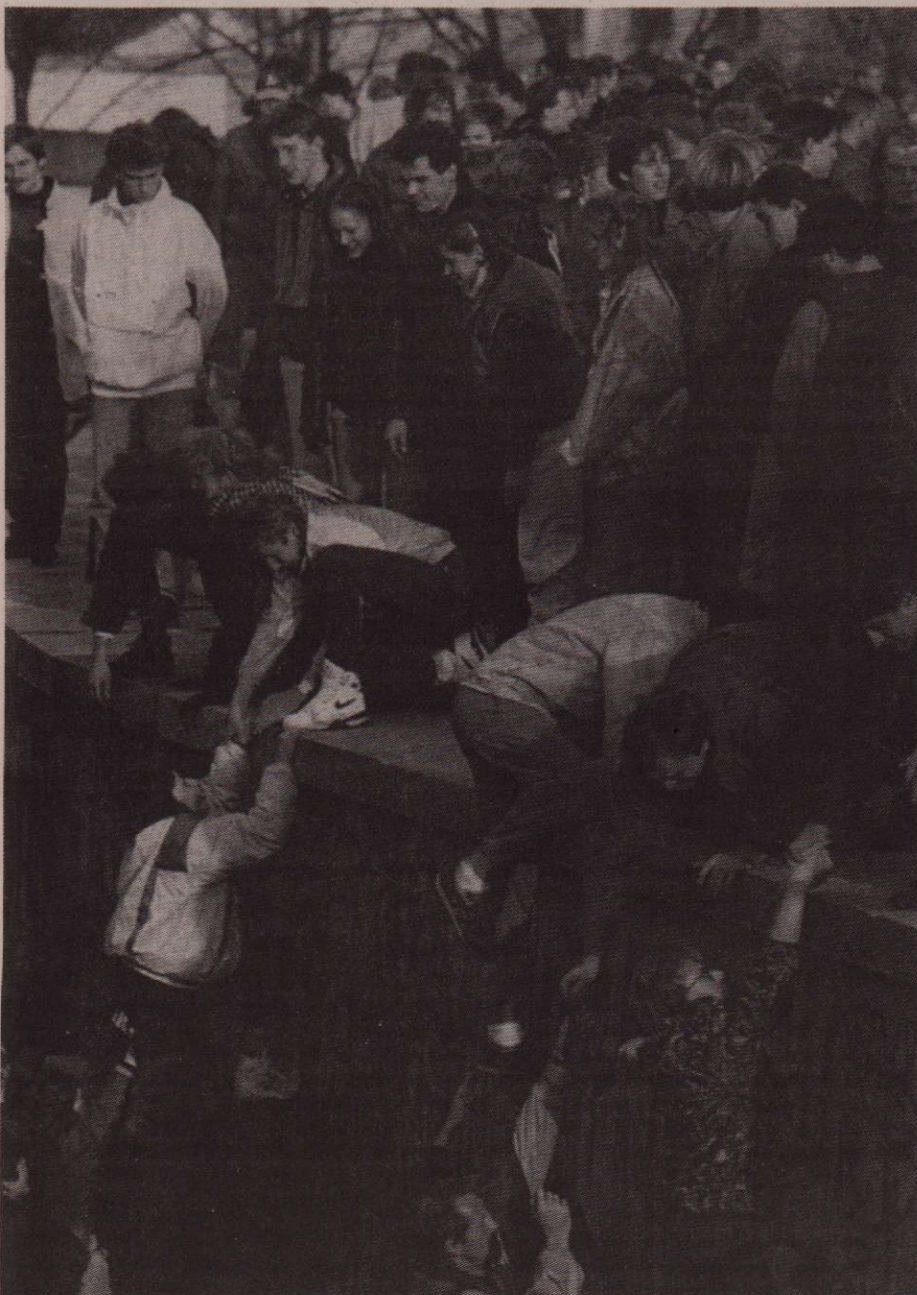
within *Outlook*) declared in a debate at the 1990 Workers' Liberty summer school that the East European revolutions marked the end of the epoch that opened in 1917, the end of an epoch in which a new social order had competed with capitalism. *Socialist Action* asserts that the East European revolutions are the worst setback for the working class since Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

However, the IMG faction had dispersed and declined well before 1989, because of its inability and lack of serious, continuous work in any direction rather than because its politics were necessarily worse than the other groups. The story was told in an article in *Socialist Organiser* no. 478.

Socialist Action is now a grotesque sect, closer both in its political positions and in its methods to the collapsing Stalinist tradition than to anything Trotskyist. *Outlook* is less grotesque. Its core is made up of people from the "IMG" political traditions who became disgusted and were wearied by the wild political gyrations of John Ross (who is now editor of *Socialist Action*). That is to their credit. But rather than taking on Ross and defeating him in factional battle, they opted out to go their own way; rather than re-examining their whole tradition, they have slipped into a bland, tepid, sloppy "average Trotskyism".

The ideas of the "IMG" tradition still operate in their minds. Though they are less vehement than the SWP, they still deny national rights to the Israeli Jews. Though they are more willing to entertain political criticism of Sinn Fein than *Socialist Action*, they have argued for British trade unions to withdraw from Ireland. Though they are less disposed to excited discoveries of the "new mass vanguard" than they used to be, they have huge illusions about the potential of the Socialist Movement as such a "new vanguard".

Towards the end of the Gulf War, *Socialist Organiser* wrote to *Socialist Outlook* noting that the two groups had cooperated fruitfully in anti-war work, and suggesting a formal meeting to discuss further cooperation in that work. The reply was a letter of two sentences, the first saying that there was "no political basis" for such a meeting, the second suggesting a phone call to fix a meeting. At the meeting they explained that they wanted to make plain that agreeing to consult implied "no political convergence" between the two groups. In other words, *Outlook* is frightened of seeming close to *SO* but can't quite think how to distance itself by clear and coherent political argument.



Socialist Action, "the East European revolutions are the worst setback for the working class since Hitler's rise to power in 1933."

Zeffirelli's Oedipal Hamlet

Cinema

Tony Brown reviews
Hamlet

Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* was going to be my last Shakespeare film. It wasn't that it was a bad film, it was just that I found Shakespeare movies too inaccessible.

All the criticism normally aimed at studying Shakespeare at school — too difficult, outdated language — applied even more so to the film.

It is ironical that the freshest attempt at a Shakespeare play should come out of Hollywood. *Hamlet's* success continues the trend of non-formula films doing well this year. Blockbuster sequels are playing to small audiences and movies that aren't expected to do well are becoming hits.

It's even more of a surprise because Zeffirelli's decision to cast Mel Gibson as the Prince of Denmark was scoffed at. How could Mad Max play the anguished and procrastinating Hamlet? Well he does; and he does it very well. Gone are most of the annoying mannerisms that Gibson has developed, and in their place is a robust and assertive characterisation of Hamlet.

Zeffirelli has stripped the play back to the core story of the murder of Hamlet's father by his uncle Claudius, Claudius' marriage to Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, and Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia.

This allows him to focus on Hamlet's relations with the two women in his life, Gertrude and Ophelia.

When Gertrude marries her brother-in-law, Hamlet declares: "treachery, they name is woman". (Shakespeare was more subtle: "Frailty, thy name is woman".)

Hang on, what about Claudius?



Glen Close and Mel Gibson play Gertrude and Hamlet

He actually murdered Hamlet's father. But it becomes obvious that Hamlet feels Gertrude has betrayed him as much as his dead father. It is his mother's love that he wants.

Soon after Ophelia, at the behest of Polonius, her father, seeks to compromise Hamlet. She does it only in obedience to her father and against her own best wishes.

Hamlet feigns madness to protect himself and give himself time to consider his predicament.

His angst has a more concrete source. He is in love with his mother, and with Ophelia, both of whom appear to have betrayed him.

Zeffirelli plays the much parodied scene with Yorrick's skull at the graveside as the piece of

humour it is in the lead-up to the final climactic scenes where Laertes, Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet all die.

For Glenn Close the horrific death scene has become part of her forte, following *Fatal Attraction*, though at least she only dies once here.

Her Gertrude is passionate and

sensual and along with Alan Bates, Ian Holm, Paul Schofield and Helena Bonham-Carter, makes for a strong cast.

If you feel like something classical, then *Hamlet* is worth seeing. Gibson's sword in the final scenes is as lethal a weapon as anything else on the screen this year.

The law is a sexist pig!

Television

Cathy Nugent reviews
Inside Story

Inside Story dealt with rape — the police investigation of rape, newspaper reporting of rape, and with rape as an experience women are put through.

The hour-long programme — entitled *A Very Serious Offence* — was able to do no more than scratch the surface of the issues involved. Nonetheless, these were dealt with seriously.

Mostly, the programme dealt with the way rape victims are treated by the police. And, I suppose, contrary to most of our expectations, offered a positive image.

One woman was filmed reporting a vicious attack on her by three men. She was interviewed by police from the Met — a notoriously brutal police force in all other respects — sympathetically by both men and women.

I don't know if there have been enough changes of attitude by the police to justify this picture. Unfortunately, the programme did not give us any information from which to judge. Certainly police

policy and practice has changed in recent years.

Women officers from the Met were shown being trained to deal with rape victims. Past police practice was criticised. A video was shown of a programme made some years ago about the Thames Valley police. Here a woman was harassed, accused of wasting police time and interrogated about her sexual experience.

This scene was used as a starting point for discussion. The looks of horror, disgust and shame on the faces of the women police was very revealing.

The rest of the programme seemed slightly incidental and was awkwardly spliced together with the film of the woman in the police station.

There were interviews with two extremely brave women who had been victims of rape attacks and had gone to court. There was an interview with a woman barrister who seemed quite sensible if a bit toffee-nosed in her distinctions between women who had a "reasonable lifestyle" and those who didn't.

Most unsatisfactory though were interviews with convicted sex offenders. This largely consisted of voice overs. This may have been necessary but the overall effect was too selective and too shallow.

It was shallower in other

respects too. We were bombarded with statistics flashing up on the screen. One I caught stated that by 1992 the Home Office intends to have universal rehabilitation programmes for sex offenders. Okay, but what likelihood is there that this will really happen?

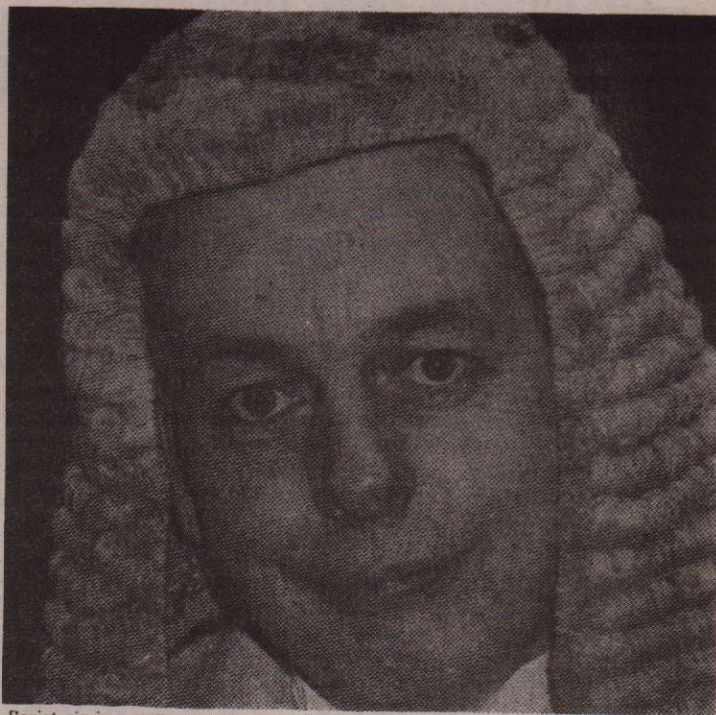
But despite this too unscrupulous and bland approach, I thought the programme was excellent. If the filmed events in the police station encourage even more women to come forward (as is now happening) and report attacks this is a good thing.

But of course the story does not end there. The woman in the programme decided not to proceed with her "complaint". The implication was that she couldn't face any comeback from her attackers, or did not want to go through the trauma in court.

It is a sad fact that going to court is the major stumbling block for rape victims.

There they will be put on trial. They may be expected to be emotional and tearful (and thus convincing). They will be expected to account for their own sexual morality. This is quite astounding — unfair!

Elsewhere the law takes account of prejudice. For instance the accused's past record (if they have one) is never read out in court under any circumstances. Yet a



Sexist pig in a wig

woman's sexual experience is. As a defence it can only imply "loose women ask for it". If that's the law, then the law is a sexist pig!

Yes, of course it is!
It should be changed: sexual ex-

perience should be deemed "inadmissible evidence". Rape in marriage should be on the statute book, and judges should not be obliged, no more than they are in any other crime, to instruct juries to "be careful" about the victim's statements.

National lesbian and gay activist conference

Lesbians and gays organise

OUT AND PROUD

By Steph Ward (NUS Lesbian and Gay Committee)

West Midlands Lesbian and Gay Coalition hosted a national lesbian and gay activists' conference in Birmingham.

The conference was billed as a "what next?" for the lesbian and gay rights campaign. Although not widely advertised and ignored by the lesbian and gay press, it attracted around 50 activists.

Workshops on Clause 25, Paragraph 16 and Operation Spanner discussed the issues and how to build an effective campaign to fight for our rights.

Probably the most significant decision of the conference was to attempt to organise a national conference to launch a fighting lesbian and gay organisation. Discussion centred around



What more? A national campaign!

the lack of any national campaign to co-ordinate action against the most recent attacks like Clause 25 and Paragraph 16.

Also the on-going problem of campaigns collapsing after pieces of Tory legislation like

Section 28 pass into law was considered.

It was decided that a steering group made up from representatives from different local groups should organise publicity for Pride and arrange for a conference

in July.

The creation of a national lesbian and gay liberation organisation could be an important step forward both in fighting off attacks on our rights and in building a movement for our liberation.

The trial of Winnie Mandela

The racist state must take blame

WRITEBACK

Your article on the conviction of Winnie Mandela (SO 486) makes some good points absent from the rest of the socialist press.

But it avoids two key points. Firstly, when the

alleged crimes of which Winnie Mandela has been convicted were committed, the ANC was an illegal organisation. By definition its authority was exercised in summary forms. The racist South African state must take the blame.

Secondly, however, this fitted, like a glove, the Stalinist politics of the ANC. It was more than happy that libera-

tion politics were not controlled democratically, from below.

Winnie Mandela's actions can, therefore, be explained. But they cannot be excused. They are a dead end for socialism in South Africa. It is now, however, for the South African state to make such a judgement.

Joe Lane Kennington



Winnie Mandela

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 23 May

"The General Election", Nottingham SO debate between a member of the Green Party and Jim Denham. 8.00, International Community Centre, Mansfield Road

"The struggle for socialism", Sheffield SO meeting. 7.30, Victoria Hall

"Labour and the general election", Leeds SO meeting. 7.30, The Coburg, Woodhouse Lane. Speaker: Ruth Cockcroft

"The new world order and the Kurds", Glasgow SO meeting. 7.30, Glasgow City Hall. Speakers from SO and CARI

Friday 24 May

"Students and Socialism", Glasgow University Labour Club. 1.00. Speaker: Mark Sandell

Saturday 25 May

Demonstrate against racist attacks. Assemble Hawksmoor Youth Club, 1.00, Thamesmead Estate, London

Saturday 25 - Sunday 26 May

Conference on Asia: Crisis and Social Change. ULU, Malet Street, London WC1; 10.00 start.

Organised by International Forum on Asia

Sunday 26 May

"Marxists and national conflicts", Islington SO meeting. 7.30, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7

Wednesday 29 May

"The Chinese revolution of '89" East London SO meeting. Speaker: Emma Colyer. 7.30, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street E2

Saturday 1 June

Socialist Movement AGM, Sheffield Poly

Sunday 2 June

Second Anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre. Rally in Chinatown, London (Tube: Leicester Square), 2.00-4.00. Speakers include Emma Colyer (National Secretary, NUS)

"Two years on from Tiananmen" Socialist Organiser London Forum. 7.30, The Plough, Museum Street. Speakers include Cheung Siu Ming (National Secretary of the Chinese Solidarity Campaign)

Monday 3 June

"Socialists and the general election", Manchester SO meeting. 8.00, Town Hall

Tuesday 3 June

Second Anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre. Protest Rally outside the Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London WC1, 7.30. Organised by the June 4 Mobilising Committee '91

Thursday 6 June

"Fighting for Lesbian and Gay Rights", Hull SO meeting. 7.30

Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 June

"Resourcing the Future", conference organised by the Red Green Network. Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St, London

Monday 17 June

"What is Socialism?" Northampton SO meeting. 7.30, Emerald Club

Wednesday 19 June

"Bush's new world order", Merseyside SO meeting. 7.30, Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road

Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 July

Middle East Peace conference organised by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, London

Don't forget the limerick!

Sometimes occasionally publishes verse. I'm surprised you have so far neglected the liberating limerick. These for example:

I'm Tony Rock Cliff or Gluckstein
And I give The Party its line
Israelis we hate 'em
Young Jews, sure we bait 'em

In short, I'm a crazy old swine!

Or:
I'm the millie in CPSA
By chicaning I won and lost sway

I hate Mark Serwotka
'Cos I scrambled my trotwka
What a pity that I've had my day!

Or:
I'm Grant, Grant, Ted Millie Grant
I'm always real good in a rant
Thought Mao was progressive
Became quite obsessive
But I hadn't the brain of an ant!
I bet there are lots of others SO readers know.

Fifi Scurrilous South London

The politics of an apolitical old cynic

EYE ON THE LEFT

Mark Osborn did not enjoy a visit to hear Tony Cliff speak at one of the current series of SWP rallies

Tony Cliff — God, what a cynical, lying old creature he is! I heard his "Join the SWP" speech at the end of the SWP Oxford rally two weeks ago. His argument, full stated: amongst socialist groups we are big, therefore we are right, therefore you should join. Do not think about joining, thinking involves "bureaucratic conservatism", just join now.

Neatly avoiding the argument that the Tories are bigger than the SWP, and therefore, presumably, they are even more right than the SWP, Cliff went on: the Bolsheviks grew during the Russian revolution, and they were right therefore as the SWP is growing it is right. Never mind that there are plenty of examples of looney sects who have grown: the Healeyites, the Moonies.

The SWP is growing because it occupies a particular "patch" on the political spectrum — outside the Labour Party — which is attractive to people radicalised by the Poll Tax and the opposition to the Gulf War.

Although very small with respect to the size of the working class, it is the most visible group on the left — the first group people meet. Cliff claimed: we've bloody recruited 100 people a bloody week since the end of the Gulf War. Bizarrely he went on: we now have more activists than the bloody Labour Party. And wilder still: the Labour Par-

ty plays no role in bloody working class life.

What planet is the man on?

This was the night of the Monmouth by-election which Labour took with a big swing because of working class fears about the future of the NHS.

The idea that the SWP should campaign for a Labour victory was greeted with laughter. No, he said, we should kick the Tories out.

But by what mechanism? and to be replaced by who? Just do not think about it. These questions are themselves "bureaucratic conservatism".

It makes me laugh when the SWP witter on about the regime and expulsions in the Labour Party. Sure, Socialist Organiser knows better than most about the Labour bureaucrats. But the SWP builds in an apolitical way through a regime which has certainly expelled more socialists than the Labour Party during the last 20 years.

Cliff avoided politics to the best of his ability. Difficult questions were avoided as barriers to getting recruits. The SWP's "party" is a group which puts building itself way above politics. Politics are a detail to be changed in order to get recruits.

To listen to Cliff you would believe that the SWP had been in the forefront of the Poll Tax campaign from Day 1. There was no mention here of the speeches he made 2 years ago: not paying your Poll Tax was as stupid as not paying your bus fare. Change of line! Pick up a membership card at the door...

Finally, the most disgusting feature of the meeting was the toadying that goes on in the SWP. The SWP's student organiser was visibly straining to laugh in the right places.

They remain on the edge of the movement — a dead-end for socialists looking to revitalise the labour movement.

Inside Election special

Socialist Worker

Get them out

Vote Labour

BUT Build a fighting socialist alternative

1987 general election: the SWP say vote Labour, but whatever you do don't do any campaigning to get them elected.

Rolls Royce: Strikes needed to win

By Pat Markey
AEU

Rolls Royce management are trying desperately to talk down the significance of their decision to sack the entire workforce.

They are claiming it is a "legal" technicality in order to impose a six-month wage freeze. All anniversary dates for wage increases are to be put back six months and all automatic incremental increases based on service or skill will also be put back six months. However, it appears that workers are being expected to work their notice, and thus effectively have been sacked. And that still leaves the question of 6000 redundancies by the end of 1992 at 7 out of the 9 Rolls plants.

One effect has been confusion. In one instance, management had to re-issue a circular to workers explaining the situation after the first one had failed to make any sense whatsoever.

But the feeling amongst stewards is that these attacks by Rolls Royce are an attempt to



Bankworkers flying pickets

These are the workers for whom old fashioned trade unionism is supposed to be out of date. Office staff from two sections of Barclays Bank have walked out after colleagues were dismissed for refusing to sign an agreement not to take industrial action. Here they are picketing the main computer centre to encourage computer operators to join them. Secondary action it's called. Photo: Paul Herrmann

soften up the union for compulsory redundancies at some later stage.

The Leavesden Plant meeting of Rolls Royce senior stewards and convenors on Thursday 16 May decided to ballot for an overtime ban if Rolls did not withdraw their threats by 29 May. But, because so little overtime is actually being worked in Rolls Royce, a ban will have only a limited effect. On 29 May CSEU is convening an all-union

meeting to discuss the situation and representatives of the manual workers' unions have already stated their intent to ballot for strike action in the event of any compulsory redundancies.

Strike action remains the only way to force Rolls Royce to back down and withdraw the new contracts and pay freeze. Talk by MSF of taking the dispute to the High Court should not be seen as an alternative to strike action.

Already other employers are learning from Rolls Royce's tactics. On Friday 17 May the Glasgow shipyard of Kvaerner Gowan sacked 1,600 workers who are on strike over a pay and conditions offer which includes wage increases of 6.4% and 4.4% over 21 months. The company has said it would only take back those who agreed to accept a tough new package of working conditions. A great deal rests on the outcome of the Rolls Royce dispute.

DSS: spread the staffing strikes

By Mark Serwotka,
Rotherham DSS

The DSS conference at CPSA met against a background of staffing strikes — most notably at Hull, where members have been out on strike since 3 April.

Elsewhere members are also out. The offices affected stretch from the North East to Wales, the Midlands and London. These strikes have all come from the bottom, as members have decided that the strain is too much to bear.

In one DSS office payments are still being made at 7pm!

That the strikes have spread so far and so quickly is also a testament to the strikers from Hull, who have travelled far and wide, calling for support for their strike.

Throughout this whole period the right-wing DSS Executive have refused to lift a finger. Rather than call for a national campaign, they have clung to a miserly offer of £16 million from management in the hope that this will solve the problems.

£16 million is a drop in the ocean. It will do absolutely nothing to solve the staffing crisis. What's more, management have made it clear that his money is not to be spent on more permanent staff!

With this in mind, the DSS con-

ference voted massively in favour of a section-wide campaign. The leadership, who opposed the motion, could only muster 3,000 votes against, compared to our 20,000 in favour.

Nothing is beyond the DSS section leadership. By Thursday of conference, no mention had been made of implementing the agreed policy.

The Hull branch took the initiative and called a conference meeting of all DSS delegates and observers. A resolution was unanimously carried, calling on all branches to submit requests to the union for official strike action, thus hoping to force the executive into action.

Dave Kowalski, Section Chair, was spotted trying to sneak out

of the meeting. He didn't escape. Strikers insisted that he address the delegates. With the utmost contempt he grudgingly spoke for a few minutes while continuously looking at his watch, making it clear that his time was being wasted.

Kowalski refused to give any commitment to lead a campaign.

One striker from Hull was reduced to tears as she saw the contempt their action was being treated with. It is now up to the branches to build the campaign.

This should be on the basis of flooding the executive with strike submissions and, if need be, taking action in the meantime. In this way the exec can be forced to lead a campaign. If they will not, we will have to do it ourselves.

Marshall Cavendish fight for recognition

By Tony Brown

NUJ members are on strike at Marshall Cavendish against another derecognition campaign, this time by Times Publishing.

Workers at Marshall Cavendish were told on 22 February that the union agreement would end on 22 May. Since then NUJ members have been working to rule.

On 7 May 97% of members voted by secret ballot in favour of terms and conditions negotiated by the union, and 74% voted for strike action.

Miranda Spicer, Mother of the Chapel, told *Socialist Organiser* that after 22 May any union activity inside the building could be used as a pretext to sack union members. Any staff joining the company after 22 May would be offered conditions including longer working hours, less holidays and in-

dividually imposed rates of pay.

This is the third NUJ campaign against derecognition

running. Other actions in defence of union rights are continuing at Haymarket and IPC.

Go-ahead strikers

By Gill Crann

Throughout the North East towns are cut off while 1,150 bus drivers from one of the biggest companies in the North East, Go-Ahead Northern, are on strike.

This week 350 workers from the Stanley depot were sacked. But management's tough line didn't last long. After getting just 11 replies to the jobs advertised they reinstated the workforce, but with no better conditions.

The strike began when workers at the Stanley depot re-

jected a pay offer of 4.5%, effectively a pay cut, and voted to strike; other depots at Sunderland, Consett, Washington, Gateshead and Tyneside followed.

The management are threatening to reduce holidays, end payment for meal breaks, reduce pay by up to £15 a week and cut sick pay by a third.

Strike funds are being set up and mass meetings being held across the region. After two weeks, negotiations are still to be opened. Management are refusing to negotiate until the workforce goes back.

Messages of support can be sent to the TGWU, Transport House, Barrack Road, Newcastle.

Knowsley teachers' strike

Over the last fortnight teachers in Knowsley have been taking strike action against the Borough's education cuts. A striking teacher explained the situation to *Socialist Organiser*.

"Knowsley's education record is already poor; it consistently has the lowest GCSE results in the country and currently some schools have classes with over 40 pupils. Yet this year, to avoid

Poll Tax capping, the Labour controlled council has slashed its budget. In education, this has led to cuts in individual school budgets of about 7% and schools proposing redundancies amongst teaching and non-teaching staff — already 5 teachers have been issued with redundancy notices.

In response, teaching unions are campaigning for the Council to reverse the education cuts. Across the Borough the NUT are taking a series of one and two day strikes and NAS/UWT half day strikes".

Workers sacked for official strike

By Nik Barstow

After a year of being battered by government attacks, support staff in the Health Service voted last week to take a pay cut.

NALGO's National Health Group voted on 8 May to "reluctantly" accept an £11.50 a week or 7.9% offer for administration and technical grade workers in the NHS.

Since 1979 the support staff's pay has fallen by over a quarter compared with similar jobs outside the Health Service — and now looks set for another drop.

The "reluctant" acceptance was opposed by a minority of branches who realised that the recent upsurge of opposition to the Tories' "NHS reforms" gave them a huge advantage in a real pay battle, but many branches have "had the stuffing knocked out of them" by opt-outs and re-organisations.

The dangers faced by trade unionists in the "reformed NHS" was graphically illustrated by a speaker from the Oldham Medical Records Strike — where 34 NALGO members were sacked in March for taking official strike action.

She appealed to the delegates to back her fight for reinstatement by supporting the Oldham Branch's call for a national Day of Action by all NALGO members on 26 June.

The Union leadership fudged the issue by refusing to "name the date" but insisted that supportive strike action was "on the agenda" and will be discussed again at NALGO's National Conference which starts on 10 June.

It is vital that all NALGO members, in the NHS, in local councils, and in other public services where the union organises build a campaign now to "name the date" for a national day of strike action.

The Oldham dispute is the first time that public sector employers have moved to sack workers taking part in an official strike over pay... and if the bosses in one health authority get away with it, lots more NHS managers and local councils will start doing the same.

The attack in Oldham is one of the biggest attacks on trade union rights to take place since the latest round of industrial relations laws came into effect — we must organise to stop it in its tracks.

Messages of support and donations to Oldham Medical Records Strikers to: Frances Sherrington, NALGO Treasurer, Cytology, Community Services, Westhulme Hospital, Oldham OL1 2PN.

Town Hall pay battles

Local Councils are heading for pay strikes this summer.

In talks over NALGO's annual pay claim for local council white collar workers, the employers have refused to put forward an offer.

The next pay talks meeting is set for the end of May. The employers have stated they may not make an offer at that meeting.

A refusal by the employers to make an offer by that date would be a major breach in recent practice.

The employers are delaying an offer in the hope of inflation falling. Any fall in inflation will be used as justification for making a paltry offer.

NALGO's claim is for 12% and a minimum wage of £9,330.

NALGO's Local Government branches have a delegate meeting on 10 June. No offer — or no satisfactory offer — and council

workers will be preparing for a summer wave of Town Hall strikes.

Cuts conference

Strathclyde NALGO hosted a conference on local government cuts last weekend.

It was attended by about 40 delegates representing almost 30 NALGO branches. The branches present reported on the struggle they were involved in and there was discussion on the most effective way to fight back. The idea for a national demonstration to link up the separate disputes looks as if it might be taken up at this year's national conference, with Liverpool being discussed as a possible venue. If properly built for this could be a starting point for national industrial action against cuts and compulsory redundancies.

Around the conferences

MSF conference

rejects pay norms

The giant white collar and technicians union MSF — one of the biggest unions affiliated to the Labour Party — has unanimously rejected "all forms of wage restraint".

Delegates at the union's annual conference in Bournemouth supported a resolution that explicitly opposed the TUC's recently floated notion of 'pay norms'. An incomes policy by any other name.

At the same time conference backed the notion of a statutory minimum wage — "That is not

incomes policy, that is a measure to end the poverty of many, many workers in the country" argued executive member Dave Cooke moving the resolution opposing pay norms. The newly elected right wing 'Kinnock lackey' General Secretary designate, Roger Lyons, remained noticeably silent throughout the proceedings. Over to you TUC...

• MSF conference also voted *not* to hold a re-run of the General Secretary designate election after right wing candidate Roger Lyons emerged victorious from the ballot.

NUPE: Bickerstaffe calls for national minimum wage

NUPE's annual conference started in Scarborough this week with a bold call for the next Labour government to initiate a national minimum wage of half the male annual average.

General Secretary Rodney

Bickerstaffe said that the demand was "not relief, not charity, but justice".

Strangely Rodney also buried his head in the sand when he pretended that "Neither the TUC nor the Labour Party have incomes policies on their formal agenda and so far as we can tell neither have they on any private agenda." If only...

LCDTU: a rave from the grave

Readers under the age of thirty may well have never heard of the Liaison Committee for the

Defence of Trade Unions, LCDTU for short.

In years past the LCDTU was the body through which the Communist Party extended its tentacles into the British trade union movement.

The LCDTU met last weekend and pledged itself to campaign at all levels of the labour movement for the repeal of all anti-trade union laws.

They hope to win this position as TUC policy in Glasgow this September.

If this happened it would undoubtedly be a victory for the left, but surely it makes more sense to campaign for positive rights for trade unionists: the right to strike, organise, picket effectively, take solidarity strike action etc?

After all, many decent rank-and-file workers think that "repeal all anti-union laws" really means "abolish all ballots". The Communist Party would never want that, would it?

Wapping strike?

The world turns... As *Socialist Organiser* goes to press it is expected that the electricians' union, the EETPU, is about to announce a vote in favour of industrial action at Rupert Murdoch's supposedly non-union, strike-free workers' paradise: Wapping.

The action will be in protest at new shift patterns which will involve an extra day a week's travelling for those workers who were recruited by the EETPU in Southampton in a bid to smash the original print unions.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Money scores

By Tony Brown

The fact that Arsenal, Spurs and Manchester United all won big titles this month should be the main sports news.

But instead they've all been relegated to second-rate news.

It's an indictment of modern sport that the clubs' business dealings are more important than the playing of the game.

Turn to any back page and the stories are dominated by articles on finance, shares, debentures, and management buy-outs. Gascoigne's knee is so important not because a



great player's career is threatened but because on his knee rests Spurs' financial future. Today a knee injury doesn't just disappoint fans, it depresses share values.

Floated on the stock exchange in 1982, they diversified into clothing production and have run up debts of £20 million.

The off-field struggle for control of the company this year has pitted supporters, players and team officials against the club management and its bank. Terry Venables' buy-out bids are based on keeping Gascoigne to play at Tottenham. Clearly the supporters want that too. But they carry no weight in the decisions of the bank who see their involvement in purely monetary terms. It matters little that in selling Gazza, and losing others, they will weaken a successful team in the future.

They will have their money back, but the long-time supporters who pay their money each week will have had no say or influence in the decision. They will be left to follow a team decimated by a group of faceless corporate executives.

This week Manchester United follow in Spurs' steps and will list their club in an effort to raise £17 million. Arsenal are trying a different tack by floating shares to raise enough money to make their stadium an all-seater by 1993.

It all ties in well with the League's plan to get an elite Premier League. If successful it will spell the end for a lot of clubs.

Marx said capitalism reduced all human relations to a cash exchange. Sport for a long time managed to hold out against this, but it is no longer the case.

In France, Bordeaux, a first division club with £30 million of debts, have been relegated because they went broke.

The trend for more elite competitions and a smaller number of rich clubs is not limited to English football.

The attempt to establish an intercontinental American football competition is another example, as is the inclusion of New Zealand and New Guinea in the Sydney football competition.

Such competitions mean enormous expense, making them dependent on corporate sponsorship and television. These trends are not going to be turned around.

Sport is being transformed from an enjoyment where people followed their local team to a business where the supporters are nothing more than consumers.



The Tories are the liars!

By Richard Bayley

The Tories' accusations of Labour "lies" about hospitals opting out of the NHS have a hollow ring to them.

In reality, the Tory "reforms" do threaten to significantly reduce the scope and accessibility of NHS services for many people.

Robin Cook MP was right to nail Tory minister William Waldegrave for his reaction to the cuts at Guys Hospital. Waldegrave said that they were none of his business. That, said Cook, was proof that the levels of healthcare available under the NHS are no longer seen by those in charge of the NHS as a government concern.

All this is scare-mongering, say the Tories. Services will still be available free at the point of need in NHS Trusts (ie. opted out hospitals), cry Tory backbenchers.

This misses the point — quite deliberately.

Even under private health insurance you do not pay at a cash register on the reception desk! What is available in the NHS, where, and how easily — that is the issue.

What is available in the NHS, where, and how easily — that is the issue

NHS Trusts will determine what services they provide, and in what quantity, according to the laws of profitability.

Trusts will compete for "contracts" to supply health care for various districts and fundholding GPs, in order to get cash.

Health care is a means to an end: profit is the purpose of the operation, the all-shaping end.

The Trusts, in turn, will pay "rent" on all their assets, and aim to cost all their departments and

produce prices for treatment.

In reality, *real* estimates of costs are some 10 years away from being produced. What gets cut now is being cut simply on the basis of what provides the quickest cash savings with the least resistance.

Keep that last bit in mind: with the least resistance.

Trusts will also increase their income by expanding pay beds, and offering what are now supposed to be standard services as optional "extras" to patients — at a price.

Meals, access to a TV, even the state of your bed, all will be up for sale once you are in hospital!

Even if your local NHS Trust has kept its doors open to the public and kept all its services intact, that's not the end of the story.

Under the "internal market" which the Tories have introduced, your Health Authority has to "purchase" the treatment you require, through making a "contract" with a hospital.

If there is no contract to cover the service you require, then you will not necessarily get treatment.

Crawley Health Authority, for instance, have made no provision this year for the carrying out of sterilisations and, last April, refused to treat a patient who was on the waiting list unless her GP stumped up another £150!

Under the new system what do you get?

- Hospitals driven by cash incentives and not clinical need.
- Hospitals unwilling to offer services not specified in the contract.
- Hospitals willing to move patients up or down its waiting list according to whether your GP has his or her own budget.

This, Mr Waldegrave, has *nothing* to do with the NHS! The Tories are the liars!

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