

Crisis in India



centre pages

Socialists  
for  
Labour



page 3

For socialist renewal!



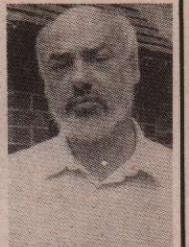
For workers' liberty!

Yes, campaign for  
democracy!



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Behind  
the  
pindown  
scandal



page 4

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Tories out to destroy the NHS

# The market is bad for your health!

**W**e no longer have a universal health service freely available to all. That is what the Tories' new "internal market" means.

Now, when you go for medical treatment, the

answer may be no. No, because hospitals in your region no longer provide that treatment — they have dropped it because it's not profitable in the new "internal market" — and the local health authority has spent all of its budget for buying treatment from outside.

No, because the hospital gives priority to patients of "budget-holding" GPs, and your GP isn't a "budget holder".

The "internal market" will not make health care more efficient. It will make it more unequal.

Turn to page 2

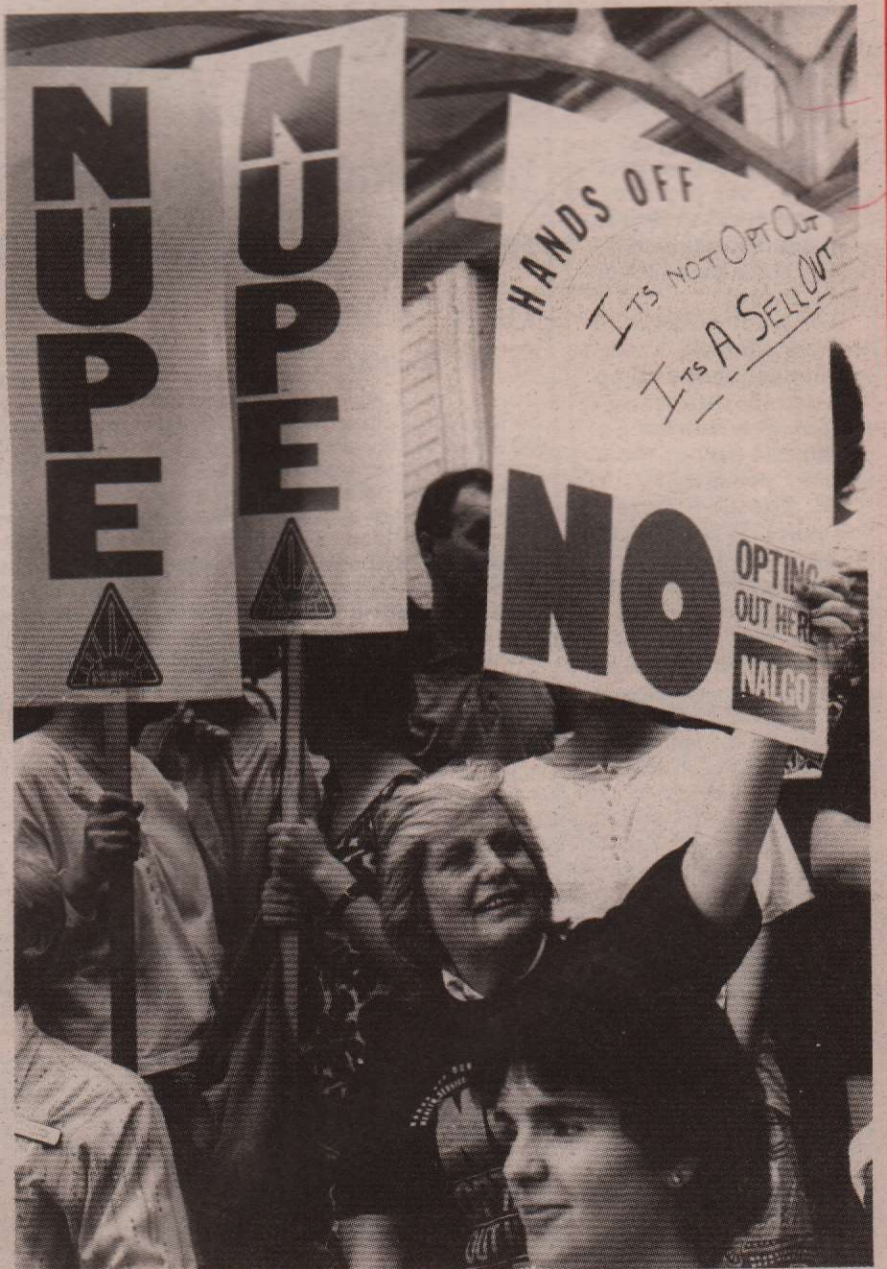


Photo John Smith (Profile)

### The lie machine



Sex and death, the two great principles! This sick-making cocktail on page one of *The Sport* might be called the double gloat: ogle "Fiona" and then give an excited cheer as "our boys" of the SAS acted as judge, jury and executioners, killing three men in Northern Ireland.

*The Sport* seems to be thriving, though, a weirdly unintentional send up of a certain sort of tabloid. It is now an established part of the British "newspaper" scene. You see it more and more. What does it tell us when a gross caricature can inch along in the track of the *Sun* and the *Star*? And what comes next, in the tracks made by *The Sport*?

The exposés of the tawdry reality behind the mystique of the British monarchy come thick and fast. Even the most tenuous links with scandal are enough to have one or another royal publicly smeared. Like a bunch of ravenous rodents the tabloids eat away at the rotten wood of the monarchy. Good!

Once upon a time you went to the fairground to see the freak-show or watch the strong man burst chains with his chest, or roll around in flames. Now the tabloids allow you to gawp in bed on Sunday morning. Cf last Sunday's *News of the World*.

# Gorbachev back in the good books

It now appears certain that Mikhail Gorbachev will be invited to the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations (G7: USA, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Canada and Italy) meeting to be held in London in July.

The invitation represents a victory for Gorbachev in winning back support from the Western leaders and a retreat by Bush who only a month ago was determined not to invite him.

Gorbachev's emissaries to Washington, including Eduard Shevardnadze, Grigory Yavlinsky and Yevgeny Primakov, have all stressed that economic aid was essential if the hardliners were to be prevented from gaining control.

As before Gorbachev has given way on troop numbers in order to win support from the West. This time he has broken the deadlock in the stalled talks on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) thus clearing the way for a US/

Soviet summit to be held in Moscow in the next eight weeks.

In reasserting his position within the Soviet Union and fixing the CPE talks, Gorbachev has given Bush the excuse he needed to approve the \$1.5 billion in agricultural credits which he had refused to authorise in May.

Now Bush is also prepared to grant the USSR "most favoured trading nation" status.

Gorbachev will be arguing that \$100 billion in Western aid is vital if the USSR's crip-



Gorbachev wins back support from the West

pled economy is to be kick-started into activity.

One of Bush's earlier concerns was that if Gorbachev attended, the meeting would be dominated by the state of the Soviet economy. He is

undoubtedly right.

What the Americans want is to press the EC, and especially Germany, to cut interest rates and deal with the problems surrounding the stalled GATT talks.



## US Marine faces death penalty for opposition to Gulf war

By Jeff Mackler

Erik Larsen, a US Marine Reservist who applied for Conscientious Objector (CO) status and was an outspoken critic of the US war in the Middle East, now faces the death penalty.

According to the Marine Corps, as stated in their charges against Larsen: "Lance Corporal [Eric Larsen] has been in an [un]authorised status for a period in excess of 30 days during a time of war and pending serious charges, including an alleged violation of Article 85, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), desertion. If found guilty of these charges he faces the possibility of the maximum punishment authorised, which is death."

Of the estimated 3,000 GI resisters who expressed their anti-war views during the US intervention in the Middle East, Larsen is the first to be charged with desertion in time of war.

In a related and very important

development, Tahan Jones — a black Marine and anti-war activist who was often a keynote speaker at many of the mass demonstrations in the San Francisco Bay Area — is expected to turn himself in to the military authorities soon. He will more than likely face the same charges as Larsen.

With the agreement of their families, a Jones/Larsen Defence Fund has been established to organise a rally and publicise the cases of these two GIs across the US and internationally.

Tax-free contributions to this effort can be made as follows: For Erik Larsen: Hayward Peace Fellowship/Erik Larsen Defence Fund. For Tahan Jones: Third World Resisters/Tahan Jones Defence Fund. For the joint fundraising effort: Jones/Larsen Defence Fund. All cheques can be sent to the Jones/Larsen Defence Fund, 4229 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94609.

From the US Socialist Action

## Bailiffs in Hull

By Paul Hampton

Anyone who thought the poll tax was dead after events in Hull this week.

On Friday 31 May Janet and Keith Gibson, members of Holderness anti-poll tax union, were followed by the police and bailiffs from their home to the Asda supermarket. Whilst they were inside, their car was towed off and impounded by bailiffs.

## The market is bad for your health

From front page

Look at the United States, which has a largely free-market health system. It spends two and a half times as much, per head, on health care, as Britain — and gets worse results. More children die before the age of one in the US than in any other advanced capitalist country.

In Britain, even after all the NHS cuts so far, every woman expecting a baby gets about a dozen check-ups free, and probably ante-natal classes free too. In the US, 60 per cent of women expecting babies get few or no ante-natal check-ups.

If you pay in the US, you can get a luxurious private room in hospital, the latest technology, the lot. You will probably get more treatment than is good for you. A huge proportion of babies in the US are delivered by Caesarean section — requiring a highly qualified surgeon, and a lot of post-natal care for the mother — rather than normally, by a less qualified midwife.

In the US, you can pay for a specialist baby doctor, and get as much treatment, and as many check-ups, for your child as the doctor can get past your health insurance company. Or — if you're one of the 30 million with no health insurance — you get



Waldegrave: minister in charge of the cuts

nothing.

Under the NHS, every mother has visits from community midwives and health visitors, and free access to a child health clinic.

The more equal, less market-oriented system is more "efficient" — and infinitely more in line with civilised human life, and less like the law of the jungle.

The market is always the law of the jungle. It always means that everyone must look out for themselves first, and devil take the hindmost. As a method for society to deal with the sick, the old, and the very young, it is obscene.

In its immediate effect, the Tories' "internal market" is a way of forcing through cuts — by confronting health authorities and hospitals with

cash-limited budgets — and smashing up the health workers' unions — by destroying national agreements and further "contracting-out" services.

In its implications, it is a step towards the US system.

The new "trust" hospitals are managed, and employ workers, separately from the NHS. Their boards are stacked out with business people from outside the health service.

For now they are tied to the NHS by contracts. But those contracts can change. The next step on from what the Tories are doing now is to bring private health insurance companies into the "market" in competition with the District Health Authorities, and to relegate the Health Authorities to marginal provision for some of those without private insurance like Medicare in the US.

The Tories are on the defensive. But Labour is still not on the offensive as it should be.

We need a national campaign, with mass demonstrations, led by Labour; full support for industrial resistance by NHS workers; a fight to force a general election; and a commitment from the Labour leaders to reverse Tory cuts and privatisation and rebuild a universal free health service.

## Which people's capitalism?

By Teresa Brewster

Tory people's capitalism is turning out well for some people — for the top managers and the shareholders of sold-off companies like British Gas and British Telecom.

Both Gas and Telecom have announced huge profits. And no wonder: when the Tories sold them off, they transformed them from public utilities into profit-seeking private monopolies or near-monopolies, with only slight conditions attached to their licences to coin money at the expense of the consumer.

Top managers used the sell-offs as an opportunity to award themselves huge page rises and to increase the pressure on their workers' wages and conditions.

The gains distributed

through dividends to shareholders also go mostly to a well-off minority. A relatively large number of middle class and better-off working class people did buy a few shares in Telecom or Gas when they were first sold off, but many have now cash-

ed in and sold those shares.

Most of the shares in these profit-making monopolies are now owned by the same people as own most of the shares in other companies — the big financial institutions, and a tiny minority of wealthy individuals.



# Socialists for Labour

It is time for socialists to do some plain speaking on the Labour Party.

A general election is coming. It might come as early as October, or as late as next June, but it is not going to be more than a year from now.

The general election will be a chance to get rid of the Tories — it will be the only constitutional chance to put them out for another five years.

What are the alternatives? Either the Labour Party under Neil Kinnock has moved so far to the right there is now no real difference between Labour and the Tories, and therefore socialists have no choice in the election and should treat it as an irrelevance. Or there are still important differences between Labour in one camp, and the Tories and Liberal Democrats in the other, and therefore socialists should actively work for a Labour victory in the election.

Socialists are increasingly divided on this question. In response to the disgusting antics of the Kinnockites who lead the Labour Party, many socialists have given way to a bitter mood of hopelessness: there is, they say, or half say, no alternative to the Tories, and certainly not Neil Kinnock's Labour Party.

We in *Socialist Organiser* and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty believe that socialists should throw their weight strongly behind the Labour Party in the coming election. Between the Tories and Labour — even under Kinnock and his gutless team of public relations experts and right-wing careerists — there is, still, a fundamental distinction.

The Labour Party is — still, despite what Kinnock and his friends have done — the political party of the trade unions, which means that it is the party of the organised working class movement in Britain. The Labour Party is a vast distance now from the sort of political party the working class needs: but it is the only mass working class party there is.

To the left of Labour there is nothing that has political credibility with more than a few thousand workers. In national politics there is simply nothing that could conceivably offer itself as an alternative to the Tories.

The Liverpool left is really no exception. There, a sizeable group of anti-Kinnock leftists — the Militant-led "Real Labour" Broad Left — has split from the Labour Party and won a bloc of seats on the council. Despite this success, it is improbable that they can even win the late Eric Heffer's seat in the upcoming Walton by-election, though, apparently, they plan to stand. It is impossible that they could in a general election present themselves as an alternative to the Tories even on Merseyside. That is the measure of where the left is, because in Liverpool the anti-



Kinnock left has gone furthest from Labour and, in the local elections, can claim to have established some electoral credibility.

No, Labour is the only conceivable alternative to the Tories which the labour movement will have in the general election.

This is, to be sure, a grim situation for socialists. We are in this situation now because, in the great battles of the early '80s — when, for a while, it looked as if the left could remake the existing mass labour movement — we were defeated in the unions and in the Labour Party by the right wing and their soft left allies.

As a result of that defeat we have seen the Kinnockite right-wing leaders of the Labour Party rat on workers in struggle, refuse to lead — or even support — the battle against the poll tax. We see them doing their best to look like Tories with a slightly more sensitised social conscience. We see them now refusing to mobilise workers to fight the Tories, and indulging in endless passive waiting for the Tories to get so unpopular that an election victory drops at Neil Kinnock's feet.

The revulsion which sections of the left feel for Kinnock's Labour Party is all too understandable. But revulsion is a bad guide in politics, and a short-sighted one. Despite Kinnock, a Labour election victory would bring great benefits to the working-class movement.

Tory defeat after a dozen years in power would break their mystique and shatter the sense that they are invulnerable. The feeling of powerlessness and helplessness before the brutal determination of the entrenched Tories has been a big factor in undermining working-class militancy and self-confidence throughout the 1980s.

No matter how right wing and

pro-capitalist a Kinnock Labour government would be, it would inspire no such feeling of helplessness in the labour movement. Quite the opposite: no matter how right wing Labour's leaders are the fact of a Labour victory would nevertheless encourage workers to look for advantages and for openings that would let them advance. Workers would be encouraged to press wage claims and to demand the restoration of the cuts the Tories have made in the health service.

Kinnock says that Labour would keep most of the Tory anti-union legislation. But pressure would mount from the trade unions for radical changes. Even without such changes, it is highly unlikely that a Kinnock government would be able to use the anti-union legislation now on the books with the same crippling ruthlessness the Tories used — for example — to destroy the dockers' defensive strike two years ago.

The scoundrels who lead Labour would perhaps try. The labour movement would fight back. The left in the labour movement — Labour Party and trade unions — would revive in the fight around such questions. When the then Labour government tried to bring in anti-union legislation in 1969 resistance from the labour movement forced it to retreat and abandon its plans.

To be indifferent to these issues because of disgust with Kinnock is to be indifferent to politics. To be indifferent to replacing the Tories with a Labour government because Kinnock would try to do in Britain what "socialists" like himself have done in France, Spain, Australia and New Zealand, is to be ridiculously fatalistic. It is to be defeatist even before the battle begins.

Kinnock will not be in control of the forces unleashed in the labour movement by a Tory defeat. The labour movement will resist many of the measures Kinnock will try to implement.

Many workers who are now Kinnockite because they think Kinnock's Labour is the only hope we have of getting the Tories out will raise their expectations once the Tories are defeated. Once the labour movement has kicked out the Tories we can stop the Kinnockite right-wing Labour leaders carrying on with Tory policies! Anyone who says otherwise now is a wretched coward and defeatist!

The fight to get rid of the Tories could mobilise millions of workers now, even a fight focused merely on the call for an immediate general election, if only Neil Kinnock would fight. A left-wing campaign to kick the Tories out and return a Labour government, even an unofficial campaign of limited numbers, can give the left itself a unifying focus, and the ability to mobilise behind us many workers who are not now particularly left wing, but who do desperately want to stop the Tories destroying the National Health Service.

For the "revolutionary" left to turn its back on the election is for the left to turn its back on the millions of workers who will back Kinnock for the reasons above. It would be to turn our backs on the working class as it actually exists in Britain now after a dozen years of being battered by the Thatcherite class warriors in power.

That is why left wingers have organised "Socialists for Labour". That is our approach.

Against this, the jaded and weary defeatism which grips much of the revolutionary left is simply not serious working class politics. It is, in many cases, just not politics. It is

a reversion to primitive anarchist attitudes and to old-fashioned "preaching socialism", and to the sort of helpless bewilderment in face of bourgeois power which characterises the socialist sects before the birth of the modern labour movement.

This election is the only political process available to the British working class right now. Socialists must help workers go through this experience and learn from it, not tell them "everything is hopeless" (and in the case of the SWP add: except strikes). To say everything is hopeless, and add bitter "r-r-revolutionary" curses at Kinnock is the most pathetic and irresponsible sectarianism. To say socialists should perhaps vote Labour on the day but should not now try to organise the left independently to fight for the Labour vote in the election — that is to accept that politics is now the exclusive domain of the triumphant right wing of the Labour Party. That too, even when accompanied by much "revolutionary" noise, is the crassest and most prostrate political defeatism.

Small, local breakaways from Labour like that in Liverpool — a breakaway at the heart of which is *Militant*, which made such a wretched hash of things when it had power in Liverpool, opening the door to the present right wing Labour council — are no more an alternative than is weary abstention.

The key task now facing the working class is to get rid of the Tories. By organising to help do it the left can also prepare the labour movement for the inevitable fight against a future right-wing Kinnockite government.

The serious left in Britain now are those who can combine the fight against the right wing of the labour movement with putting forward principled perspectives to help the entire broad labour movement — the movement as it actually is now — orient itself in the battle with the ruling class and their chief political party.

Right now that means throwing what we have to throw into the fight to drive out the Tories. That is the necessary focus now of the fight to build an organisation of socialists who will ultimately be able to reorganise the entire labour movement, doing the job the left tried and failed to do in the '80s.

It is a job that *must be done*, because there can be no socialism without the working class, and without remaking the labour movement it has built in over a century of class struggle.

Until it is done, the left will always be faced with dilemmas such as those we now face in this election.

Build "Socialists for Labour"!

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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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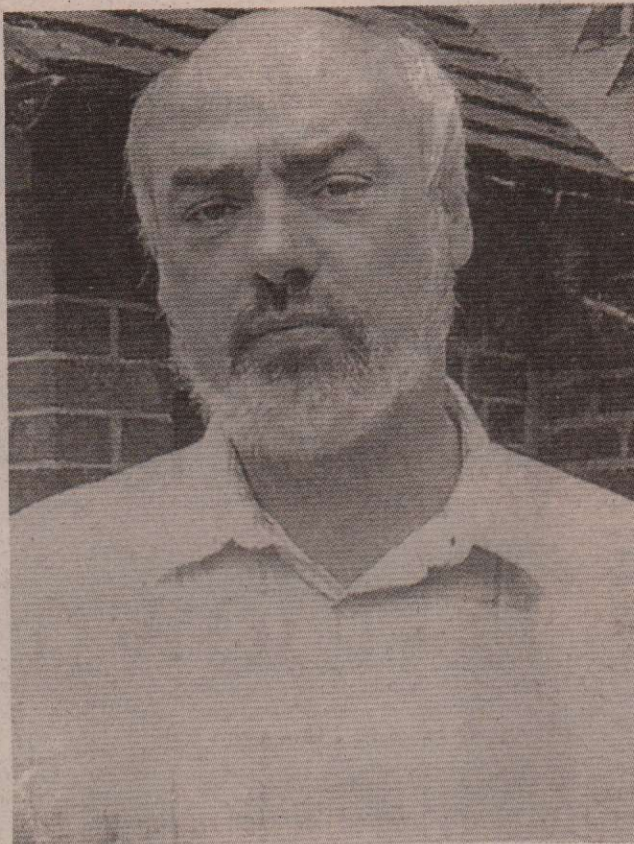
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BEHIND THE NEWS

# The issues behind the "pindown" scandal

By Liz Dickenson



Tony Latham

Saturation coverage by the press, television and radio has made us all familiar with the name of Tony Latham, a senior social worker for Staffordshire Social Services, and his role as "the chief architect and initiator" of "pindown".

It has not made us aware of the real issues behind the scandal.

Pindown was a disciplinary method used in some of the residential children's homes run by Staffordshire. The Levy report says: "pindown fundamentally relied on isolation, humiliation, and confrontation, was wholly negative and entirely unacceptable."

Young people and children as young as nine were made to strip down to their underwear or, in some cases, nightclothes and were kept in sparsely furnished rooms in solitary confinement. They were deprived of any form of communication with their peers, staff and the outside world.

They rose at 7am, had their meals in silence and had to knock on the door to be allowed to go to the toilet. The only occupation allowed was the mindless task of copying out the telephone directory. One young person was kept in this inhumane conditions for 84 days.

This treatment is indefensible. Through his solicitor Latham attempted to justify this regime as a "contract whereby issues, problems and relationships were confronted and privileges were fully earned". But clothes, reading material and human communication are rights, not "privileges", for children and young people in care.

Social service managers, local councillors and government departments have denied any knowledge of "pindown"; but the Levy report quite clearly states that "pindown" was not a secret technique.

A concerned worker wrote a departmental memo as early as 1984, but "pindown" continued. There were many visits to the homes involved by members of the local social services committee who failed to notice what was going on under their noses. Did they, I wonder, ever speak to the children, or read the log books? Apparently not.

In 1987 the Social Services Inspectorate visited one of the homes and failed to notice what was happening.

The government's response has been to order an investigation by Bill Utting, the Social Services Inspectorate Chief! What a response. His inquiry will only look at the monitoring and control of children's homes and won't include issues of staffing and resources. The intended thoroughness of the report can surely be judged by the fact that Bill Utting retires on 19 July and intends to complete the inquiry before he leaves.

Barry O'Neill, the former Director of Staffordshire Social Services, who took early retirement last December, told the Levy inquiry that "there was a clear

policy decision to let Tony Latham get on with it and not to interfere as long as he produced the goods." What were those goods? Traumatized, acquiescent

children? The media have pointed out that the majority of staff are unqualified and inexperienced. As a former residential social worker, I

would agree. Staff are undervalued, low paid and not given enough training.

But training should not be necessary to stop children being treated cruelly, as with "pindown". Training should be about ways of working with very difficult children, and alleviating the all too real stress of this particular job, which carries a high risk of personal attack.

Many residential social workers are committed to the children and young people in their care. Many residential homes do provide a positive alternative for children who cannot remain with their families. Media coverage has ranged from restrained to emotive to hysterical.

But it has failed to question this society's sanctioning of the punitive treatment of children. Remember the "short, sharp, shock" treatment meted out to juveniles in the early 1980s? This coincided — perhaps not incidentally — with the "birth" of Latham's brainchild, "pindown".

Thatcher and the Tories have long lauded the virtues of the family. Latham is said to have used "pindown" deliberately to give its recipients a negative view of care and get them to return to their families.

If so, he ignored the reasons why the children were in care in the first place.



Rolls Royce workers

## Seven steps to a sell-out

Anyone who remembers the series of disputes that broke out in British Leyland in the late 1970s will have experienced a distinct sense of deja vu when reading about the recent Kvaerner Govan strike.

The pattern is almost the same:

1. Management proposes a "package" of draconian attacks on working conditions and/or wages.

2. The union leadership prevaricates, or even recommends acceptance.

3. The membership rejects the "package" and comes out on strike.

4. Management threatens to sack the entire workforce if they don't return to work unconditionally.

5. Secret negotiations between national officials and management.

6. A new deal is reached: management withdraw the sackings and the unions agree to the package.

7. The national officials pronounce the deal a "victory" and the membership reluctantly accept it.

That is what happened on several occasions at BL in the '70s and it's also what happened last month at the Govan shipyard (now owned by the Norwegian company Kvaerner) in Glasgow.

The company told the press that the outcome was "not a victory for either party", but then they could afford to be magnanimous: they'd got everything they wanted. The Confed, the AEU-dominated alliance of all the shipbuilding and engineering unions, had backed the Govan stewards' decision not to negotiate until the sackings were withdrawn.

But then Alex Ferry and the Confed leaders spent a week in secret talks with management and made no attempt to build support for the strike. The Scottish TUC was similarly unenthusiastic about the strike, with General Secretary Campbell Christie urging "sensible negotiations" but avoiding any call for solidarity action.

In the end, the Confed officials recommended a return to work on the same pay and conditions terms which had provoked the strike in the first place: an angry mass meeting voted 653 to 414 to accept. The central argument was that the yard might shut if the dispute continued.

The union bureaucrats love to boast that "we'd have been willing to fight management but the members let us down". A strike like the one at Govan exposes that sort of gaff: the members were, initially, solid and morale was high. With decent leadership, they would have stayed out. Kvaerner's threat to close down the yard was probably a bluff — but even if it wasn't, Govan shipyard workers have an obvious example to follow in resisting closure.

This miserable story of squandered rank and file militancy may well set a dangerous precedent: Rolls Royce have already withdrawn their mass sackings. When the union leaders accept their pay freeze no doubt we will be told that, overall, a "victory" has been achieved.

Kvaerner Govan is a classic example of rank and file militancy being dissipated by right-wing officials. Rolls Royce is a classic example of the almost laughable weakness of the "left" in the unions, faced with a similar situation.

The *Morning Star* last week reported, with obvious approval, a lobby of Rolls Royce's AGM where workers, "kitted out in City-style bowler hats", buttonholed shareholders "to enlist support for a four-point plan to save 6,000 jobs and the future of the key Leavesden helicopter plant". The object of this farcical resurrection of the "anti-monopoly alliance" (workers plus small shareholders vs nasty Lord Tombs) was to "urge the company to seek short-term funding projects from the government to weather the recession". All very well, perhaps, as a publicity stunt, but as a strategy for resisting Rolls' wholesale attack it's useless.

More worrying still is a "detailed survival plan" drawn up by the officials, which even the *Morning Star* admits would involve the partial closure of the Leavesden plant. Presumably, if Rolls do anything short of closing down the whole site, it will be hailed as a great "victory"...

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# WORKERS' LIBERTY '91



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# Reject this offer!

By Tim Cooper, Secretary,  
Notts County NALGO

The 6.1% offer to local government staff is an insult.

This year, according to the *Economist*, pay rises are running at an average of 9.25%. 6.1% is well short of even that figure. Council workers' pay rises have repeatedly fallen short of inflation. In real terms that means pay cuts. We need a 12% pay rise to regain some of the lost ground.

It now seems likely that we are set for a major confrontation with the employers. While the smaller sections of NALGO (Gas, Electrical and Water) have been settling at around 9 or 10%, the employers' side were encouraged by the Health Admin and Clerical section settling at 7.9%.

Leaked letters from the employers' side have shown that they have deliberately delayed the final offer in order to compare favourably to the temporarily falling rate of inflation. They are expecting a ballot for industrial action.

Jim White and the rest of NALGO's leadership are saying "the offer is contemptible". But members on the ground remember the same response last year, only to find him accepting at the smallest improvement.

The rolling programme of 1, 2 and 3-day strikes proved very popular and successful in 1989. The "yes" ballot gave legitimacy and built the action. The launching of a similar wave of action needs to be prepared for.

We need to push for the threat of all-out action at the end of a rolling programme. If the employers know the only card we intend to play is selective action by key groups like computers or telephones, they will be much better prepared. Already many authorities have contingency plans, including threats of lock-outs of non-striking workers.

In 1989 selective action left most members on the sidelines. All-out action would allow every member to feel fully involved in the action.

The Tories and the employers say

## Fight for a general election!

By Fiona Monkman  
Barnsley NALGO

The last 12 years under the Tory Government have seen attacks, cuts and the systematic decimation of our public services. A continuation of the present Government would mean only further destruction of what public services we have left. The need to Campaign for a General Election is paramount.

NALGO ran a restricted campaign around the May local election — producing a certain amount of limited publicity. This now must be advanced into a proper lively campaign involving public sector workers at local, regional and national levels.

A major campaign must be built which prioritises kicking out the Tories but also forces a commitment from Labour to restore spending to pre-1979 levels. Some effective work has already been done by health worker unions in attempts to prevent the Tories dismantling the NHS. This now needs to be spread to other public services.

The General Election will be a clear confrontation between the labour movement and the Tories so, despite Kinno's refusal to make an unequivocal commitment to essential public sector financing, a Labour victory is vital. At the same time we must begin to prepare the working class fightback against a Labour Government intent on implementing 'pro-capitalist politics' — organising workers with the renewed confidence a Labour victory inevitably brings.

workers should keep wage rises down to tackle inflation. This is hypocrisy. CBI president Mick Newmarch gave himself a £163,000 (43%) pay rise on the same day as our 6.1% offer! Directors in Britain have averaged rises of 10-14% at the same time as their profits are tumbling.

The employers have offered nothing on our minimum wage claim. This part of our claim was debated and passed by last year's NALGO conference. The minimum wage is not an extra which can be used as a bargaining counter in negotiations. It must be the central core of this year's pay claim.

The figure of £9330 is recommended as the minimum wage by the Council of Europe. Beneath this figure workers fall below a decent standard of living. Contrary to myth, one quarter of a million white collar council workers fall below this decency threshold. That is nearly half of NALGO's local government membership.

Low pay is the biggest problem facing many NALGO members. The time has come to deal with it. There should be no settlement without the minimum wage.

*Socialist Organiser*  
Public Meeting  
Socialists, Labour and  
the general election

Wednesday 12 June  
6pm, Room 4  
Glasgow City Halls  
Candlerigg

Speakers: Nik Barstow and Ian  
Taylor (Scottish Labour Party  
Socialists Executive)

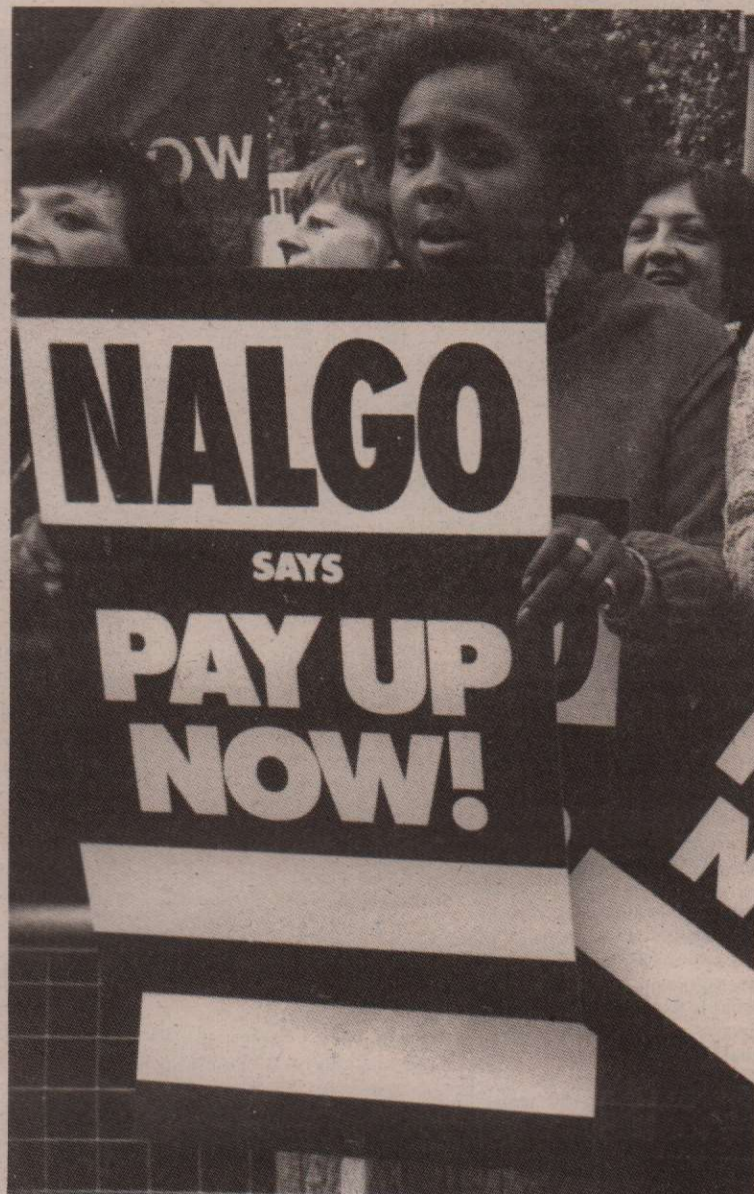
## Neither broad nor left, but SWP

By Tony Dale, Manchester  
NALGO

In November, over 200 NALGO members from around the country gathered at the Broad Left Annual General Meeting. Was this large turn-out the result of a year's successful campaigning by the Broad Left? Had left-wing NALGO members finally decided to make the Broad Left a real broad organisation of the left in NALGO?

No, the battle at the AGM was a straightforward takeover bid by the Socialist Workers Party against the *Militant*. This battle royale attracted little interest and attendance from NALGO members outside these two groups.

How has the "new" Broad Left fared?



Since the AGM the Broad Left has been a front for the SWP. Little democracy exists: the *Socialist Organiser* supporter on the Broad Left National Committee has only been informed of one meeting.

The Broad Left puts out thinly veiled SWP propaganda. At the Broad Left Cuts and Poll Tax Conference in March, Chris Harman spoke as editor of *Socialist Worker*. To have speakers who are SWP members is no crime, but for someone to address a conference of NALGO activists as the editor of *Socialist Worker* is crass sectarianism.

The BL meeting at Conference is called "Tories on the rocks, Kinno's won't fight. Let's build the socialist alternative". This is hardly addressing itself to the task of organising NALGO militants to change the

union.

The Broad Left has failed to build a serious fight in the union around issues like the Gulf war, cuts and poll tax. It has satisfied itself with loud, but passive, denunciation of the NALGO leadership. What is needed is an organised drive for changing the union.

Should the Broad Left be abandoned? No, but it needs a radical change of direction.

*NALGO Action* is now being published again after a gap for a number of months. It is good to see its return. *NALGO Action* is sponsored by 30 branches. Since its launch it has sought to "provide a forum where branches and activists can exchange information and ideas". As a result, it has been a breath of fresh air in the union.

## Cuts and poll tax: why we need a national fightback

By Chris Croome,  
Sheffield NALGO

The poll tax has undoubtedly represented the biggest and most severe of the attacks on local authorities introduced by the Tory government.

As well as being designed to massively transfer wealth from the richest to the poorest in society the poll tax was designed to decimate jobs and services. These cuts have caused tens of thousands of posts to be left unfilled, huge rounds of voluntary redundancies and closure of essential services. Many local authorities are pushing through or planning cutbacks in the order of £10-£20 million and as a result affected branches are now experiencing or being threatened by compulsory redundancies and unprecedented attacks on service conditions.

Liverpool Labour council has led some of the most vicious attacks on

local authority trade unions. It was the first in the country to use the anti-union legislation against a threatened strike. There have also been attacks on hours — management wanting an increase from 35 to 37! as well as cut backs in maternity leave and training. Liverpool has also introduced a point system for deciding who to make take compulsory redundancy, points are accrued for being off sick, unauthorized absence and industrial injury, those with the most points being the first out. Haringey council has introduced 'recruitment to stay interviews' where they actually interview people for their own jobs as a way of deciding who to make take compulsory redundancy. Five workers are being interviewed for three jobs. One woman who had worked at her job for 13 years was interviewed for her own job and then sacked. In Brent the council have withdrawn all facility time for shop stewards.

Early last year there were lots of local disputes over gradings and conditions for workers undertaking poll tax duties, the longest and most bitter of these disputes was the 9 month long Green-

wich strike which cost the union over £1 million. During the end of 1990 and throughout this year we have seen many local authorities threaten huge cuts packages, £34 million in Derbyshire for example. But, on virtually every occasion the threats have been reduced following ½ and 1 day strike actions — the councils keep finding money that they had forgotten about!

However several ballots for further strike action following successful 1 day actions have been lost, Strathclyde and Ealing to name two.

There can be no doubt that the total lack of any national focus to link these battles has undermined members' confidence, it is therefore essential that in order to first of all put up a successful defensive fight, members' confidence must be rebuilt. A positive starting point for this would be a national demonstration against cuts and redundancies, if this cannot be won through the Local Government Group Meeting on Monday it could be called by branches and hosted somewhere like Liverpool where there is a crucial battle going on.

## Towards a Labor Party in the US

Al Meyer reports from  
New York

On 4 May, 191 New York City working class activists attended a discussion led by Tony Mazzochi regarding the formation of a Labor Party in the US. Mazzochi is the secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union.

Shop stewards from a wide range of unions including the Communication Workers of America, the United Auto Workers, Teamsters and many public sector unions were present. The meeting room was rather hot and uncomfortable due to the fact that many fewer participants were actually expected and the room was overcrowded.

While there was some physical discomfort, the factor that produced the discomfort was an encouraging sign — namely, widespread interest in a new political formation that would truly represent the interests of working people.

In fact the publicity for the meeting was almost casual, and many participants said they attended only after having accidentally stumbled over a flyer lying around their union offices. Many also stated that they had been 'looking for something like this' for quite some time.

While Mazzochi has been advocating a Labor Party for more than ten years, it is just within the past few months that he and several others have given some organizational development to this idea. Basically a group called Labor Party Advocates (LPA) has been formed hoping to get as many shop stewards, rank and file activists and others involved so that in about two years a constitutional convention could be called to inaugurate a new party.

One of the major tools being employed by the LPA is the use of surveys of union members at various locales to gauge the interest for a Labor Party. So far the surveys done in all sections of the US and involving many different kinds of unions show widespread support for such a party. Similarly, they show significant disillusionment with the Democrats and Republicans as meaningful vehicles for expressing the interests of workers.

Outside of a general notion of class struggle or conflict, and the belief in democracy there is as of yet little in the way of a program which the LPA can be said to explicitly promote. The need for a more developed program was one of the major issues brought up by those who attended the 4 May meeting and 17 May follow-up.

Program, the problem of coalitions, and the use of timetables, eg a convention within two years were the principal problems discussed at the New York meetings. While these matters are still unresolved, the idea of building this new movement is strongly supported.

UAW leader, Walter Reuter, was one of many leaders who used to say that they supported a labor party — just not now. Perhaps by forcing the issue and not waiting for the top labor brass to take the initiative, this long overdue idea might finally get off the ground.

# GRAFFITI

**Eve Pollard becomes editor of the Sunday Express**

## All about Eve

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**N**ow, don't get me wrong: I hold no brief for Eve Pollard, the new editor of the *Sunday Express*. From what I can gather she is vain, petulant, unscrupulous and hypocritical.

Just like many other prominent journalists (the name Andrew Neil somehow springs to mind in this context). But she seems to be good at her job, having kept the *Sunday Mirror's* circulation buoyant while rivals like the *News of the World* and *The People* lost readers hand over fist.

Her move to the *Sunday Express* was a bold (some would say foolhardy) decision: the paper is in big trouble, having lost a massive 10% of its sales over the last year (down to 1.62 million, more than 300,000 behind the rival *Mail on Sunday*). And the *Express* management are not noted for their tolerance of editors who fail to deliver the goods in short order — as Ms Pollard's two predecessors, Robin Esser and Robin Morgan, can testify.

But the coverage of her switch to the *Sunday Express* has been universally condescending, snide and self-righteous. The *Independent* couldn't resist commenting upon her hair ("long enough to toss impatiently if an unfortunate minion gives offence") and her clothes ("tops cut low enough to provoke interest"). *Private Eye* devoted an entire column to Pollard anecdotes, dubb-

ing her "journalism's answer to Joan Collins" and describing various prima-donna peccadilloes in graphic detail; again her legendary "ample proportions" provided a source of school-boyish jocularly.

The *Independent* even suggested that Ms Pollard may be planning an eventual "straight swap" with husband Sir Nicholas Lloyd (editor of the *Daily Express*), should he decide to "spend more time with his family".

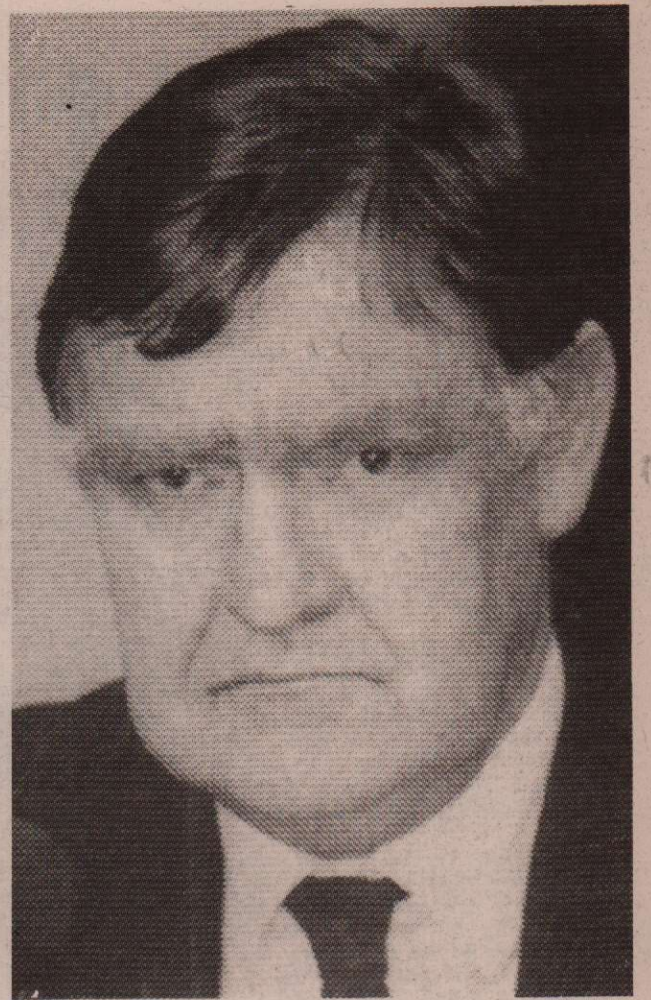
The one question that hasn't been asked is how Ms Pollard/Lady Lloyd — a Thatcherite Tory — was able to edit the Labour-supporting *Sunday Mirror* for so long?

**"The pub conversation ruse is an age-old ploy of reactionary newspaper columnists seeking a populist image... I'd pit my knowledge of pubs and pub conversations against Bernard Ingham's any day"**

**L**ike me, you had probably hoped that with the departure of Mrs Thatcher we'd heard the last of Bernard Ingham, the Downing Street propaganda chief whose wages were paid from our taxes. No such luck.

Ingham's turgid and self-justifying autobiography, *Kill the Messenger*, is being serialised (after much censorship by the new regime in Whitehall) in the *Sunday Times* and he has begun a regular column in the *Daily Express*.

As you'd expect, the Ingham page in the *Express* is a paeon to his former mistress and her policies, leavened by an attempt at "bluff" humour in the manner of John Junor. In other words, it's garbage.



A bluff, reactionary Yorkshireman

In his first offering to readers of the *Express*, our bluff Yorkshireman describes being accosted by a "posh" woman who shouted "Well, I hope we are going to get more open government now you're gone". Ingham consoles himself with the thought that "open government" is not likely to be a topic of conversation in the snug of "The Two Ferrets". The pub-conversation ruse is an age-old ploy of reactionary newspaper columnists seeking a populist image. But on this occasion, I can assure Mr Ingham that he is wrong: during his tenure as Mrs T's personal "Press Secretary", the various scandals, cover-ups and unattributable whispering campaigns emanating from his press briefings, were debated with vigour in pubs up and down the land. I'd pit my knowledge of pubs and pub conversations against Bernard Ingham's any day.

The pubs I frequent are real: "The Two Ferrets" is a figment of Mr Ingham's im-

agination. Bernard Ingham may be gone from government circles, but his spirit lingers on. Last week the *Independent* reported "senior government sources" as claiming that the British Medical Association had secretly offered to drop opposition to NHS trust hospitals in exchange for guarantees on wages and conditions.

The alleged proposal was dubbed a "piss-house deal" by the "government source" — which apparently, means it was "the sort of unofficial agreement that might be made by men while standing at urinals".

The BMA vigorously denied proposing any such deals and suggested that the "leak" smacked of the kind of off-the-record propaganda put about by Bernard Ingham during the Thatcher years. Come to think of it, "piss-house journalism" would be quite a good description of the entire lobby system.



Edith Cresson covers up the Socialist party's appalling record by attacking the Japanese

## Edith and GATT

### GRAFFITI

**E**dith Cresson, the new French Prime Minister, has wasted no time since becoming PM in attacking the Japanese over their trade policies. The Japanese counter by saying that France, and the EC, have their own restrictive trade policies.

The spat reflects the increasing tensions over trade as the industrialised countries sink deeper into recession. The prime example of the impasse is the stalled GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) talks — known as the Uruguay Round.

These are the eighth round of talks since GATT was established in 1948. They have been going since 1986. This may seem a long time, but the Tokyo round took five years, from 1974-9, to settle.

120 countries are involved with the aim to include agricultural, services, intellectual property rights, and dispute settlement procedures to the existing agreements on multilateral trade and the removal of barriers.

The current deadlock arises from the demand by the US and the Cairns Group of farm exporting countries for the EC to cut export subsidies to the four million farmers covered by the Common Agricultural Policy. The EC have so far refused.

It puts Edith Cresson's complaints in better perspective. Also the fact that there are now 2.6 million unemployed in France might explain Cresson's desire to deflect attention from the Socialist Party's performance onto Japan.

**U**nemployment continues to rise in Britain as well.

Although the government won't admit it, Department of Employment projections say that the number of jobless will continue to rise for at least another five months.

They predict that there will be 60,000 each month thrown out of work until winter.

If unemployment is the worst for 20 years so also is the rate of company liquidations.

Liquidation is often the last step before collapse beginning with financial restructuring and leading to receivership.

The first three months of this year saw 5,478 businesses go into liquidation in England and Wales, up 77% over the 1990 first quarter. KPMG, the accountancy firm and main beneficiary of liquidations, predict that the figures will remain the same for the rest of the year. If so, then the 20,000 liquidations will be much higher than the previous record of 15,000 in 1985.

It would also be much greater than the number of new companies created since then.

More than half the numbers were in London and the South East, but the highest rate of increase came in South Wales and the Midlands, both up 130% on last year.

**T**he effects of this recession will inevitably affect the Tories' election chances.

Modern election campaigning now concentrates on marginal electorates and special issues targeting. So far both parties have been focusing on the 40 most marginal seats where Labour is expected to do well. However, those 40 will not be enough to win government.

However, one survey has shown that the next 100 seats, in order of marginality, are actually showing a worse rise in unemployment than the most marginal 40. In 75 out of those 100 unemployment is up 25% this year. On average the increase was 45%.

The opportunities are there for Labour to attack the Tories and win a substantial majority. The question is, have they got the heart for a fight?

**A**t first sight the decision this week by Neil Bush (son of George) and 10 other former directors of the failed Silverado Savings and Loan of Colorado to pay \$49.5 million to settle the lawsuit over the collapse seemed steep.

That is until you read that the collapse of the Silverado alone was worth over \$200 million. Silverado was only one of the S&Ls that spectacularly collapsed in the late '80s leaving the American people a tax bill of anything up to \$500 billion to pay over the next few generations.

Not surprisingly Neil is a bit of an embarrassment to old George these days.

I suspect however that Dad will be even more displeased at the report that Neil was also this week disqualified from a tennis tournament. He was found playing in a division rated far below his ability. A cheat at business and in sport.



## Make-up stops you from living

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

**W**ould you pay £5,000 for a flat stomach?, *Good Housekeeping* asks this week. An interesting question.

The question is premised on the idea that there are women out there who have £5,000 to spend on plastic surgery. Most women don't.

What would you do with £5,000? £2,500, £3,000, £4,000 to *SO* for new printing equipment, or whatever, and the rest for yourself?

A holiday, a car, a bit off the mortgage, a bit in the bank — fill in your own choice here.

But what if you had so much money that you could solve *SO's* financial problems for ever and still have enough left over to make plastic surgery a real option — would you do it?

It's a question which relates to how you feel about your body. How would you "improve" it, if you could? Bigger, smaller, firmer breasts, smaller bum, less saggy thighs, no more wrinkles, face-lift, different nose, flat stomach? Of course the process is not without pain, but one could emerge looking younger, "sexier", more beautiful.

Men would admire, women would fume (or vice versa).

Girls dream and fantasise about having the sort of face and body featured on the front covers of women's magazines. Many women try to get that face and body by dieting, make-up, exercise,

and possibly plastic surgery.

The problem is that it is stopping women from living. Make-up costs money. Testing it involves inflicting unimaginable suffering on animals. Putting it on takes time. Badly applied or cheap make-up or make-up left on too long clogs the pores, and damages the skin.

Skin is good stuff. It is self-renewing, elastic, waterproof, and free. Make-up is none of these things.

Make-up is a way of avoiding having to admit that the face in the mirror is you — good, bad or indifferent. Make-up is a way of spending money and time painting someone else's image onto your face.

Make-up is a way of telling women that they are so worthless that they should put a mask on before inflicting themselves on the world.

It is also a multi-million pound business. Everything about make-up is also true about diets, plastic surgery and the rest of the "beauty"

industry.

A woman I once knew said that putting on her make-up gave her the opportunity to spend time looking at herself, to spend time and resources caring for herself. This, of course, was true, but the purpose of the exercise was to change herself into an "acceptable" woman.

It is quite possible to spend the same time just looking and getting used to yourself, brushing your hair, giving yourself a massage, or doing yoga! Time and money spent on your face and body don't have to be spent changing it.

I am not saying that women should give up caring about their appearances. But the care should not be motivated by fear (and, often, it is panic) that they have to fit the acceptable norms.

Caring for yourself should be just that — caring for the person you are not the model you would like to be.

Stereotyped "beauty" is a con to keep us spending!

*The Commonwealth of Britain Bill*

# Yes, campaign for democracy

Patrick Murphy discusses the issues raised by Tony Benn's Commonwealth of Britain Bill

200 years ago the French people rose up against the aristocrats and clerics who ruled them and fought to create a new, democratic France. The spirit of their revolution became contagious and the democracy germ infected every European nation in the 19th century.

That spirit was summed up by one of the French leaders, Camille Desmoulins: "The great only appear great," he said, "because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"

Although the majority of French people were involved, the political direction and aims of the movement were dominated by the most organised, articulate and prepared social class, the middle class or bourgeoisie. For that reason we describe the French Revolution as a classic bourgeois revolution — that is, that although the changes brought about benefitted everyone outside the ruling class, they benefitted the employers, the new capitalist class, above all.

**"It matters very much to us how democratic capitalist society is. The undemocratic aspects of the British system have been allowed to continue because they inhibit and contain working class radicalism, they defend our rulers from scrutiny and give them a wider range of options in maintaining their economic domination."**

We got the sort of democracy which allowed the middle class to take political power but at the same time declared private property and economic laws to be sacrosanct and protected from political interference.

If we were to take the French example as the typical bourgeois political revolution then we would have to say that Britain's transition to liberal capitalist democracy was still not complete. The French aimed to set up a secular, republican democracy which would remove special feudal and inherited privileges. In Britain the political system still bears the imprint of feudal privilege, even though the move to a parliamentary system here began 150 years before the French Revolution.

Tony Benn addressed this issue in his recently published Commonwealth of Britain Bill. Benn proposes a very wide range of reforms to the constitution which, if they were implemented, would change everything, and then again, nothing. He would abolish the monarchy, have four-year fixed terms for parliament, replace the Lords with an elected House of the People, introduce a separation of powers with a President elected from both Houses, create federal parliaments in Scotland and Wales, and remove the Official Secrets Act and put the security services under democratic scrutiny. Even this summary draws out only the major changes in a very detailed Bill.



The police manhandle a suffragette in pre-World War 1 Britain. The women's fight for votes is one of the most heroic episodes in the long struggle for democracy. It was as late as 1918 that women in Britain got the vote, and

not until 1928 did women get the vote at the same age as men. In France, it was only in 1945 that women got the vote; in Switzerland they got it only three years ago!

Benn's bill raises two issues of general importance to socialists. First, he has come in for criticism from people on the left who regard his concern for the constitution, formal democracy, and individual rights as all beside the point in the "real class struggle". Here Benn is a better guide to revolutionaries than many self-styled Marxists.

It matters very much to us how democratic capitalist society is. The undemocratic aspects of the British system have been allowed to continue because they inhibit and contain working-class radicalism, they defend our rulers from scrutiny and give them a wider range of options in maintaining their economic domination. Every extension of democracy weakens their ability to contain us.

Marx and Engels included, in their programme for communists, the demand for annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and payment of MPs. Lenin insisted that socialists should be for the maximum democracy possible under capitalism since this was the clearest, and most open, form of oppression, the most favourable conditions for the struggle for genuine, thoroughgoing social democracy.

Even more important to the

socialist tradition is the idea that the struggle to extend democracy, to fill it out, is tremendously educational — it educates workers in the nature of the society in which we live, makes our daily oppression political, brings home faster than any number of lectures the need for political as well as economic change. Socialists are always the best and most consistent democrats; to miss that is not only anti-democratic, deep down it is apolitical.

From that point of view there is much positive in what Benn is trying to do; his attempt to deepen liberal democracy in Britain should be welcomed. There is, however, a fundamental weakness or limitation in such proposals for workers.

Benn is aware that real power in our society rests not in parliamentary chambers or the courts but in ownership and control of the economy. Liberal democracy gives people the right to remove their MP, councillor or ruling party, but we are no closer to removing our boss or our relationship with major companies than in 1800.

He tries to deal with this problem

in a complex Charter of Rights, which includes "the right to useful work at a fair wage that provides an income sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living". This is hardly "extremism" — it suggests a basic human minimum for all as a

**"The idea of 'fair wages' is utopian, it is a contradiction in terms. Wages serve a particular function in our society — they buy labour power for employers at a rate which ensures that employers accumulate profits and workers continue to need to work."**

right — but this sort of right can only be enforced if we have open political control over precisely those aspects of society which our entire system protects from "politics". Liberation from need is possible not

through a better constitution but through a break from reliance on parliamentarianism and constitutionalism.

What do we mean by such a break? Assuming that Benn's democratic bill were passed, and genuinely enforced — who would decide which work was useful?, "useful" for what purposes, profits, export trade, social need? What is a "decent standard of living" in the 1990s — a healthy diet and secure accommodation, or a three-day week and a regular foreign holiday?

Most importantly, who is to decide what is a "fair wage"? What is fair to the worker is extreme to the employer and no "independent" body will accept that workers should be well paid regardless of the effect on profits and "economic viability". The truth is that the idea of "fair wages" is utopian, it is a contradiction in terms. Wages serve a particular function in our society — they buy labour power for employers at a rate which ensures that employers accumulate profits and workers continue to need to work. There is of course more to say about wages, but they are absolutely not paid to provide a decent standard of living.

Decent standards, a good income and useful work or activity are all laudable aims, and the fight for such goals is the central driving force behind the struggle for eventual working-class liberation. Yet these are the very problems, the very inequalities and injustices which cannot be resolved within our existing economic system, which point the way to a new method of organising society. In the struggle for these goals ordinary working people need to be able to decide for themselves what are acceptable standards, reasonable incomes, useful jobs and functions, etc. and have the power to act on these decisions — outside of the consequence for profits and viability.

That requires new structures, new democratic bodies at every level which have so far only been glorified in history, the sort which cannot be laid down in blueprints by any Marxist because they arise when workers move into a very high level of struggle.

That such bodies do arise is a fact which the history of our class persists in teaching us — the Commune in Paris in 1871, the Soviets of 1905 and 1917 in Russia, the Councils of Action in Britain's 1926 General Strike, the Workers' Council of Hungary in 1956. Socialists should study and draw from such examples, not as ready-made blueprints, but as indications of the creative power of our class and the distinctions between our democracy and liberal democracy.

Tony Benn still looks to the liberal parliamentary system to concede a "decent standard of living" to working people because it is reasonable to do so, and he can logically and persuasively demonstrate that and, more importantly, because he will use his influence to produce the sort of mass pressure and action from below to force such concessions.

His confidence in the importance of working-class self-activity is to Benn's credit, it sets him apart after a period when the fashion has been to move in the opposite direction.

Socialist democracy, we should insist, however, is a break from capitalist democracy and not an extension of it. As long as we look mainly to the norms and rhythms of parliamentary politics we are still on our knees — when we see the great appear weak, the impossible appears possible, and democracy begins to affect the aspects of our lives that really matter.

## After Gandhi assassination

# Why India is lurching into chaos

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and the inability of the Congress Party to find a successor, has highlighted the disarray of mainstream politics in India. Why are the politicians unable or unwilling to come to grips with India's problems? And where is the way out from the chaos? Martin Thomas reports

India has a large, and often militant, working class. Textile workers in Bombay, dockworkers and rail workers across India, and many other groups of workers, have fought great industrial battles against great odds.

But politically most of the working class is still tied to various sections of the bourgeoisie or the middle class. And the Indian bourgeoisie is increasingly rotten and corrupt.

India had strong handicraft industries and a rich culture before it was conquered by Europeans. Two centuries of British rule largely destroyed the handicraft industries — flooding their markets with the products of British factories — and kept India's peasant majority in medieval dependence and poverty.

British rule also, however, created the conditions for a new sort of industry. Commenting on the British administration's railway-building drive in the 1850s, Karl Marx wrote: "I know that the

English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for their manufactures.

"But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withhold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways.

"The railway system will

**"British rule in India was administered and enforced largely by Indians."**

therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry."

Marx also wrote that "The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether"; and elsewhere he wrote about how British rule in India sustained poverty and stagnation. The growth of modern industry in India remained very slow until independence in

1947.

Since 1947 industry has grown much faster, though still slowly compared to countries like South Korea. There has even been some improvement of the conditions of the peasantry, at least in certain parts of India.

British rule in India was administered and enforced largely by Indians, with only a minority of British people in the administration and in the army. That apparatus of rule was carried over intact into independent India. The party which fought for and won independence, Congress, was led by people like Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi from a partly-Anglicised, often English-educated, elite.

That elite set about developing independent India's economy with ideas shaped by English Fabian socialism and by admiration from Stalin's USSR. The state took a leading role. Today, two-thirds of India's industrial assets are owned by the state, and the other third of industry is heavily regulated.

Bureaucratic direction and regulation did develop the basics of modern industry in India. But, as in many other countries, it has run up against limits.

The bureaucratic strategy was also a narrowly nationalist and protectionist one, aiming to develop India's economy as a more-or-less self-sufficient unit with relatively little international trade. That approach was not as absurd in India, with its huge size and resources, as in many other countries. But even India cannot be walled off from the world economy. Its industries need foreign technology. It has to make exports in order to pay for that technology.

Increasingly, state regulation



Police drag away Hindu chauvinist

has spiralled into a mess of corruption, with officials demanding a rake-off in bribes from every business enterprise.

Both Rajiv Gandhi and the last two prime ministers, Chandra Shekar and VP Singh, favoured "liberalisation" of the economy. None of them achieved much.

Meanwhile the growing middle class feels itself to be more of a power, and has become increasingly vocal. Its revolt against the old elites has been expressed through a variety of movements based on particular communities or castes.

Britain manipulated divisions between the peoples of India in order to rule, selectively recruiting certain "martial races" for the army, for example; favouring "loyal" areas like the Punjab for public works over rebellious areas like Bengal; and encouraging Muslims to support British rule as supposedly a protection against the Hindu-dominated nationalist movement. At independence it partitioned the country into "Muslim" Pakistan and "Hindu" India, although over a hundred million Muslims remain in India; maybe half a million people were killed in clashes between the communities at the time of partition.

The Congress Party officially opposed all that, declaring itself in favour of a secular society and a united Indian nation without discrimination against minorities. But even before independence, Mahatma Gandhi had given a decidedly Hindu coloration to the movement. Since Congress became a governing party, its leaders have repeatedly manipulated local, ethnic and religious conflicts for petty advantage, reducing its of-

ficial stance to shoddy hypocrisy.

Thus has the basis been laid for the movements which threaten to turn India into a mess of communal and sectarian conflicts. The most threatening is the Hindu-chauvinist BJP. Linked to a fascist paramilitary group, the RSS, the BJP campaigns on the theme of the decades of official concern for the Muslims and other minorities. Congress and its various breakaways (like VP Singh's and Chandra Shekar's parties) — largely, in fact, lip-service — have disadvantaged Hindus.

What may appear to be "national liberation movements" within the Indian federation are mostly sectarian or communalist movements.

## A society and poor

India has about 800 million people, with an average national income per head of \$300 (around £170) per year.

The average covers extremes of rich and poor. India has one of the largest industrial sectors in the Third World. Its total of value-added in manufacturing is comparable to, for example, Spain's.

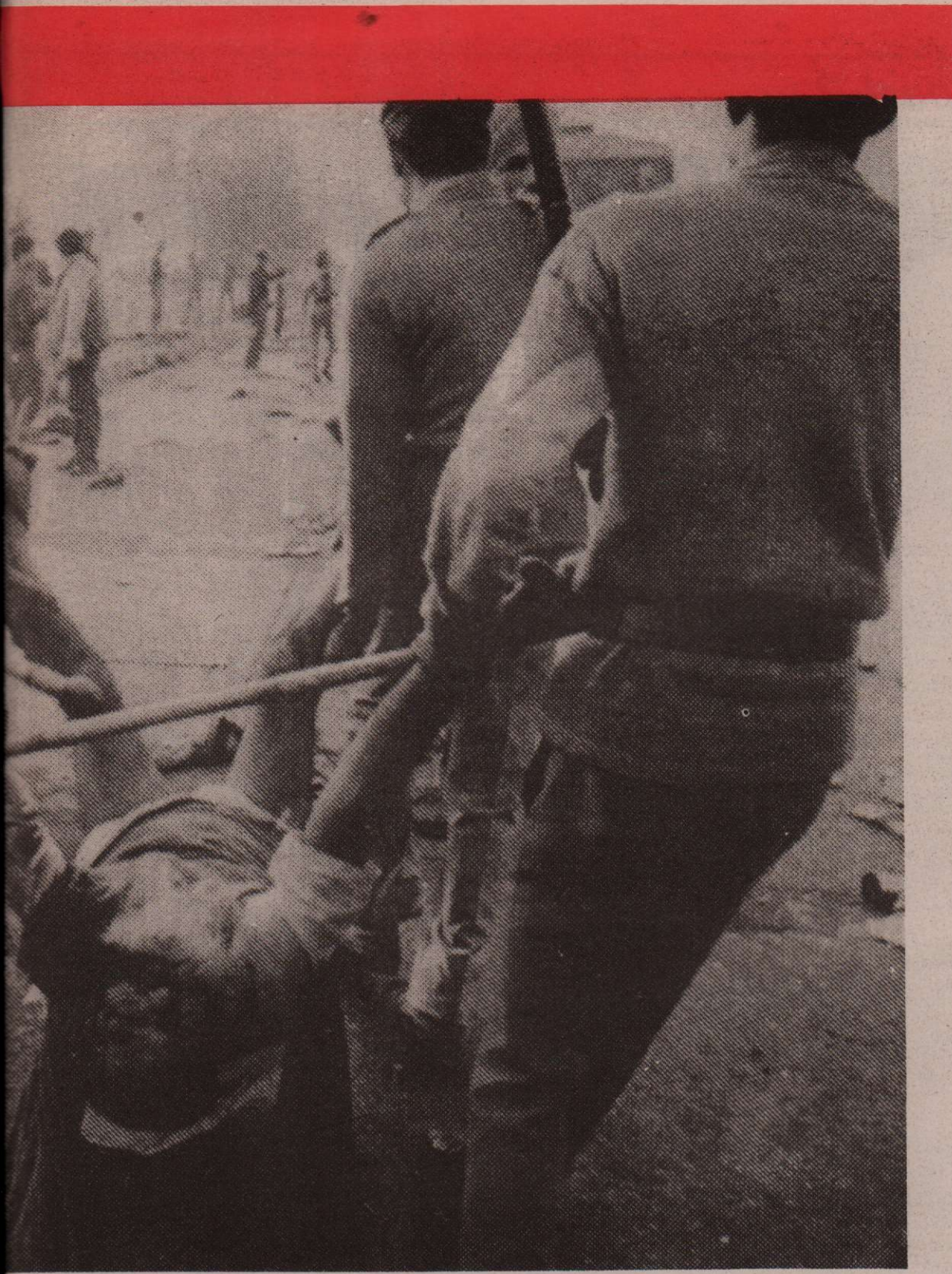
The profits of that industry, and of land ownership, sustain a substantial wealthy class. India also has a number of trained scientists and technicians comparable to the US's, and a sizeable middle class.

Yet nearly forty per cent of the population live below the official poverty line. In the city of Calcutta, some 300,000 people live on the



The political dynasty pays its last respects





# Eric Heffer

**E**ric Heffer, who died on May 27, was the nearest thing to a *Socialist Organiser* MP, but he was not a Trotskyist.

When he broke with Stalinism in the late '40s he also rejected Trotskyism.

He seems to have been influenced by the "ultra-left" commentators who traced the degeneration of the Russian Revolution to the pre-Stalin Civil War period, and to events such as the Bolshevik suppression of the uprising at Kronstadt in 1921. He was never a Trotskyist. It was a point he would insist upon.

Nevertheless, names aside, he was the nearest thing to a British Trotskyist MP in existence. Of course — it is no secret — there are two MPs who call themselves Trotskyist, but they supported Russia's barbarous equivalent of the Vietnam War, the Stalinist attempts to napalm and starve Afghanistan into submission to the Russian empire.

By contrast, Eric Heffer had a consistent record of unqualified class struggle politics for the whole world.

Not only was he an enemy of US imperialism, and of regimes such as that of Pinochet's Chile and apartheid South Africa, but an enemy of all Stalinist regimes and of the Russian empire too. He was always an active supporter of those in the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, or wherever, fighting Stalinism from within.

When it seemed a lost cause, and long before Solidarnosc made it fashionable, Heffer fought for free labour movements in the Stalinist states. He spoke at the conferences *SO* organised in support of free labour movements in the Stalinist states.

Names aside, Eric Heffer's politics were "Trotskyist" politics on every question of the class struggle — East as well as West. With the exception of the European Community, *Socialist Organiser* could always ask Eric Heffer to comment on the key political questions of the day and be pretty sure his views would coincide, as near as made little difference, with ours.

We tested it often enough and we were never disappointed or rebuffed. Again and again we put his comments on the front page, proud and pleased that Heffer, who commanded a considerable respect all across the labour movement, was willing to take his political stand with us.

Eric Heffer was a parliamentarian. He seems to have operated in the House of Commons almost as if it were a trade union. But

when the Tory anti-union laws were being used to bludgeon striking seafarers, Heffer appealed to workers — on the front page of *Socialist Organiser* — urging them to ignore the law and break it, and to organise mass pickets to resist the police. Together with Tony Benn he went down on the seafarers' picket lines. And that's only one example.

Legality and the sovereignty of parliament were no god to this parliamentarian. The interests of the working class always came before such considerations. In Heffer's view workers had a right to resist unjust laws and naked Tory class legislation.

During the Gulf war the dying man stood like a rock against the tidal waves of chauvinism. Many other examples could be cited of Eric Heffer's consistency and reliability.

It is this which allows us to put the keening for Heffer in the press of his bourgeois enemies into the necessary perspective. Others in the history of the labour movement who have won the esteem of the class enemies of the labour movement had sought it; and they paid for it by shedding their own identity, by betraying the working class, by toadying to its enemies.

In contrast, though he seems to have won a great deal of affection, and from unlikely people, Eric Heffer remained himself, a proud representative of the oppressed and exploited and an irreconcilable fighter on their behalf against their oppressors and exploiters.

Yet, he was a man full of paradox and even contradiction. The nearest thing to an *SO* Trotskyist in the House of Commons was also a devout Anglo-Catholic! At the age of about 50, he returned to the religion of his youth, and died in the arms of the church of which Elizabeth Windsor is the hereditary chief. And Eric Heffer seems to have extended even to the Tories a rare Christian charity, and the human goodwill and human solidarity of a practising and consistent socialist. If even some of the newspaper reports on his friendships are true, he was possessed of a startlingly non-Bolshevik tolerance.

Yet, to the end — to the day he went to the House of Commons, dying, and spoke out against the ruling class and their war in the Gulf, and to his very last day — Eric Heffer remained politically uneroded and unsoftened. He remained the fighting working class socialist he started out to be more than 50 years ago.

We are immensely sad that he is gone.

John O'Mahony  
John Bloxam

In Kashmir, the only state of the Indian federation with a Muslim majority, a free vote would probably go in favour of secession to Pakistan, and India's central government has maintained control with great violence.

In the Punjab, a section of the Sikh movement — based mainly on better-off farmers and students — wants a separate Sikh state, a "Khalistan". But the Sikhs are a slight minority of the population in the Punjab, and a minority closely interlaced with the Hindu majority. A separate Sikh state could be created only after terrible violence and forced population movements. Moreover, the Sikhs are not an oppressed minority in India; on the

whole they are better off than the Indian average.

In Assam, a "nationalist" movement based mostly on students uses Maoist rhetoric. But its cutting edge is the reactionary demand for the expulsion of Bengali migrant workers and a ban on further migration.

The two hidden, but central, issues in India are *land reform* and the *creation of a united and independent labour movement*.

India must have more *land reform* laws than any other country in the world, but less actual land reform than most. Many peasants still work under systems of sharecropping or other forms of dependence. Capitalist agriculture

is developing, especially in better-off areas like the Punjab, but in a highly unequal way, creating a small minority of relatively well-off farmers and a huge army of landless people reduced to grabbing a living by odd jobs. Public investment still goes mostly to the state industries — impressive-looking, if inefficient, and equipped with strong lobbies in the corridors of power — rather than to help the majority in the countryside.

India has many trade unions — too many. The movement is divided into a large number of small trade unions, often local, and also divided politically, with unions often tied to one or another political party.

There are two main parties claiming to represent the working class, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party (Marxist). The split between the two CPs dates back to 1964, and was linked to the rift between Moscow and Peking. The CPI was the Moscow-loyal party — heavily dependent for its upkeep on the control by businesses linked to it of a large part of Indian-USSR trade — while the CP(M) declared itself independent of both Moscow and Peking. The CPI has its main base in Kerala, in southern India; the CP(M) has long been the leading force in West Bengal, around Calcutta.

Both CPs have tied themselves to bourgeois parties. The CPI even supported Indira Gandhi's "state of emergency" in 1975-7. The CP(M) has generally supported the bourgeois opposition to Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, most recently VP Singh.

If it can unite and develop its own independent politics, the Indian working class can remake India. If not, the country faces further bloody chaos and poverty.

## of rich

streets, and three million in shanty towns. The worst poverty is in the countryside, where most of India's people live. 70 per cent of the workforce is in agriculture.

Nine out of every hundred babies born alive die before age one; in Britain and other Western countries only one out of every hundred dies. Average life expectancy is 57 years. Half of all men in India, and three-quarters of women, are illiterate.

India's production, in both industry and agriculture, has grown slightly faster than population (production, four per cent growth per year; population, two per cent). But most of the gains from growth have gone to the better off. Millions of landless rural labourers and sharecroppers are as poor as ever.



Eric Heffer as chair of Liverpool Labour Party, 1960

The failure of Thatcherism part 2

# The fall of Thatcher

By John McIlroy

By 1989 the contradictions of the Thatcherite project were coming home to roost.

Increasing real wages for sections of the working class, increased home ownership, a government-stimulated credit boom — these had enabled Mrs Thatcher to paste together a coalition of just enough voters to ensure electoral success in 1987.

But the problems of the UK economy had not been resolved. The UK was still unable to compete effectively with the important capitalist economies, it was facing rising inflation and a dangerous balance of payments deficit.

Mrs Thatcher, the opinion polls showed, was deeply unpopular. Lawson's policies as Chancellor had allowed demand to grow three times as fast as potential output. The price now had to be paid. The advantages his policies had brought in terms of election success were now disadvantages in terms of economic success.

The deep seated contradiction between the electoral plane and the economic sphere were now becoming

serious factors in the future of Thatcherism.

Something had to be done to cool the overheated economy. Devaluation of the pound was intended to make exports cheaper and encourage increased investment. But there was no guarantee that it would succeed and it could also increase inflation and pressure for wage rises.

Thatcher again began to look to a rise in unemployment to curb earnings growth — still increasing at more than 9%. But the major weapon deployed, based upon rejection of credit controls or wage restraint, was once again high interest rates to jack up the cost of credit and press down the increase in wages.

But these policies provoked unpopularity and unrest. As house prices fell, people with high mortgages were unable to pay or to sell. Repossessions and debt soared. Inflation made matters worse by moving closer to increases in earnings and overhauled them, eating into living standards.

The poll tax was for many the biggest economic blow and its unfairness further fuelled resentment and made it the most hated fiscal measure since Pitt introduced income tax in the 1790s. It provided a catalyst and focus for resistance to

Conservative policies. 1989 saw a spate of strikes and wages remained buoyant.

The problem was that the medicine prescribed by Thatcher to get the economy back on its feet had failed before. This time it was not only failing to do its job, it was enraging the patient and endangering the Tory Party. For the first time Labour, led by a man everybody was certain could be beaten by a backward baboon, went into a significant sustained lead in the polls.

This not only soared to 20% but was confirmed in practice by success in local government and European elections.

This, in turn, strengthened the serious differences within the Conservative leadership. Nigel Lawson, Geoffrey Howe and Douglas Hurd looked increasingly to the EC and integration into the European Monetary System. Internal divisions led to the resignation of Lawson in autumn 1989, arguing that Thatcher was dominating economic policy, advised by the guru Alan Walters..

The rats were deserting the sinking ship and Thatcherism was moving into terminal crisis. The reliance on high interest rates was not only alienating key sections of Thatcher's support, the beneficiaries of her policies on taxes, house ownership and wages, but sections of capital.

The poll tax was opposed across the board and was raising again the spectre of civil disobedience and social instability not sniffed since the miners' strike.

In the Mid-Staffordshire by-election in March 1990 the Tory vote was down 18% and Labour's vote up by 24%.

After 11 years of Thatcherism, Britain had the highest inflation, the lowest growth and the largest balance of payments deficit in Europe. The protests against the poll tax demonstrated the highest level of civil resistance since the miners' strike of the mid eighties.

In desperation, as their attempts to improve the economy worsened their electoral position, and endangered their continued ability to

improve the position of capital, the Tories turned to the EC.

Thatcher, however, was determined to maintain freedom to manoeuvre for herself politically and for capital economically. She aimed to continue to balance between the EC and the USA, seeing such freedom as the best strategy for the UK's finance and services-dominated economy, and wishing

*"The bosses had decided, despite the risks, to back the European card: who could be less fitted to lead them in this new tricky venture than this Europhobe."*

to avoid future economic conflict with the US.

Looking at the situation, Thatcher was basically impressed by the existing power of the City, rivalling New York and Tokyo, by the shrunken base of home manufacturing, by the fact that the UK was the home of more transnational capitalists than any other country bar the USA. She was most impressed by the dangers of greater EC integration. She was not yet convinced that there was a need to undertake what she saw as a high risk strategy.

She was a great believer in the power of her determination and gut convictions. Together with her notorious luck they had pulled her up by her bootstraps before. They would do so once more.

In her bunker, Thatcher was also

genuinely concerned at the social market tendencies of the EC's leading states and even more of the apparatus based upon the Commissions itself, and feared that the UK might be manoeuvred into a political straightjacket.

The Thatcher formula remained an economic internationalist-political nationalist one. She feared that closer integration would privilege the immense relative power of German manufacturing industry, that this would be reflected politically, and that with both the UK and Germany interlinked in the same bloc, the US would deal on the political level more intimately with the most powerful partner, so that Germany would become the USA's new subaltern.

Political anti-Germanism, crass nationalism, was a factor here, as could be seen from Nicholas Ridley's outbursts which provoked his resignation in July 1990. However, many of those who went along with Thatcher's basic position questioned her tactics. Was it not better to influence and restrain progress from a comfortable, sheltered position within the EC tent rather than pissing stridently but ineffectually into it from the darkness outside?

As the EC countries moved towards closer integration with agreement on a tariff-free market by 1992, and proposals for monetary co-ordination and a single currency, Thatcher either opposed progress or dragged her feet. She refused to put the pound into the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European monetary system — an agreement between EC members to maintain their currencies in relation to each other within certain limits.

However, the most important sections of capital gradually came to favour speedy entry into the ERM as essential to their interests. The biggest sections of industrial capital, supported by the trade union leaderships, saw the advantage of a larger protected home market and exchange rate stability.

The City became increasingly fearful of losing out to Frankfurt and Paris as the counting house of Europe. The majority of capitalists, economists and politicians came to favour entry for fear that otherwise British capitalism would be left isolated with no adequate base.

As the political and economic situation deteriorated a majority of the Cabinet moved to support entry into the ERM. They did so in the hope that, as the fixed exchange rate ruled out devaluation, employers would push for, and workers would accept, wage cuts as a price for maintaining employment.

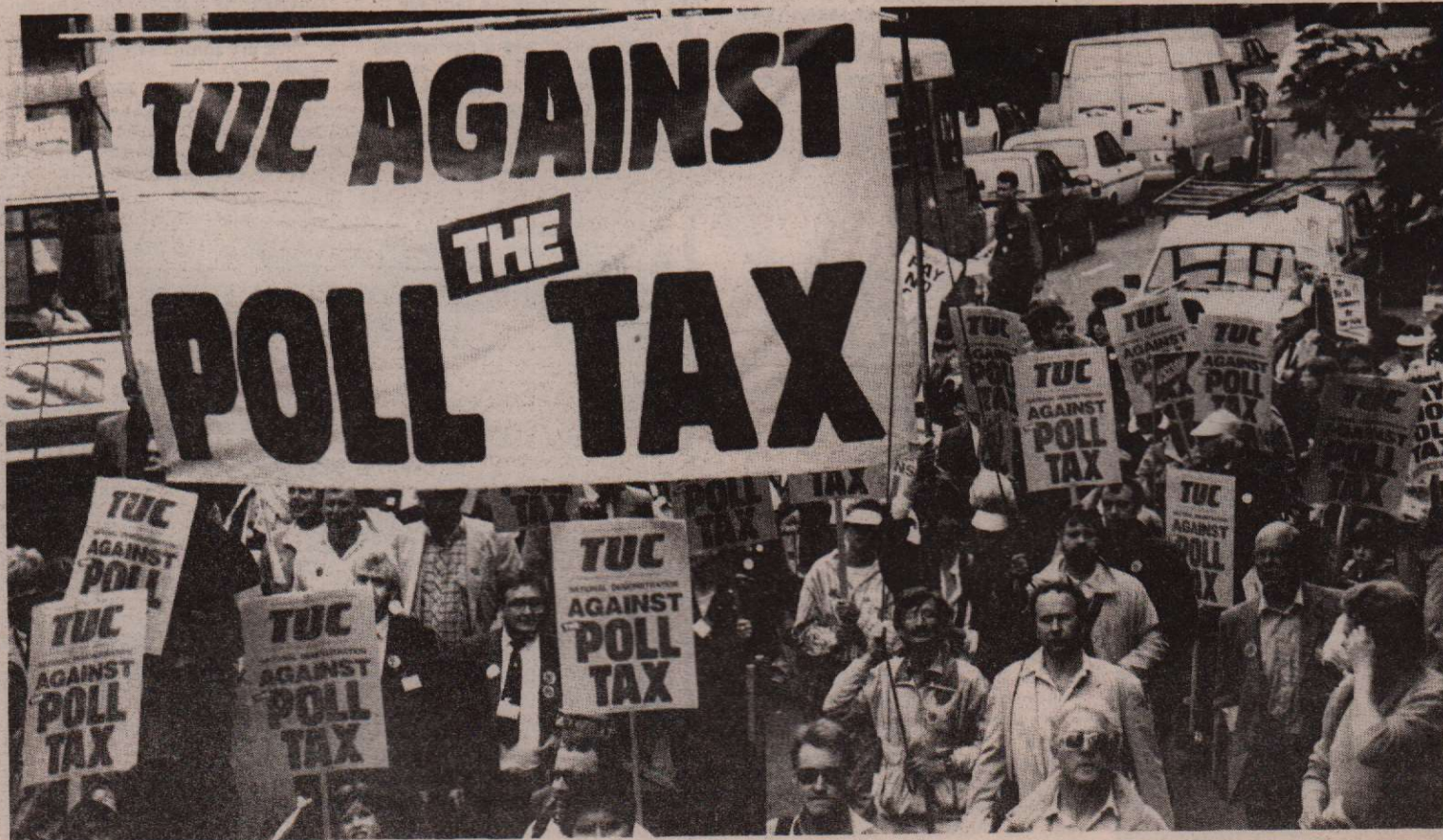
But perhaps their main fear in the face of electoral unpopularity and growing capitalist support for entry was that this issue could head a decisive move to Labour, who were strong supporters of entry. Thatcher therefore, for once, stole Kincock's clothes.

Pushed by Major, Lawson's successor as Chancellor, and Douglas Hurd, she agreed on the eve of the 1990 Tory party conference to join the ERM. This was combined with a small cut in interest rates. Thatcher's acquiescence was grudging and half-hearted. This did not make for continued effective leadership. And she was likely to continue as a barrier to further necessary European integration.

That this was in fact the throw of a desperate woman, with her back to the wall, was demonstrated in the following weeks. Surveys showed that the poll tax remained the most hated tax this century, and that in the context of wider economic



Hurd — pro-European



The poll tax was massively unpopular



policy it was the powerhouse for a massive haemorrhage of Conservative support.

Events demonstrated that large numbers were prepared to take to the streets to show their resistance, and that larger still numbers were prepared to withhold payment. It was clear that discontent over the disintegration of the economy was targeted on Thatcher herself, and that her determination and strength were now perceived as barriers to overdue change.

The bosses had decided, despite the risks, to back the European card: who could be less fitted to lead them in this new tricky venture than this Europhobe who had clearly already failed them economically?

In the Eastbourne by-election in October, the Tories lost their 25th safest seat, a seat they had held since 1906. A few weeks later at Bradford the Tory vote was cut by 23%. The party came out of the conference season 13% behind Labour in the polls. The *Financial Times* said: "Margaret Thatcher's government is in worse trouble than at any time since she became Prime Minister in 1979."

Through 1990, company failures

were running at three times the level of 1989. It is now clear that the economy had gone into recession as early as June. By October 24 the *Guardian* was firmly stating: "The UK economy has plunged into deep recession as high interest rates and a strong pound take their toll of output, exports and jobs and investment."

Unemployment was increasing at over 50,000 a month, its fastest rate for nine years, and was forecast to hit two million (ie. 3 million) in 1991. Despite all the activity and exhortation, average earnings were now increasing at an annual rate of over 10%, and with the decline in productivity unit labour costs were increasing at a dangerous 12% — way out of sync with the UK's competitiveness.

The well-known City analysts Phillips and Drew reported: "ERM entry has not provided any downwards check to inflation expectations. It is now widely assumed that the government has been provoked into accession."

If UK capital was to make a success of its entry into the ERM and its pegging to the Deutschmark — which many felt over-valued the pound — then inflation would have

to come down to German levels. Yet in the fall of 1991 inflation was running at 3% in Germany — and touching 11% (and eight year high) in the UK.

Finally, and ominously, it was reported that profits had taken their steepest quarterly dive since 1981.

Whilst the government was still sticking to its forecast of 1% growth in 1991, economists were predicting contraction. It looked very much as if the economy was set for a re-run of 1979-81, and gloom deepened at the news that the US economy had contracted nearly 2% in October.

All of this was the key to the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister Geoffrey Howe, the ghost of 1979-81, in early November. The *Financial Times* now stated baldly: "The best course would be for Mrs Thatcher to resign voluntarily during the next few months. If she declines to do so, she should be under no illusions about the risks."

Thatcher's downfall had finally come. Her nemesis after 11 bitter years was not just the economic situation, focused on the poll tax, but the resistance of those who, despite everything, were still prepared to fight.

## The unions: down but not out

By John McIlroy

The unions as the primary organisations of the working class were, in terms of their organisation, activities and philosophy, a barrier to increased profitability and speed-up.

Thatcher aimed to reduce their coverage, particularly in key industries, and cut off union growth in the new service and finance-based sectors. This would help to reduce the power of the unions and this objective would be spearheaded by the sustained large-scale unemployment macro-economic policy would create.

It would be followed through by restrictive legislation hitting union organisation and methods.

Thatcher did not perceive the uprooting of trade unionism as a realistic political objective, but she wished the residual trade unionism which would remain to be remoulded in the image of market rationality.

The weaker unions of the Thatcherite era would identify with their employer not with a wider external movement and they would adjust their behaviour to the ups and downs of the market.

To the attempt to stimulate and strengthen the already existing "business union" tendencies, Thatcher added a specific emphasis on wages. There would be no incomes policy but wages would be moulded by the wider changes in the labour market induced by unemployment, changing patterns in the labour force — more part-time, temporary, flexible workers — and by a specific government campaign to undermine national bargaining pushing wage determination down to where the profit-productivity earnings equation was more visible and to eradicate bargaining on the basis of the "going rate", inflation and comparativity and replace it by replacing these criteria by a simple relation of wages to profitability.

Finally, in the interest of a free market and the undermining of their political and social legitimacy, union leaders would be excluded from the political process.

The record of government success here is a mixed one. Trade union coverage has been seriously weakened. The membership of TUC-affiliated unions — unions which effect a minimal class consciousness — is down from over 12 million in 1979 to just over 8 million in 1990 and such unions now represent around 38% of the labour force, far short of a full majority.

This decline has not, as many argue, been cyclical. It has been structural and that is far more serious. Membership did not recover in 1983-88 as the economy came out of the recession. While the number of employed workers leaving the unions has been minimal and while employer derecognition has been on a small scale — although it is now increasing — membership loss has not simply been due to unemployment. It has also been due to failure to recruit in the new expanding industries as the union strongholds contracted with the old industries.

Density in the UK is still far higher than it is in the US, Japan or France, and still higher than that in Germany.

Nonetheless, its decline has been a success for Mrs Thatcher.

So, in relation to the 1960s and '70s, has been her achievement in putting on the statute book six major pieces of legislation and a host of ancillary measures which have bred cases in the courts and influenced the behaviour of trade unionists.

The employment legislation has restricted the purposes of trade unions and limited their achievements. The 1989 Dock strike provides the most recent graphic case study of how it can be utilised strategically by the employers.

We can get some measure of Thatcher's success by comparing her handling of this difficult area with Wilson's attempts to use legislation to batter the unions with *In Place of Strife* and Ted Heath's attempt to domesticate militancy with the 1971 Industrial Relations Act.

A further reverse for the unions was their exclusion from political influence. Even at their zenith in terms of political involvement between 1974-79, the union leaders only exercised influence on governmental decision-making, not power. Actually, if you look at the statistics from 1979 you will find that the number of meetings and contacts with govern-

ment ministers, though scaled down, remains surprisingly high — set against the popular stereotype of total exclusion from the corridors of power.

But the contacts are more and more at a junior level and what those contacts achieve compared with the '60s and '70s is trite and derisory.

On the other hand, the government's intention that their policy of putting the union tops out in the cold would be emulated downstairs by the bosses in industry putting their stewards out in the cold, met with only partial success.

The limited fashion for macho management in the early 1980s seems to have waned and over most sectors of industry employers sought to introduce changes in work organisation and new technology through, not over the heads, of their own union representatives.

While business unionism has had its successes, leading to the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC — the first major prolonged split in the movement in the post-war period — and has influenced the AEU and other unions (as well as the TUC itself, of course), developments such as "no strike" deals have been limited and it has had to be paid for.

Despite the reversals the unions have suffered, wages outstripped inflation in 1982-89 and demonstrated tremendous resilience in the face of political offensive and sustained unemployment.

Of course averages tell far from the whole story. Differentials have increased. The gap between the highly paid and the low-paid has stretched. The

*"The decline has not, as many argue, been cyclical. It has been structural and that is far more serious."*

proportion of income in the hands of the top 20% of households increased to 39% in 1987 compared with 34% in 1979.

The proportion of income going to the bottom 20% declined from 10% in 1979 to 8% in 1987. This growth in the incomes of the better off was, of course, one of the keys to Thatcher's electoral success.

But economists have recently noted the adverse economic effects of the growth of a lower-paid insecure strata down at the bottom of the working class in terms of lowered morale, motivation and aspiration.

The Tories have won the big set-piece confrontations. The *Stockport Messenger* dispute, the miners' strike, Wapping, Sealink and the Docks dispute. Strikes have declined in the 1980s, although not to the levels of the immediate post-war period.

The unions have been reduced in size, internal differences have been amplified, the power of the TUC, albeit generally used against the unions, has diminished, the sense of movement is weaker.

But decentralisation and a new political and economic framework have not broken the unions — although the dangers of this are growing. A surge of initiatives intended to incorporate a weakened working class from greater share ownership to the flexible firm, with a core of secure, highly paid workers and a periphery of super-exploited labour, are shown on closer examination to have had a far more limited impact than you would believe from the headlines.

A range of struggles — the rail dispute, the dock strike, the NALGO action in local government, the ambulance dispute — still erupt. Some, like the NALGO strike and the movement for a 35-hour week, are both offensive and successful.

However, despite the underlying strength of the organised working class we would have to grant Thatcher a degree of success with her range of policies intended to weaken the unions.

US 'Politically Correct' movement

# Linguistic Stalinism

**AGAINST THE TIDE**

By Jim Denham



**A** Labour-controlled council in the West Midlands recently decided to ban a children's book from its libraries on grounds of racism.

The book, apparently, tells the adventures of a cheeky little monkey. The "racism" arises because the book's illustrations show the monkey dressed in a schoolboy's uniform: the good burghers of Sandwell decided that this would give offense to black people. A case, perhaps, of "racism" being in the eye of the beholder.

Sandwell Council and the cheeky little monkey somehow came to mind as I grappled with accounts of the "Politically Correct" (PC) movement in the US. I should state at this point that my information on the PC phenomenon comes mainly from Peter Jenkins, the Butskellite political columnist of the *Independent*. But whatever his other faults, Jenkins is not prone to hysteria and does not have a record of "loonie leftie"-baiting. Also, his accounts tally with my own observation of the PC movement's British equivalents.

**"...linguistic Stalinism is only one manifestation of the PC: it comes as part of a package deal that involves extending (or, rather, reducing) multi-culturalism to an absolute relativism."**

The movement's best-politicised activities concern behaviour and language. A number of colleges and universities in the US have begun adopting PC codes, supposedly intended to curb behaviour and/or language that might give offence to racial minorities, women, gays and lesbians. Some of this is quite reasonable and no-one but a bigot could object. But quite a bit is downright silly and some of it is an affront to any conception of free speech.

The University of Connecticut, for instance, has prohibited "inappropriately directed laughter". The *New York Times* has adopted a "style book" that requires the use of the term "adult male" in place of "man". The word "burly" is also on the PC banned list.

I tried the "burly" on my boss, a committed feminist and anti-racist. What images and implications did the word conjure up? "Male", "big", maybe (but not necessarily) "stupid". The PC movement has banned "burly" because it supposedly gives a

negative image of black men. As my boss pointed out (when I explained the point of the exercise to her), that argument only makes sense if you are pre-disposed to the assumption that all black men (sorry, males) are big and stupid.

But linguistic Stalinism is only one manifestation of the PC: it comes as part of a package deal that involves extending (or rather, reducing) multi-culturalism to an absolute "relativism". According to this view, there is no such thing as objective "knowledge", "facts" do not exist; philosophically, "reality" is a complete illusion. One culture, philosophy, scientific theory, concept of history, or whatever, is as good as another. It's all subjective, a matter of opinion.

But here we come to the central contradiction of PC/relativism: instead of applying their own laissez-faire approach to themselves (as well as everyone else) they proclaim it to be the *only* acceptable point of view, and set about purging reading lists, limiting free speech and hounding "incorrect" academics.

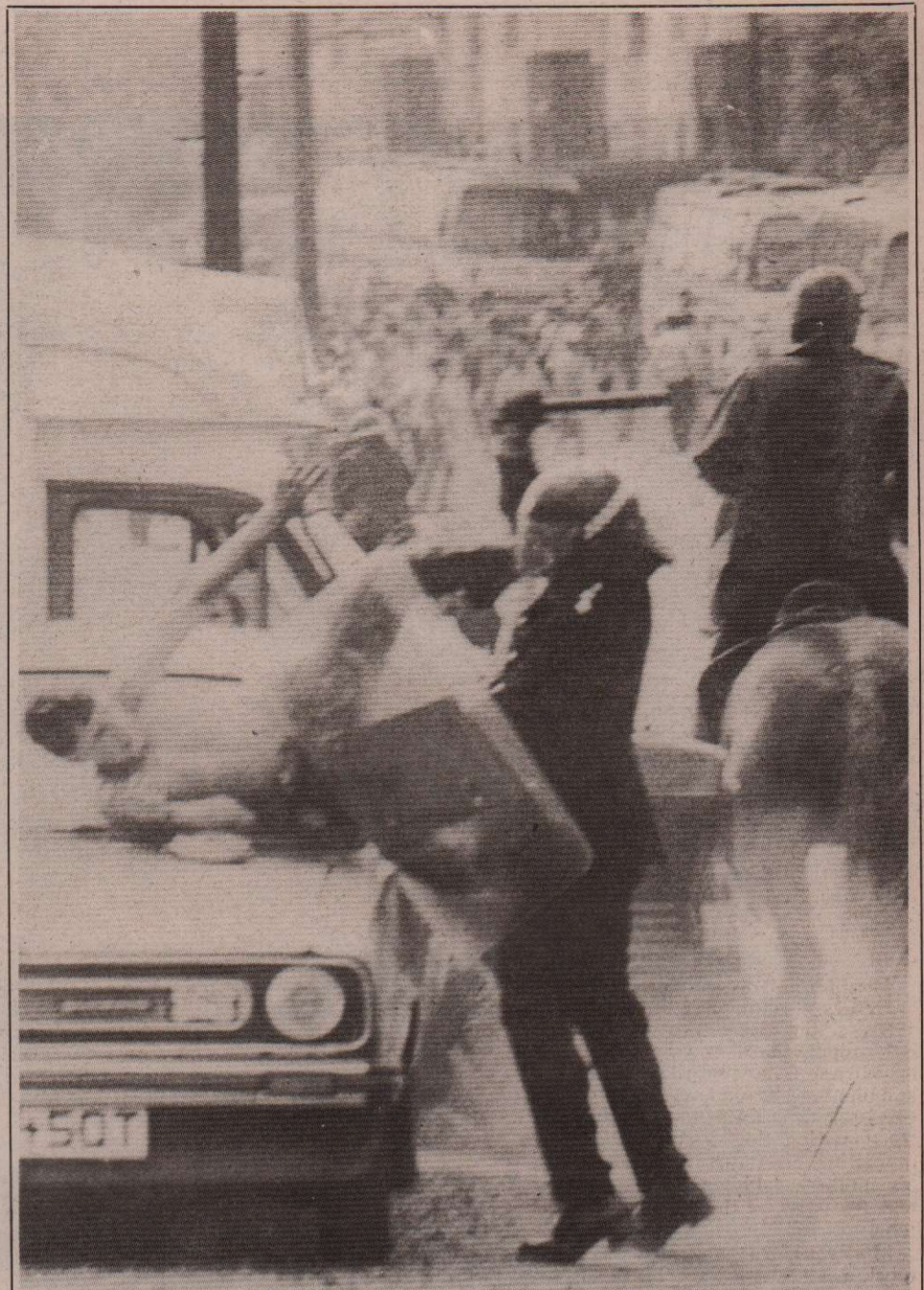
**A** special target of the PCs are 'DWEM's'— Dead White European Males. These include Plato, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Newton and (presumably) Marx. The object seems to be the complete repudiation of the entire Western cultural and scientific canon (tainted as it is with racism, sexism, etc) in favour of more "Politically Correct" alternatives.

In particular, mighty efforts are being made to "prove" that Western civilisation has its origins not in the Greeks but in black African sources. Similarly, the science of Newton (and Einstein) is rejected in favour of "ethno-mathematics" and "feminist science".

Now, it is certainly not my intention here to deny that mainstream education and culture has always downplayed the contributions of women and black people. In particular, the superiority of early Asian civilisation over European ones has been consistently ignored by most Western historians. And who knows what unrecorded contributions to culture and science were made in Africa over the centuries? But that cannot detract from the *fact* (sorry to have to insist on prosaic old "facts") that the highest achievements of art, literature, science, history and philosophy that we have *on record* tend to be the work of "DWEM's". They are (or should be) *everyone's* birthright.

To reject mainstream European culture because of racist, sexist societies that produced it, is to deny the working class and the oppressed their opportunity to arm themselves ideologically for the battle for a new, better society. It is intellectual Luddism.

Ironically, the chief victims of the PC movement are black students. According to the Marxist historian of slavery, Eugene Genovese, "we have transformed our colleges from places of higher learning into



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

Orgreave, near Sheffield, June 1984: thousands of miners' pickets and riot police fight pitched battles outside a coking plant. The battle raged daily from 29 May until coke runs from Orgreave were suspended on 18 June. Dozens of miners were injured in police attacks; Arthur Scargill himself was

hospitalised.

The miners won that skirmish. They were defeated in their strike because the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions were so far from having the same determination and courage as the miners who faced the brute force of the capitalist state at Orgreave.

Neil Kinnock spent most of his time denouncing the violence of the miners' pickets! The trade union leaders passed general motions of support for the miners, but did nothing to mobilise their members or to link their own struggles with the miners'.

places for the technical training of poorly prepared young men and women who need a degree to get a job in a college-crazy society". Meanwhile, young blacks are ghettoised into Afro-American studies and their educational achievements devalued accordingly.

The PC relativists no doubt disdain such formal categories as "left" and "right" but my guess is that they would not object too strongly to being called "left wing". In fact,

they are profoundly reactionary.

**T**he exiled Iraqi architect Samir al-Khalil recently published a book (*The Monument*) which examines the role of art and architecture in Saddam's military dictatorship. Khalil is especially scathing about Robert Venturi, the "post-modern" architect presently in the news because of his National Gallery extension.

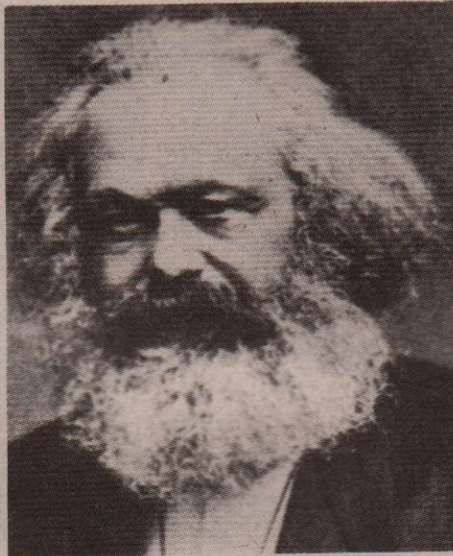
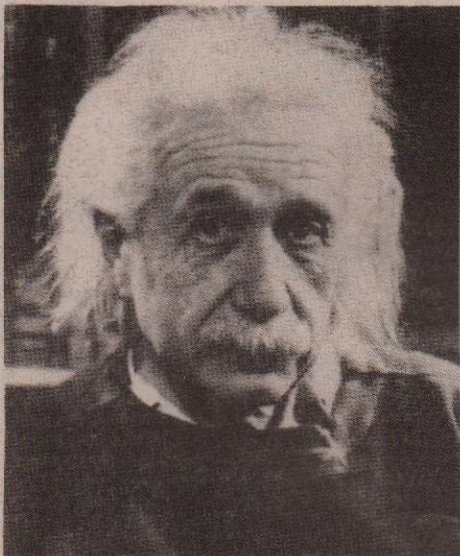
Venturi was one of many Western architects who tried to make money from Saddam's huge programme of grotesque public works, climaxing in the infamous "Victory Arch" based on giant replicas of Saddam's own arms holding sabres. Khalil accuses Venturi of something more than simple greed and opportunism: his artistic prostitution is the direct result of his *relativism*.

I didn't follow this line of argument at first but then it fell into place. For the likes of Venturi, Saddam's regime and the requirements it places upon arts and culture is just as acceptable as any other commission. You want grotesque, militaristic kitsch? You've got it! For Venturi, *there are no objective standards*, either in aesthetics or in politics.

This is a particularly extreme example of "relativism" and it would obviously be unfair to bracket all the PC movement adherents together with this particular charlatan.

But they are linked by a common philosophical approach and it's one that Marxists should fight tooth and nail.

As for Sandwell council, I suspect none of them have (yet) heard of the "Politically Correct". They're just silly. But then, it's all relative, isn't it?



'Dead White European Males' Einstein, Marx and (probably worst of all) Freud. These males and their cultural and scientific work should be rejected, according to the 'Politically Correct' movement. Yet it is a fact

that the highest achievements of art, science, philosophy, etc. that we have on record are the work of 'DWEM's'. This is intellectual Luddism

Turn on,  
tune in,  
cash in?

Film

Alison Roche reviews  
*The Doors*

**T**he *Doors* is a film you'll either love or hate depending on whether you're interested in mysticism, drugs, expanding your mind and witnessing self-destruction. Jim Morrison was the superstar of The Doors, pivotal to their creation and fame. His personality is imprinted in their lyrics; the yearning of wanting to grasp something beyond this world, to challenge convention etc. So the film is largely about Jim's rise and fall from stardom.

The film portrays him as the archetypal rebellious youth in the 1960s, cutting ties with convention by dropping out of college because no-one appreciated his film-making and bumming around until he gets a band together. From then on acid trips, parties, singing songs about murdering his father and fucking his mother, dabbling with spirits and free love are the criteria for a rebel.

Morrison, far from being a social rebel, was a middle class (his father was an admiral), self-indulgent, arrogant, egotistical, sexist boy who never quite managed to get over adolescence. His search for a better world was to look beyond this one. The film picks up this point by showing us a Shaman who follows Morrison around ready to take him out of this world where he supposedly doesn't belong. Morrison was heavily influenced by the mystics of Shamanism. Shamans were the 'official' Indian tribal acid-trippers who supposedly understood the trappings of life and reality and so philosophised about spirituality outside reality.

Oliver Stone, the producer, plays upon the myth that Morrison was obviously a genius whose soul was tormented by this world. Throughout the film Morrison has either a joint, a bottle of whisky or is tripping to prove he couldn't cope with or accept reality. Yeah man, let's all escape from this boring number!

So while there are race riots, anti-Vietnam demonstrations and a general radicalisation of youth, Morrison's angry energy is channelled into tripping on another plane. His self-destruction is a one-man crusade no-one can stop him from. Whilst hundreds of youth are getting arrested for demonstrations against the war, Jim is challenging the capitalist state by himself. He takes on the police for spraying mace in his eyes backstage and gets arrested. Wow, what a rebel!

The film also shows us how rebellious he was towards women. He locks his girlfriend in a cupboard and sets fire to it, he turns down responsibility for a child. The male chauvinism in the film makes you wonder, however, whether part of it is due to Oliver Stone rather than Morrison. For example, Jim Morrison's girlfriend Pam is portrayed as a one-dimensional stooge rather than a real person. We also have to witness Nico giving him a blow-job just to see Pam's hysterical reaction when she opens a lift-door and discovers them.

If you are not a Doors music fan then this film is not for you as background music plays throughout the film.



Bunny Baxter (George Wendt) asks David Merrill (Robert de Niro) for permission to 'name' him

# The witch-hunt without politics

Film

Tony Brown reviews *Guilty by Suspicion*

**T**he point of *Guilty by Suspicion* is not to rat on your friends and to stand up for what you believe in. They are strongly made by Robert de Niro in the film's final scenes at the 1952 hearings into Un-American activities (HUAC).

By the end the film has moved up a notch in intensity to what should have been dealt with earlier. Irwin Winkler wanted to make a film about the effect the Hollywood witch-hunt had on an individual, his family, friends and work. He was especially interested in the impact on someone who wasn't a Communist, but was made to pay because there was some suspicion.

His problem was that he wasn't really interested in why the witch-hunt took place or what it was really about. So the movie is split in two, the drama of David Merrill (de Niro), which is developed, and the witch-hunt, which provides nothing more than a backdrop.

Merrill arrives back from Paris a successful director and protege of Darryl Zanuck, the movie mogul. He is barely aware of the upheaval that has already occurred because of McCarthy's hearings even though 10 of Hollywood's best known writers have been jailed, and people like Bertolt Brecht and Charlie Chaplin have been forced to flee the country.

He is convinced anyway that it doesn't concern him because he isn't a Communist.

Inevitably his past is examined and those couple of meetings he attended in the 1930s are enough to place him under suspicion and in the early 1950s' suspicion is sufficient.

He refuses to co-operate when co-operation means naming others to clear himself. He is so confident of his ability and American justice that he doesn't believe that he could

be blacklisted.

The bulk of the film is devoted to the impact that the blacklist does have on him. Unemployment hits him hard, he loses his house, he is followed everywhere. He can't buy his son a bike for Christmas.

When finally called to testify he refuses to take the easy way out of naming others and lectures the disgusting Congressmen about his view of the American constitution. It's stirring stuff.

But by making the point that innocent people, that is non-Communists, could be found guilty on suspicion, the film misses the historical point that the target of the witch-hunts were people who really had been Communists (that is, Stalinists) or had been part of the left during the Depression or the War.

There is a lack of context for the film. We see the Rosenbergs being led to the electric chair following their espionage trials almost in pass-

ing.

The only direct explanation we are offered for why the witch-hunt is taking place is because "politicians want to get their picture in the paper by being photographed with movie stars".

It is remarkable that this important piece of American history — and one that focused so dramatically on Hollywood — has been so neglected by Hollywood: this is only the second feature film made on the subject.

In recent years, however, a number of documentaries have been made on the McCarthy period, and the history of the US CP, which devote large portions to the Hollywood Trials.

But one shouldn't look here for an explanation of what happened in Hollywood 40 years ago. They never question the strategy adopted by the defendants of either taking the fifth amendment — invoking the right to remain silent on

grounds that they might incriminate themselves — or refusing to co-operate.

There is a steadfast refusal to admit that the CP's strategy at the time was mistaken. Many of those who were victimised were party members, but they refused to counter the slurs of the Congressmen and FBI that to be a Communist was "Un-American".

Their behaviour was in stark contrast to that of the US Trotskyists during the early years of the war, who vigorously defended themselves in court. They went to jail, but they kept their political honour and self-respect.

In contrast to most of the real victims, Merrill defends himself. He refused to either deny or be ashamed of his past.

Like the documentaries, *Guilty by Suspicion* makes no real attempt at examining the politics behind the witch-hunts but unlike them at least provides a decent drama to watch.

# Dylan should be pensioned off

SOAPBOX

By Paul Mellelieu

**S**o Bob Dylan is 50. Big deal! Never mind the media hype, the great wash of adulatory articles in the quality press, Bob Dylan should have retired long ago.

One old fool on TV (you know the kind, chunky jumper and almost certainly a member of the Campaign for Real Ale) argued that Dylan is the most important person who has ever lived!

I don't mind some of Dylan's stuff (especially when Hendrix covers it), and I'm not averse to listening to dodgy '60s and '70s music myself. I'm off to see YES at the end of the month! I even admit having gone to Stonehenge and wearing an appalling pair of flares in my teens.

The point is that old Bob hasn't made a half decent record for 15 years. In fact, he's been responsible for some quite horrendous garbage. As a militant Christian convert, he made "Slow Train Coming", switched back to Judaism and came up with "Infidels" (a slight improvement) and then switched back again to good old Jesus!

What a visionary! What an artist! What a silly old git, if you ask me.

And then we have daft old university professors pouring over his lyrics with the reverence afforded to Shakespeare.

Don't get me wrong, old duffers can make great music, more noticeably jazz and classical musicians. Van Morrison manages it. (The latest YES album is a corker too!) And religion doesn't mean the creative wells dry up. John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and Gustav Mahler's nine and a half symphonies are examples that

spring to mind.

For 15 years every record Bob Dylan has released has been greeted by the music press with, "not quite up to the classic Dylan, but the next one looks like being a return to form". We're still waiting.

And Dylan has been responsible for spawning some of the dullest folk rock acts that your uncle raves on about when you go to see him at Christmas. Yeah!, right on uncle, stick that Al Stewart album on again.

I just hope that all this '60s revivalism that's going on — Hendrix, the Doors, etc (clubs in Manchester are playing Cream and Pink Floyd!) — doesn't extend to house versions of "Blowing in the Wind".

I fear I'm too late, though. I see there's a group called The Dylans becoming popular with the youth. Now think about that — a whole band of Bob Dylans.

Aaaagh!

# Freedom of speech for rap!

WORLD'S 'NASTIEST' BAND HAS THE WRONG ATTITUDE

## Niggas take the rap

POLICE TO SEIZE 'OBSCENE' ALBUM

TOP-SELLING rap group from America may see its latest album banned in Britain.



I am writing to you in the hope of bringing to light an issue which has been ignored by the left press but, in my opinion, has very serious implications.

It is about the censorship of Rap music. In the *Daily Mail* (29 May) we are told that Scotland Yard is planning to prohibit the sale of the soon-to-be-released album "Niggaz 4 Life" by the American rap group NWA (Niggaz With Attitudes).

The article goes on to say that the album's lyrics talk about having sex with 14-year olds and taking drugs. The album is also supposed to stir up hatred towards whites and the police.

In my opinion, this is not the reason for the censorship. Rap music, by its very nature, is a very subversive music which is anti-establishment and also a focal point for black and white youths to have a better understanding of each other.

The establishment finds



Freedom of speech is okay for fascists but not for black rappers

rap music very dangerous, so they use censorship as a weapon not to protect us, the public, from obscene lyrics, but in order to prevent these anti-establishment groups from reaching the youth, and also stop this music bringing white and black youth closer together.

The basic point I would like to raise is that NWA have been accused of stirring up hatred towards white people and the police. Do we see our fabulous boys in blue censoring such racist newspapers as

the *Star* like they have done to NWA, when the *Star* is seen to incite racial hatred?

Or do we see Scotland yard taking as harsh a stand with the National Front or British National Party when they incite racial hatred?

No, of course they don't, because the *Star*, British National Party and the National Front have freedom of speech, but young black rappers — freedom of speech? You must be joking!

Daniel Blake Ringwood

# Eastern Europe: theory is grey

Chris Reynolds, in *SO 487*, argues that Mandel is incorrect to stress the obstacles facing a capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe. But surely Mandel's analysis made in 1989 has been borne out by events.

The investments made by western capitalism in the East have remained pathetically small. Ironically capitalists were much more willing to do business with the Stalinist

regimes which could impose austerity policies without having to worry about any democratic sanction.

And while the world recession means that there is overcapacity in the west, capitalists have seen little point in boosting production by moving eastwards.

It is true that the black market has developed but this should not be seen as a process leading inevitably to capitalism. On the contrary, while money can be made by

dubious means, those with resources to invest, ie bureaucrats and black marketeers, will abstain from productive investment.

In this situation, it does not seem sensible to adopt catch-all labels which can only simplify what is essentially a transitional stage.

Mandel is right to stress the contradictory nature of the situation — on the one hand a powerful working class, on the other a capitalist dynamic but one facing serious dif-

ficulties. This dialectical approach is surely preferable to imposing some schema from the Marxist list of terms on a complex and unprecedented reality.

Chris Reynolds appears to require that we approve or disapprove of the situation as a whole and does not permit an approach which sees both positive and negative aspects. Theory is grey but reality is green!

Daniel Doveton, Newton Abbot

## Southwark building workers' strike:

# We should face reality squarely

Tony O'Brien's letter in *SO 485* accusing us of misleading the readers of this paper in regard to the recent strike in the Southwark Council DLO deserves a serious reply.

If anything, it is Tony's letter that is misleading. A previous letter has already dealt with some of the minor technical details of this matter. We want to concentrate on the political issues at stake.

In Tony's words: "Our criticism of your article is not sectarian. We recognise the valid work done by many Socialist Organiser supporters in the struggle against the employers. Our criticism is that articles by labour movement organisations must be (1) factual and objective; (2) recognise all aspects of the struggle and not just see defeats and victories; (3) to give recognition to those who are prepared to lead workers in the struggle against the employers in the knowledge that workers will hesitate (even when principled leadership is being given at a rank and file level) at certain stages of the struggle and may only give limited support."

Let us start with the first sentence. "Our criticism" implies that the *SO* articles

were written by people with no inside knowledge of the DLO and that Tony is speaking in the name of the stewards' committee. Not so.

One of the authors is a long standing activist in the DLO, an EETPU shop steward and former treasurer of the DLO stewards' committee. Hardly distanced comment from the outside...

Tony's point (1) has already been dealt with in *SO 486*. Point (2) is the crucial one.

Tony tells us to be balanced and not just see "defeats and victories". It was precisely our intention to provide a balanced account and doing so first of all requires calling things by their right names.

An indefinite strike called off after two days with large-scale scabbing and very limited support from the second biggest union involved is a defeat and a retreat. There are no other words to describe it.

Bringing in a small victory won before the strike like the reprieve for 24 apprentices' jobs as Tony does will not make this retreat go away. A defeat is a defeat. Recognising this should in no way be seen as a criticism of the leadership provided by the stewards committee.

Pointing to the terrible role of the national officials, accurate though this may be,

does not get activists in Southwark DLO out of the problems facing them. In fact, it can become an excuse for inactivity. Though we are sure this was not Tony's intention, the following comment can easily be interpreted as implying that no local battles have a hope of success until we change the national leadership:

"...there is no substantial victories or overall successes possible without a leadership that will initiate a national campaign, so as to defeat the government and its policies, which is behind all these attacks."

But we will only get a "new leadership" out of the work that activists do to stop the retreat in the existing local, defensive battles, and attempting to link them up.

Recognising retreats is the first step to being able to reverse them.

In the past certain left groups always talked of the need for a "new leadership". But they never told serious activists how it could be built in the real class struggle in the here and now. The "new leadership" would either just descend from the sky like Superman or be summoned up by recanting the "correct" slogans. But it never materialised.

Surely Tony doesn't want

to follow that road?

Yours in comradeship  
Henry Mott  
Shop Steward  
Southwark Council DLO  
Tom Rigby  
Socialist Organiser EB

# Breast cancer breakthrough

Les Hearn's



## SCIENCE COLUMN

Breast cancer is a major killer of women in Western countries, even when surgery has been carried out.

Most people with breast cancer are quite elderly but some 6,000 younger women, below the age of menopause, are diagnosed to have it each year. Since their cancers tend to be rather more virulent, anything that can improve their chances of survival is worth investigating.

This lay behind the research published last week into the link between time of surgery and the breast cancer patient's menstrual cycle. The study was carried out at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's Breast Unit at Guy's Hospital in South London.

It was a considerable surprise to the research team to find that the timing of breast surgery could affect survival rates by 100% or more in some cases.

The women studied, 249 of them, had all been treated between 1975 and 1985. They had been suffering from various stages of disease — in some, the cancer had spread to the lymph glands in the armpits. Some had had mastectomy (removal of a breast) while others had had "lumpectomy" (removal of

the tumour with the minimum of surrounding tissue).

It was found that those women who had been operated on between Days 3 and 12 of their menstrual cycles had a 54% chance of survival for the next 10 years. However, those operated on at other times in their cycles had an 84% chance of 10-year survival.

Even this remarkable difference was bettered when women with more advanced cancers were examined. Where the lymph glands were affected, the 10-year survival rate shot up from 33% to 78%.

Even though it is not known why there is this difference, Guy's Breast Unit is now careful to avoid the early part of the menstrual cycle when operating. If applied nationally, this policy could result in the saving of some 600 lives per year.

So why might time of surgery affect survival? It is likely that tumour cells are released into the blood stream during surgery, probably in greater numbers than they are during the life of the tumour. If any of these lodges elsewhere in the body, it may cause a secondary tumour.

Now, the levels of female sex hormones change throughout the menstrual cycle, with oestrogen high and progesterone low between Days 3 and 12. Oestrogen is known to control the production of enzymes by tumour cells which break up groups of cells. These enzymes allow tumour cells to invade tissues and implant themselves. At other times, the hormone levels are reversed and the tumour cells may be unable to lodge anywhere. They will then be unlikely to survive.

No doubt other theories will be put forward, but the possibility must arise of treating or controlling breast cancer with hormones. These could be either progesterone, which has an anti-oestrogen effect, or synthetic "anti-oestrogens". The question also arises whether other types of cancer might be affected by hormone levels.

## WHAT'S ON

West SO dayschool. 12.00-5.00, Liverpool Institute of Higher Education

SO meeting. Emerald Club. 7.30 "Save the NHS", SO London Forum. Lucas Arms, 7.30

### Thursday 6 June

"Labour and the general election", Leeds SO meeting. Speaker: Rob Dawber. For venue phone Mike on 0532 452312

"Students and socialism", Oxford SO meeting. Speaker: Mark Sandell. Oxford Poly, 7.00

### Friday 7 June

Scottish Labour Party Socialists meeting. Glasgow Tollcross Community Centre, 7.30. Speaker: Ken Livingstone

### Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 June

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

### Sunday 9 June

"The New World Order", North

### Monday 10 June

"Mandela", Glasgow SO meeting. Patrick Borough Hall, 7.30. Speaker: Dion D'Silva

### Tuesday 11 June

"The case for socialist feminism", Brighton SO meeting. Race Hill Tavern, 7.30

### Wednesday 12 June

"Crisis in the USSR", Essex University SO meeting. 6.00. Speaker: Mark Osborn

### Thursday 13 June

"Organising for socialism", Sheffield University SO meeting. 1.00 "Lesbian and gay liberation", Sheffield SO meeting. Queens Pub, 7.30. Speaker: Steph Ward

### Monday 17 June

"What is socialism?", Northampton

### Tuesday 18 June

"The Bolshevik Revolution", Sheffield University SO meeting. 1.00

### Wednesday 19 June

"Bush's new world order", Merseyside SO meeting. Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road, 7.30 "Racism and how to fight it", East London SO meeting. Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2, 7.30

### Thursday 20 June

"The case for socialist feminism", Teeside Tech SO meeting. 1.00 "Nothing to celebrate", candlelit vigil in opposition to the "Victory Parade". 9.00-midnight, Trafalgar Square. Organised by Women Against War in the Gulf, Labour Against the War and others "Racist Britain — what's the answer?", Sheffield SO meeting. SSCAU, West St, 7.30. Speaker: Gail Cameron

# Where now in counters dispute?

By an Edinburgh  
Postal Officer

**W**orkers in Post Office Counters returning to work on Monday 3rd June were handed a letter from Management generously forgiving us for going on strike, but threatening not to be so forgiving in future. Nothing demonstrates more clearly the shock management have had from the response of UCW members to the union's strike.

Local management in Edinburgh were stunned that all the group talks and individual harassment intimidated only a few members to cross picket lines. In their desperation to win some kind of public relations success, post offices were staffed by anyone available. In one case, a union member exempted from strike action and last at a counter 20 years ago was forced to serve in a post office to keep it open. In another a branch manager was locking and unlocking the office door as customers were let in and served one at a time. Offices that opened for an hour or so were then claimed to have broken the strike.

As normal, the Post Office lies — they sent out two letters in three days to UCW members' homes to give their view of the effects of the strike and begging us to go back to work — didn't dent the strike. In one case at least the letters appear to have

had the opposite effect bringing more people out in support of the strike.

While we can't claim an overwhelming success (participation was poor in rural areas and small towns) management expected a complete flop. In the urban areas support for the strike was strong, remained solid and in some parts actually grew as the strike progressed. With greater numbers of pickets this might have been even better.

However the problem remains of where we go now. Morale amongst union activists let alone other members has been very low and falling. Management have planned to reorganise the business by prioritising branch offices, regrading jobs downwards, producing lower pay scales and undermining the union through schemes such as "Customer First" and team briefings. The union response has been weak relying on winning over public opinion. This has left the membership with little involvement in what was a fight to save our jobs and conditions.

Last week's action has seen a reversal of that trend. How significant a reversal remains to be seen and is dependent on how vigorously and effectively the union pursues the campaign. There is a great deal of cynicism from the membership towards the union — not helped by the naivety of the leadership's tactics.

To begin with a thump of action was a good move — no-one I have talked to can understand why it was announced a week in advance. This concern for the conduct of the strike is itself a big step forward.

There is no feeling in the



On the picket lines in Glasgow. Photo: Steve McTaggart

membership for all-out strike. To attempt it now would give management the initiative, have the membership at odds with itself and leave management to deal with an increasingly small number of strikers. It is likely that there will be selective strikes in key areas such as REM Units — these take in money from and supply it to Giro customers and post offices — properly organis-

ed with pickets to stop drivers from the letter business picking up or delivering the cash. These strikes would be very effective.

They might even provoke a response from Royal Mail's Letters management, which would bring the uniformed grade into action alongside us. This nearly happened during last week's strike as UCW members in RML refused to cross picket lines to

pick up mail from post offices. In Edinburgh this didn't happen principally because management found one driver willing to scab on fellow union members.

For the moment selective strikes are the only option. They allow pressure on the Post Office to be maintained. Any movement on pay by the Post Office will be seen as a victory of sorts by UCW members.

## Don't scab on UCW

By Steve Burton and  
Duncan Morrison

**A**round half of Hull's Postal Officers who work on the counters are currently out on strike in support of their increased pay claim. On the picket line are mainly full time workers, the casual staff have been bribed into work by the callous lure of potential full time jobs. Many of these workers are arriving up to two hours before their shift starts, and are receiving overtime pay for scabbing on their union.

As one striker explained to us "If they believed in what they were doing they would walk past the picket line with heads held high. But they are ashamed, and rightly so!"

The situation is such that managers are being forced to staff the counters to replace striking staff.

The pay claim is only part of the issue. Strikers realise that there has been a concerted attempt by the Bosses to split the union; the Bosses have divided the workers into four sections and each negotiates pay claims at different times of the year. A typical scale of Postal Officer which carried the same pay

before divisions now shows a £1000 per annum differential between sections. Staffing levels have been cut, smaller less profitable offices closed and their bonus scheme has been destroyed. The introduction of Casual Staff with no contracts, no holiday entitlement, no sickness benefit and very few

rights has created an underpaid underclass of workers.

But the fight is being fought and strikers are optimistic they can win. One office in Hull was closed Wednesday 29th, two are closed on Thursday 30th.

The mood was expressed by one striker who commented: "United we will win!"

Laird and Hammond  
in secret talks:

## Defend AEU democracy!

By Pat Markey,  
victimized AEU steward,  
British Timken  
Northampton

"**E**ric Hammond and I are at one in wanting an amalgamated union. Given goodwill we can get a formula for amalgamation."

With these words Gavin Laird, general secretary of the

engineers' union AEU, made it clear that the on-off love affair between the leadership of his union and the electricians is very much on again.

The two national officials have already been holding secret talks for the last four months and plan a full weekend session later this month.

In principle there is nothing wrong with a merger between these two unions; in engineering it makes real industrial sense. The problem is that this merger is likely to create an extremely undemocratic organisation. The EETPU will be back in the TUC by the back door.

And the hard-won rank and file democracy of the AEU will be the first casualty.

A previous merger plan — finally thrown out at the April 1989 National Committee (the AEU's conference) by a majority of just three votes — involved the abolition of the AEU's national committee, final appeals court, district committees, local branches, etc.

They were to be replaced by the EETPU's extremely undemocratic top-down "industrial" structure which keeps union activists divided. The election of all national officials would go as well.

What's needed is a broad-based campaign to defend democracy in the AEU on the lines of the Stop the Merger campaign which played a significant role in defeating the previous merger plans in 1989.

## RMT abandons pay fight

By a railworker

**T**he RMT has abandoned its campaign for a BR wage rise in line with inflation this year. Instead it has accepted 7.75%.

The RMT never puts in a claim as such. It always asks the various employers for a "substantial" increase and then waits to see what they offer. The Executive then considers whether they think they can afford more or not and decides whether to accept or ask for more.

But in relation to BR the rate of inflation at the time of the settlement (8.9%) was cited as the minimum — otherwise it would mean a pay cut.

So why the collapse? First, the other two rail unions (ASLEF and TSSA) weren't supporting the campaign. Instead they took the wage claim to the Rail Staff National Tribunal (RSNT). Secondly, the RMT had just had a debacle on the Tubes, where a planned strike was likely to be badly supported and scabbed on by ASLEF.

The RSNT met in record time and proposed a 0.75% increase on BR's "final" offer. BR convened the Rail Staff National Council (management and

unions) extremely quickly and accepted it. The RMT then fell into line, calling off the ball while it was half way through.

After that BR were claiming that the wage increase was conditional on accepting the need for wholesale grades restructuring. The RMT denied that the RSNT's decision meant this. A reading of the actual decision suggests that management aren't entirely wrong. The RMT have backed down all the way on this.

After BR imposed a restructuring on the Signal and Telecomms department through pressuring individuals to sign, the RMT committed itself to fight. This issue was linked to the pay claim, setting the scene for a repeat of the 1989 dispute on the same issues: pay and the right to negotiate.

Then the full-timers persuaded the NEC that there were too many legal complications on the S&T restructuring to be sure of being allowed to fight. They decided to ballot on pay alone.

With the abandonment of that, fight railworkers are in a bad position to fight restructuring.

The RMT must pick up this gauntlet and prepare to stop BR's attempt to tear up our hard won conditions of service and in the process marginalise the union.

## NCU: fight needed on jobs

By Maria Exall,  
Westminster NCU

**E**ngineering delegates to the NCU annual conference in Blackpool this week have rejected propositions which would allow the executive to negotiate a voluntary redundancy scheme with management.

All is not well however. Attempts to tie the executive's hands completely by preventing them selling jobs by way of negotiation over the enhancement of redundancy payments failed.

BT want to get rid of 8% of the workforce in what is the largest and most profitable private company in Britain.

Voluntary redundancy is an important issue facing the NCU this year, and a problem that will not go away.

There is a real danger that any voluntary scheme will not remain voluntary for long without consistent defensive local branch action. But the main objection to a union-sanctioned redundancy scheme is that more time, energy and organisation will be used to help members who want to leave than in defending those who want to stay.

This could prove very divisive and demoralizing. Any union that pursues such a policy has got its priorities wrong: it amounts to selling jobs not defending them at a time when we should be working to gain improvements in our conditions of work: a shorter working week — 32 hour, 4 day, rather than accepting job losses as "inevitable".

## Staffing victory at Hull DSS

By Mark Serwotka,  
Rotherham DSS

**A**n 8 week strike at the Hull West DSS office is about to end with a comprehensive victory for the strikers. The dispute, which began with the management insisting that no money was available for extra staff, ended with 20 extra jobs being secured.

This is a significant victory, however it is a local victory. The Hull strikers always said that they wanted more than a local solution, they have played a magnificent part in spreading action across the country, resulting in the Union's Conference agreeing to their call for a national campaign.

To date the right wing Executive of the Union have refused to implement such a campaign. In victory the Hull strikers voted to demand that the Union still calls for national action, this proves that they were always after more than just a local solution. CPSA activists should build on Hull's victory by calling for action across Britain in every office beset by staffing problems, this should be built into a national campaign. Hull have led the way, the rest of the country should follow.

Stop Press: at Monday's strike meeting, meant to be the final one, strikers voted to reject management's return to work agreement. Although happy with the staffing offer members are refusing to accept the vague terms on offer for their return.

A full account of the strike will be given in next week's SO by one of the strike leaders.

Pergamon Press NUJ  
2 years of struggle

Rally: Saturday 8 June

Assemble at Pergamon Press, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford,  
12.30

Speakers: Barbara Castle, Tony Benn MP, Steve Turner (NUJ Gen Sect), Mary Hufford (NUT Dep Gen Sect), Mike Grindley (GCHQ), Andrew Smith (Oxford East MP), Stan Taylor (Oxford East CLP)

Coaches from London will leave Trafalgar Square at 10am.  
Contact Rosa on 071 582.0996. For transport from Birmingham please contact strike HQ on 0865 60762.

Sponsors: INGA, SOGAT, TGWU, BECTU, MSF, NALGO, NUPE, NATFHE, NUM, Oxford East Labour Party, South East Region TUC, Oxford and District TUC.  
BRING YOUR BANNERS

## Solidarity with Southwark DLO workers!

**S**outhwark Labour Council has just announced that it is to make a further 91 Direct Labour Organisation building workers compulsorily redundant.

The 91 include the

Secretary of the DLO Shop Stewards Committee.

This latest attack is a threat to every DLO worker across London. The redundancies must be resisted tooth and nail. We need to rally support for Southwark DLO workers across the entire London labour movement!

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Eric Heffer, lifelong socialist dies

Eric is pictured here with Polish socialist Milka Tyszkiewicz at the CSWEB conference in solidarity with East European anti-Stalinist socialists

Appreciation centre pages



## HIJACKERS PUT BLOCK ON BINMEN

Ambush in city road as rubbish row erupts

## Liverpool Council: fight now or pay later

By Anne Field  
Street barricades were erected in Liverpool's working class heartland of Granby on Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 of May.

The barricades consisted of piles of rubbish and overflowing bin bags, erected by residents who had not had their refuse collected for over two months.

Residents went on to implement their own form of a community-based version of workers' control and management: when a refuse lorry turned up to remove the rubbish, the locals decided that not enough rubbish had been removed and blockaded in the refuse lorry until the area had been cleared to their satisfaction.

Posterity will have to forego film recordings of this event: the television team who turned up to record these events had their cameras stolen.

The mountains of rotting refuse and bin bags now scattered across Liverpool are merely the tip of the most visible (to say nothing of their impact on one's sense of smell) aspect of the campaign against Liverpool City Council's efforts to impose up to a thousand redundancies.

For five weeks the council workforce, represented by the Joint Trade Union Forum (JTUF), have fought the redundancies through a ban on overtime, a three-day all-out strike, and indefinite selective all-out strike action.

NALGO is also taking the City Council to court on the grounds that over 600 of the redundancies were agreed upon by a council sub-committee, which thereby exceeded its legal powers. An earlier meeting of the full council had rejected a thousand redundancies, but approved 384 redundancies. The sub-committee's decision thereby overturned the vote at the full council.

Over 600 of the redundancies have already been achieved by the council, through a combination of early retirement, voluntary redundancies and, more recently, a sudden spate of sackings.

The only thing left which the JTUF still appears to be fighting is the compulsory aspect of the redundancies which have not yet been achieved. Another day of all-out strike action has been called for June 19 by the JTUF, when a special council meeting will be held to discuss the compulsory redundancies, in response to a resolution moved by the "Liverpool Labour Councillors Group".

At the present rate, the council may have achieved its goal of axing 1,000 jobs by that time. The right-wing controlled Labour Group can declare itself satisfied, on the grounds that it has achieved its body count of jobs, and the union officials can declare themselves satisfied on the grounds that none of the redundancies were compulsory.

But if the council is allowed to get away with axing 1,000 jobs this time round, it will certainly not be long before it comes back for another thousand, if not even more.

The Tory Press lead smear campaign against Peter Lenahan

# Hands off UCATT!

By Tony Brown

Following their recent election victory, the UCATT Broad Left's Peter Lenahan has been subjected by the *Evening Standard* and *Sun* to a series of personal attacks.

Lenahan's lawyers claim the articles are libellous and breach rehabilitation of offenders legislation.

What is really at stake though is the attempt by the press, bolstered by the right wing of UCATT, to destabilise the newly elected officers and ultimately UCATT itself.

The stories originally surfaced in election material sent out by the secret UCATT Democratic Society. They were distributed by way of a mail out which coincidentally reproduced a spelling error contained in the UCATT branch organisers' list.

Lenahan's team are committed to campaigning for new safety legislation and standards on building sites, something that the big companies, which heavily fund the Tories, are

dead against.

If such safety legislation already existed then perhaps the steel erector killed last Friday at Broadgate, London, would still be alive. The installation of a £20 safety rail would have been enough to save his life.

In another part of this destabilisation campaign EET-PU officials have been enticing some right wing UCATT branches to break away and affiliate to the EETPU.

This should be vigorously opposed. Any and all amalgamation talks should be conducted with the elected leaders of UCATT and on the basis of TUC policy on single union deals.

**U.C.A.T.T. DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

The following information is a part of Peter Lenahan's record:

JULY 1957	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm 6 months imprisonment
MARCH 1964	Larceny of 2 cwt. copper turnings 6 months imprisonment
MAY 1964	1. Stealing chairs from Club 2. Stealing electric heaters from club i.e. original offence, February, 1964 1. 6 months imprisonment 2. 6 months imprisonment consecutively
JULY 1970	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm Fined £20.00 Pay £8.00 adv. fee
SEPTEMBER 1977	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm Fined £45.00 Pay £13.00 with expenses £9.80 from Central Funds No order made re gun

FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE FORTHCOMING AS IT IS MADE AVAILABLE

The right wing spread the tabloids' allegations against Lenahan

**Construction safety campaign**

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