

Israel after the election



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Tories and sex



centre pages

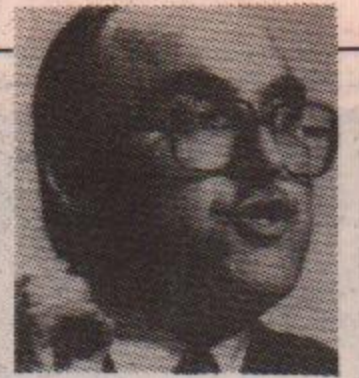


The Yugoslav cock-pit



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Labour leadership



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SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Unshackle the Unions!

The second Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference

Conway Hall, London, July 18-19th
Starts 11am Saturday, registration from 10am

speakers include: Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn, John Hendy QC, Ronnie Macdonald

These parasites cost us £60 million per year



The Queen and her family are to get ten million pounds a year, £200,000 a week, without public scrutiny, without having to account for how it is spent, without any check on value for money, without paying poll tax or income tax, and with a guaranteed 7.5% pay rise every year.

John Major and Margaret Thatcher have sneaked through Parliament a deal under which Parliament is banned from inquiring into the Queen's "Civil List" for ten years.

That is their response to the growing public mood, fuelled for its own reasons by the tabloid press, of distrust and disgust at the spendthrift Royals.

The Queen and some 13 members of her family get a total of £60 million a year from the Civil List, from various Government departments which pay for their palaces and yachts and airplanes, and from the estates of the Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall. On top of that is the Queen's income from her inherited "private" wealth, estimated by researcher Phillip Hall to be at least £18 million a year.

That £60 million could pay for 5,000 extra workers in the Health Service or in education, where nurses and teachers are currently being sacked because the Government reckons it cannot afford them. It could finance 1000 new council houses or flats, or two new hospitals, every year.

Single mothers have to name their children's fathers, and risk retaliation, or face having their dole cut. Tenants and mortgage-payers who fall behind lose their homes. Poll-tax non-payers crushed by poverty are thrown in jail. Health workers and teachers are sacked to save money. Workers everywhere are told that we must accept longer hours, harsher work rates, and smaller pay rises.

It is one rule for the poor, and another for the rich. This royal rip-off is a slap in the face for anyone who believes in equality, justice, and human decency. It is an outrageous waste. And it is worse than that.

The Royal Family not only puts itself above the laws and rules which govern the rest of us, but also claims power over those laws and rules.

The Queen retains the power, in a crisis, to overrule Parliament, to sack a Government, or to nominate a new Government. That power was used as recently as 1975, when the Governor-General in Australia, as the Queen's representative, sacked a reforming Labor government.

Sack the Queen! Up the Republic!

A RIGHT ROYAL RIP-OFF

The lie machine



When the Sun fills page 1 with the charge that the Queen (personally, you understand) kicks out an 80 year old widow, and the rancid Star tells its readers that Elizabeth II thinks money grows on trees that may mark a new state in the crisis of the British monarchy.

The next step would probably be a Murdoch campaign to have Elizabeth abdicate to make way for - no, not Charles, but ... Diana.. After all why shouldn't the Queen be chosen according to a popularity poll? A democratic election for the President of the British Republic would be better. Meanwhile, we are backing Diana for Queen and monarchy by rite of Opinion Poll and tabloid anointment.

Unite to stop Nazi-apologist Irving!

When a major mainstream newspaper like the *Sunday Times* serialises the new-found diaries of Hitler's Minister of Lies, Joseph Goebbels. That is not at all remarkable.

Such newspapers have been doing things like that for nearly 50 years.

When the *Sunday Times* employs an active long-time fascist propagandist, David

Irving to edit those diaries, giving him the chance to present his dead fascist hero to a world, much of which has forgotten and never known what the Nazis stood for, that is very remarkable indeed.

Irving is a professional "historian" who specialises in pro-Nazi apologetics and in the "Revision" of modern history to exclude from our record of the recent past the truth about the Nazi death

camp and other Nazi horrors.

It is the latest example of the diminishing notoriety of fascism and of the growing respectability of ultra-right wing ideas amongst sections of the ruling class. That does not mean that they are "all fascists now". They are not.

It means that many of the barriers that have helped keep the far right bay in Europe since 1945 are crumbling and decaying.

In parts of Eastern Europe and Russia now and even in France fascism is a powerful force. More threatening than it has been at any time since the 1930s.

The *Sunday Times'* dealing with Irving is a measure of how the tide is flowing. It would have been simply unthinkable a few years ago.

The left must unite to organise a powerful campaign to explain what Nazis and fascism were and what



We must stop Irving and his bourgeois friends

they will be again if we don't stop the Irving and mainstream bourgeois friends and abettors.

The Yugoslav cock pit

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The UN, the EC, and NATO will not, however, lend their banners to Greek or Turkish ambitions! Germany will not vote for a UN operation which is a cover for neo-colonial action by the US - as the Gulf war against Iraq was, to a large extent - and no other power is strong enough to be able to use the UN and NATO banners as its own. Indeed that is the reason why there has been no military intervention, and may well yet be none: the intervention will not give any big power a colony, or a sphere of influence, that it did not have before, but, from a capitalist point of view, will have no advantage beyond stabilising the region for normal business, and may have great difficulties even doing that.

That is why the governments so eager to send troops and weapons to the aid of "poor little Kuwait" are so cautious about Bosnia.

To be sure, the Western powers would probably be happy to kick Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbian neo-Stalinists into history's abyss, and that might give some of them an added reason to intervene. But even a big war on

Serbia might not do that, as Saddam Hussein could tell them.

Their main interest if they intervene will be to secure peace on the European Community's borders and 'stability' in Europe.

No less absurd is the associated idea that Western capital - in the first place German capital - needs military occupation to secure its domination in the former Eastern European Stalinist states. It has no such need.

The normal workings of the market - the sheer economic power of the West Europeans - make their domination in the East a certainty in the years to come - unless the working class should take power there. Right now the working class is in no condition to take power. Military intervention will just add to their costs, not facilitate West European capitalist penetration of the former Russian Empire.

If US and West European capital tries to play the international policeman on the EC's borders, we should counterpose to it something better. What exists in Yugoslavia now is *worse*. We are against the existing capitalist states, but we do not want to replace them with something worse: chaos is a lot worse.

The best outcome from the Yugoslav chaos would be for the working class in the various conflicting peoples to come together, settle accounts with their own chauvinists and tin-pot imperialists and restore a federation, this time under the control of the workers.

Short of that, socialists should want an end to the bloodshed and chaos. We have no confidence in the big capitalist powers and do not call on them to intervene: but if the West does intervene socialists can not side with Serbia and become "defencists" for Greater Serb imperialism.

Socialists should not declare, explicitly or implicitly, that the best thing is for the Yugoslav conflict to take its course with the strongest coming out at the end on top of the bloody pile.

Those socialists who adopt this posture because they want to be "anti-imperialists" will prove in their own way the basic truth that there is no consistently revolutionary politics without thought, clarity and Marxist theory. It will unfortunately, be a negative proof. This "anti-imperialism" is not anti-imperialism at all but support for the weaker and more primitive imperialism - Serbian imperialism!

IMF put squeeze on Russians

By Steven Holt

Last week's economic summit of the Group of Seven - the exclusive club of the world's richest industrial countries - was bad news for the Russian people

There will be no repeat of the Marshall Plan by which western Europe was revived economically after World War 2.

Instead, small amounts of investment will be drip-fed in return for International Monetary Fund influence in every sphere of life in

Russia.

The IMF conditions mean cutting inflation and the fiscal deficit - by cutting jobs, wages and production. It means ending state subsidies to "inefficient" enterprises and ending the subsidy on oil prices, again throwing workers out of the factories rather than investing to modernise production.

Even Yeltsin has balked at the severity of the proposed measures but there is little doubt that he will enforce the IMF's diktats and probably use the

inevitable explosions of discontent to strengthen his own position even to the point of becoming a dictator.

The IMF policies mean food shortages in the coming winter.

The plight of Africa and South America is proof that IMF policies offer nothing to workers and peasants other than austerity enforced by repression. Only a new democratic socialist workers' movement can prevent the Russian people being reduced to Third World conditions.

Israeli elections: small shift to the left

By Michel Wachawsky

The Israeli election result was not a surprise. The erosion of the Likud's popularity was obvious.

We saw a continuation of political polarisation with a strengthening of the far right.

There was overall a small shift to the left in the centre of gravity of Israeli politics. This made a centre-left coalition rather than a totally right-wing coalition.

People turned their back on the Likud for two reasons. Firstly, the Likud was identified with the status quo. While to both the right and to the left there were alternatives. To the right: a military answer to crush the Palestinian national movement. On the left were those who defended a political alternative to the intifada, by

seriously negotiating a new form of occupation.

The Labour leaders are very serious about achieving a settlement based on autonomy in the occupied territories. It is not a compromise with the Palestinians, it is their way of defending the interests of Israel.

For them the occupation cannot continue in the old way. This is a real difference between Likud and Labour.

On the other hand, I do not believe that the repression on the West Bank and Gaza will lessen. What will change is that we will have fewer provocative acts which anger international opinion and disturb the Israeli public - for instance, raiding settlements in the heart of Arab Jerusalem.

The government have promised to achieve autonomy in nine months. From Rabin's point of view it was a mistake

to fix a deadline. The Palestinians are strengthened, knowing he must and within nine months.

Rabin knows the negotiations over autonomy will be very tough. He is keeping a smokescreen around what he really intends.

Although Rabin is much more flexible than the previous government he is not less opposed to the PLO or to any possibility, even in the future, of a Palestinian state. He will try to involve the Jordanian regime in the negotiations and even in the settlement itself. He will do everything possible to weaken the militant leadership which exists in the Occupied Territories.

It is difficult to speak about one reaction to the election results amongst the Palestinian Arabs. Leaders have said they are very happy about Rabin's

victory - as if Rabin was Shulamit Aloni (leader of the Meretz Party), who has good things to offer the Palestinians but who is a minority in the government.

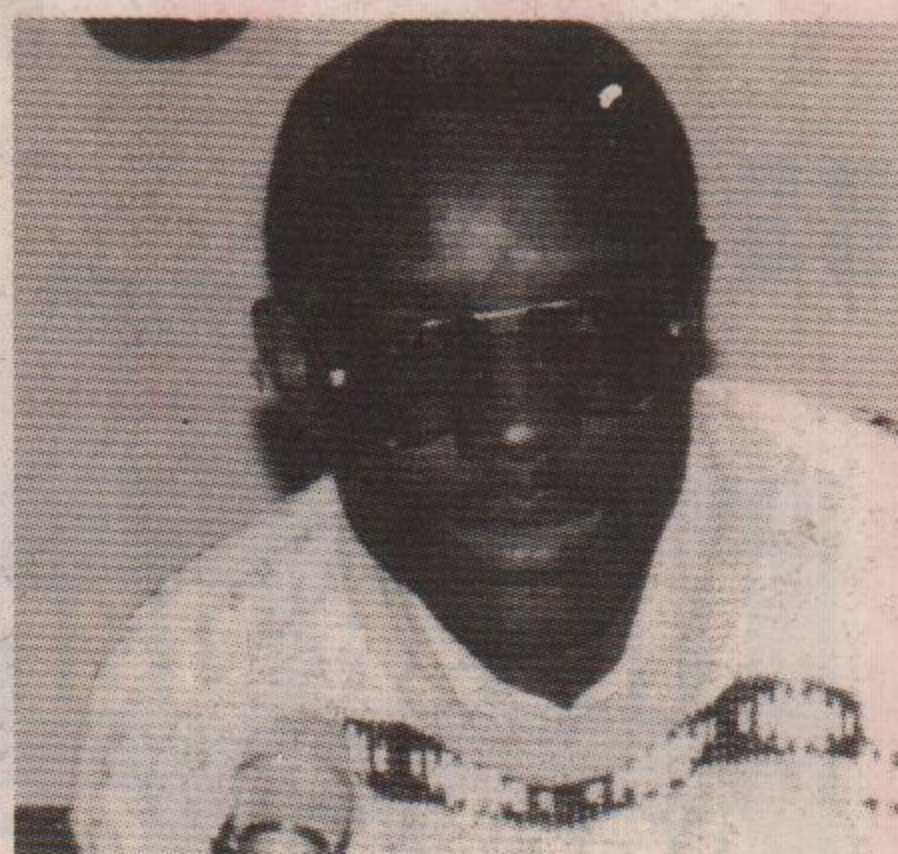
We must not forget that Rabin is the head not only of the Labour Party, but the right of the Labour Party which used to be known as "Likud B".

Finally, during the last year, there has been a situation where both Israeli progressives and important layers of Palestinians have felt there is no hope, that nothing can be changed. Shamir's image was of an unbreakable wall.

Now this has gone and people have hope again. This is what is positive about the election result. Despite illusions, the fact that people hope for change, will help mobilisation in the future.

Anthony Adebo must stay!

Anthony Adebo, seen here speaking at Workers' Liberty '92, is facing deportation. Anthony is originally from Nigeria. He has been living in Britain since 1985. He is a member of Southwark NALGO who are helping Anthony to campaign for the right to live in Britain.



Contact Southwark NALGO at 34 Peckham Road, London SE5

Euro-Nazis gather in London

By Jim Fraser

On 4 July, at a secret venue in Central London, the discredited historian and Nazi intellectual, David Irving, spoke at a seminar, dedicated to "revising" the history of the Nazis' murder of six million Jews.

The seminar was organised from the address, 20 Madeira Place, Brighton, the home of Anthony Hancock, who for decades has printed material such as the despicable "Did Six Million Really Die?" written by Richard Verrall, the former third top man in the National Front.

The revisionists deny the genocide of six million Jews and millions of other innocent people and seek to whitewash the Nazi regime. Rubbishing the testimony of survivors and of the British and other allied troops who liberated the concentration camps, and the admission of these crimes by the wartime Nazis themselves, the revisionists state that there were no concentration camps, gas chambers, mass murder or any Nazi atrocities! It is all Communist/Zionist propaganda!

Irving was the main founder of the Clarendon Club, whose meetings have been attended by right wing extremists from virtually every group, but especially the openly Nazi League of St George (LOSG).

At these dinners, presided over by Irving, the guests have included Tim Beardson, NF parliamentary candidate for Westminster, Tony Webber, NF directorate member, Mike Griffin, leader of the LOSG, John Ormow, one of the organisers of the notorious international rallies of the

fanatically Nazi Northern League in Brighton, and Column 88 leader Ian Souter-Clarence.

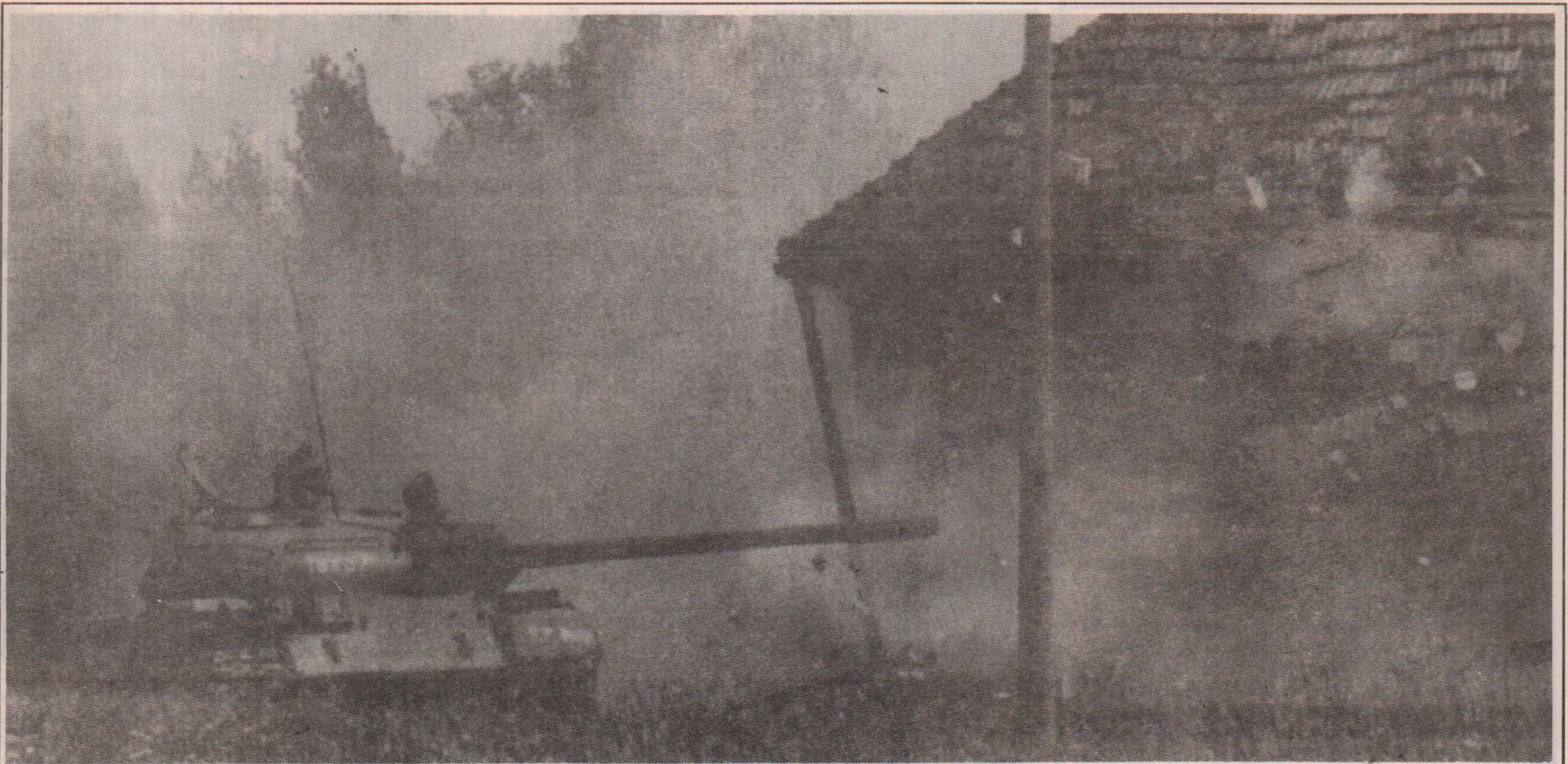
Also present at these dinners has been Steve Brady, for many years the international liaison officer of the LOSG, and Lucy Roberts, one of the senior members of the LOSG, whose home has been the venue for numerous Hitler birthday commemorations and who was herself involved with the Waffen SS during the Second World War.

Irving has addressed a number of meetings of the GPF in Germany. The GPF was founded in September 1960 by former members of the SS. Its initial aims included forming a bridge between former members of the Nazi Party and the German New Right.

Irving has also addressed and been the guest of honour at numerous rallies and meetings of the DVU in Germany. The DVU denies the Holocaust, strongly promotes anti-Holocaust reading in its newspaper *National-Zeitung*, and advertises and sells SS war memoirs and the official SS veterans' calendar. The DVU aims "to ensure that Germany's bedrock of Nazi opinion keeps its hand in". It glorifies the Third Reich, denies the crimes of Nazism and promotes xenophobia and anti-semitism.

In 1990, Irving was arrested as he led a violent international Nazi demonstration through the streets of Munich.

Irving is obsessed with the need for what he terms "benevolent repatriation" of Britain's black population, but has hinted threateningly that "benevolent repatriation is not the sole answer".



A Serbian attack on a Bosnian village. This is a primitive form of imperialism

The Yugoslav cock-pit

The old Yugoslav state broke down because, over the last decade, aggressive Serb chauvinism provoked and alarmed the smaller peoples, Croats and others, of the Yugoslav Federation.

At the heart of the chaos into which Yugoslavia has now dissolved is the predatory expansion of the Serbian state, led by neo-Stalinists whose regime has a great deal of popular support. They utilise people such as the Serbs in the territory claimed by Croatia to serve a drive which is essentially a drive to create the largest possible "Greater Serbia". It is a primitive form of imperialism, whose real content is summed up in the phrase which expresses their policy for non-Serbs: "ethnic cleansing".

Nationalism and chauvinism inevitably breeds... nationalism and chauvinism.

The Croats were pushed and provoked by the Serbs. But when Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia,

large numbers of Serbs — substantial majorities in some parts of the territory of historic Croatia — were cut off from other Serbs and trapped as a helpless minority in an alien state.

In the Croatian state set up under German patronage during World War Two, as many as half of the Serbs in Croatia — perhaps 3/4 of a million men, women and children — were massacred by Croat chauvinists, the Ustashe.

While Serb state leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic whose policies through the '80s led finally to the destruction of Yugoslavia were, as we have said, chauvinists, people motivated by the desire to aggrandise Serbia, the Serbs in independent Croatia did not have to be chauvinists to resolve to fight rather than submit to outright Croatian rule. They needed only to remember the not too distant past and look around them at the efforts being made to revive Ustashe banners, uniforms and catchcries in the new Croatia.

Thus while millions in Croatia — to stick to the one example — felt the understandable need for separation, they could not achieve independence without oppressing and threatening others. And not only in Yugoslavia. The whole of the Balkans is a crazy pavement of peoples and fragments of peoples interlocked and overlapping, and standing in the way of each others' full autonomy.

From this it followed that maintenance of a broad federal structure was the best possible way for the peoples of Yugoslavia to arrange their affairs. But the structures broke down; the central state apparatus became increasingly a tool of Serb domination, serving Serb expansion. Everything dissolved into the bloody chaos of many ethnic and national wars which is now raging.

Despite all the crimes of the Croatian chauvinists, the Croats' right to self-determination became the major issue between Croatia and Serbia; socialists have to uphold that

right, championing the minority rights of the Serbs within Croatia but denying to Serbia any right to use those minorities as a pretext for trying to conquer as much of Croatia as they can.

The Serb chauvinists were as aggressive against Kosovo and Slovenia where there were no big problems of an oppressed Serbian minority as against Croatia.

"Within this situation there is a growing demand for Western — UN, NATO — intervention to bring an end to the fighting. It is by no means certain that there will be Western military intervention. If there is, it is unlikely to bring peace or create a political framework within which the peoples of the former Yugoslavia can coexist."

Yugoslavia today may offer a picture of their own future to many other ethnically interlaced groups of people, including the occupants of large parts of the former Soviet Union.

Within this situation there is a growing demand for Western — UN, NATO — intervention to bring an end to the fighting. It is by no means certain that there will be Western military intervention. If there is, it is unlikely to bring peace or create a political framework within which the peoples of the former Yugoslavia can coexist. What military intervention would most likely amount to is action to stop Serbia expanding further, and to "freeze" the current carve-up of Bosnia. Already, anti-Serb sanctions are being mounted.

Is the conflict turning into something like the build-up to another edition of last year's war against Iraq? The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait quickly became the occasion for a savage Western war against Iraq.

Should socialists "Defend Serbia" from "Imperialist Aggression"?

If there is Western military intervention it will be a police action to avert chaos on the borders of the immensely powerful European community: it will be a limited police action. If the cluster of wars now going on are allowed to burn themselves out, they will go on for a long time, many thousands will die, hundreds of thousands and maybe millions will be "ethnically cleansed" into refugee camps, and "Greater Serbia" may become a lot greater than it is now.

As socialists and anti-imperialists, we have no confidence in the Western capitalist powers: we warn against relying on NATO or UN intervention; we advocate working-class independence. But in the name of what alternative would we denounce and condemn, and demand an immediate end to, a limited police action by the big powers?

On the ground that everything that "imperialist" Western European states do is ipso facto "imperialist" and wrong, even if it has desirable results? This is not Marxist or working class politics but absurd "oppositionism", nihilism.

On the ground that 'outside' intervention is always wrong? What meaning can such a 'principle' have in face of the bloody ethnic melée which is engulfing the peoples of Yugoslavia? Why has Serbia more 'right' in Bosnia than a UN army acceptable to the majority of Bosnians would have? That reasoning is absurd.

On the ground that neo-Stalinist Serbia is a 'socialist' or 'workers' state? It is nothing of the sort. But even if it were, then that would not require of socialists that we back Serbian imperialism, with all its

inevitable slaughters and "ethnic cleansings". Such a position would be a reductio ad absurdum of a decades-old 'tradition' of kitsch Trotskyist "defencist" policies for the Stalinist states. It is sheer nonsense, on every level.

Or should we oppose a big power police action because we believe the destruction of Serb power, the prevention of the consolidation of the Greater Serb state is the real goal of Western "imperialist" intervention? For certain, the Western powers will only intervene militarily, with all the accompanying costs, dangers and precedents, to serve their own interests.

There are powers with imperialist ambitions to gain semi-colonies and spheres of influence in Yugoslavia and the whole area round the Black Sea.

Turkey has been establishing close relations with the Muslim and Turkic-language republics of the ex-USSR. It probably hopes for influence in Macedonia, too: the prospect of an independent Macedonia, set loose by the break-up of Yugoslavia, has inflamed the ancient hostilities between Greece and Turkey.

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

Karl Marx
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The battling Brummies

Anyone who is feeling a little despondent about the state of the class struggle just at the moment, should visit the fair city of Birmingham. There you will find two important strikes taking place and two groups of workers who are determined to stand up for themselves against particularly nasty bosses.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

At first glance they don't appear to have much in common: at the Alcan Plate plant in Kitts Green, 300 mainly white, male workers are now entering their fifth week of strike action; over on the other side of town, 24 Asian workers – many of them women – have been out for the same length of time. The issue that both groups are fighting over is virtually the same: the Alcan workers are opposing the de-recognition of their unions (T&G, MSF and AEEU) while the Burnsall workers are demanding the recognition of their union, the GMB.

The Burnsall strikers haven't been unionised for very long: what persuaded them was the appalling health and safety conditions in the factory and the sacking of a (white) worker who refused to work overtime. The boss, one Mr Terry O'Neil, has said that he'd rather close down the company than recognise the union and it wouldn't be the first time that he's gone into liquidation, only to open up elsewhere under another name. As far as the strikers are concerned, they'd rather see the factory closed than go back without recognition (though, obviously, that would not be the ideal outcome). It's a small factory, but it supplies major car manufacturers like Rover and Jaguar. If Burnsall's products were blacked at the big car plants, Mr O'Neil would very soon have to adopt a more conciliatory tone. But here we come to the problem of the anti-union laws: the GMB officials in charge of the dispute (who are on the 'left' of the union and in many respects have been doing a good job) back away from any suggestion of secondary action as though it was the plague.

It's a similar story at Alcan: this is a major manufacturer with 36 other plants round the country, all of which stand to suffer a similar fate if the Birmingham strike goes down. The strikers have had donations and personal visits from workers in several of the other plants (notably Glasgow and Rogerstone, South Wales) but any talk of solidarity action (even in the form of a one day strike) is stamped on for fear of the law.

Again, the officials seem quite serious about fighting to win and the main negotiator is a T&G left winger with a good reputation. But secondary action is "out of the question".

It is quite possible that both disputes could win without spreading the action. Morale is high, regular mass meetings are being held and picketing is solid in both strikes. Best of all the two groups of workers have made contact (thanks to the Birmingham Trades Council) and have publicly identified with each other. But in both cases, secondary action would bring the bosses to the negotiating table much faster than the long, bitter road of going it alone.

Contact the Burnsall's strike c/o GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen, West Mids.
Alcan Strike Committee: 435 Somerville Rd, Small Heath, Birmingham B10



On the Burnsall's picket line. Photo Mark Salman.



Militant are pathologically opposed to the self-organisation of the oppressed.

Er... out, er... proud, er... Militant

By John Davidson

At the end of 1986, about 20 lesbian and gay members of *Militant* met in complete secrecy to discuss setting up a caucus. A few years before, an attempt had been made but documents between comrades had fallen into the hands of the full-time apparatus.

Learning from this, only comrades who were 100% trusted were invited. A schematic outline of the historical oppression of homosexuality was developed and two representatives were sent off to Lynn Walsh to demand an official caucus.

Walsh opposed the demand for the democratic right of lesbians and gay men to choose their sexuality and counterposed it to 'toleration of lesbians and gay men'.

The two arguments being, firstly, that we had a democratic right to form a caucus and secondly, that if there could be an Art and Culture caucus, there should be no reason not to have a lesbian and gay caucus!

At first it was rebuffed, but, with threats of resignation and independent organisation if it was not conceded officially, a caucus was established in early 1987.

A year later, at the height

of the campaign against Section 28, pressure began building for major articles to appear in the *Militant*. A back page for the demonstration in April against Clause 28 and similarly for Pride of that year.

From the perspective of the leadership of the *Militant*, the level of self-organisation and discussion independent of the full-time apparatus was racing ahead of their vision of the way caucuses were meant to be – tame and subservient to the main economist programme of the organisation.

At a crunch caucus in early 1988, Walsh opposed the demand for the democratic right of lesbians and gay men to choose their sexuality and counterposed it to 'toleration of lesbians and gay men', exposing his and the *Militant's* prejudices.

To howls of protest, he replied: "I meant the 18th century definition of toleration".

This was a watershed; over 20 people either left immediately or drifted out over the next year or so, since the main reason they had stayed in the *Militant* was to turn it around on lesbian and gay issues was thrown back at them.

Four years later, a pamphlet appeared which illuminated the degree to which a serious and thorough understanding of the oppression of lesbians and gay men has been stamped

out in favour of a formalistic, propagandist 24 pages of fitting lesbians and gay men into the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies... etc.

There is nothing wrong with demanding repeal of Section 28, Section 31 of the Criminal Justice Bill etc., but it poses no answers or solutions to alleviate and eventually eradicate the oppression of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

For an organisation which

is pathologically opposed to the self-organisation of oppressed groups of workers – unless they control the organisation – it failed to even mention the right of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals to self-organisation in the Labour Party, in the community and, specifically, in the trade unions.

The *Militant* have illustrated their contempt for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals except in their own peculiar organisation.

Queers Only?

By Maria Exall

Outrage, the gay pressure group has decided to ban representations from anti-sexist, anti-racist groups involved within it.

The most recent meeting ruled that discussion can only be on the specific issue of homophobia. Up until now representatives from anti-racist groups such as Lesbians and Gays Against Racism and Fascism and women's groups such as LABIA (Lesbians Answer Back in Anger) attended Outrage meetings and reported back. Now all contributions are limited to what an Outrage meeting declares relevant.

The internal workings

of Outrage as one of the most well known gay organisations does affect how lesbians and gay men organise the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation. It is to be regretted that the narrowing of the struggle in this way will not help build broad alliances against homophobia.

Outrage itself as a mainly male, mainly white, consciously non-politically aligned organisation has effectively excluded the participation of many lesbians, black people and gays in the labour movement. We need to build a broad based lesbian and gay movement capable of working with straights to achieve lesbian and gay liberation.

The choice for council trade unions:

Fighting back or selling conditions?

By Chris Croome,
Sheffield branch
NALGO shop stewards
organiser

Labour councils are now more than ever behaving like other employers. It is essential that local authority trade unionists stop supporting Labour councils when they enthusiastically implement Tory plans. Local Authority trade unionists must adopt an independent fighting attitude to Labour council employers as to all others.

But in Sheffield City Council an appalling precedent is in danger of being set by the leadership of the council trade unions. They have let themselves be brainwashed into accepting cuts in the wages and conditions of the workers so that the council can balance its budget. The unions positively promote "packages" of cuts to try and avoid redundancies! In the works department (DLO) recently, £4.1 million worth of employees' terms and conditions were traded for a two hour cut in the working week and the postponement of 250 redundancies. The leadership of NALGO use this as a precedent. They say that since workers who stormed the Town Hall last year now negotiate cuts, white collar staff must accept a pay cut as well.

In the works department the leadership of the stewards' committee itself played a key role in putting together, and winning support for,



a manual and craft package that involves the scrapping of overtime payments, the cutting of allowances and the introduction of flexible working patterns. The deal meant a cut in the daily allowance from 10% to 5% and the scrapping of the "Cathedral agreement" under which workers receive their bus fares from the cathedral to their work. These two concessions alone amount to a pay cut of between £20 and £30 for some members!

For some of the engineers, the scrapping of overtime could lead to an effective pay cut of up to £3,000 a year.

All this has not been forced on the unions follow-

ing a defeat at the hands of the employer — it has come from a union leadership that has not dared even to prepare a fight. No campaign, no preparation and no strategy — that sums them up.

The cuts package was accepted in a ballot by a vote of around 1,000 to 900. If there had been a serious preparation for a battle against cuts, then the ballot would have gone the other way.

Even before the manual and craft ballot, the largest white-collar union in the works department, NALGO, had sold out its members.

At a mass meeting the NALGO Stewards Committee and the branch leadership spent an hour and a half convincing the members that the only way forward was to accept a one day a month pay cut for the next three months "in order to force management to negotiate a proper package".

This was in response to management proposing either 40 job losses or a series of cuts in terms and conditions. No real alternative to surrender was put to the meeting, but the vote was still quite close — 180 to 100.

The right wing say that those who voted against the pay cut wanted to see redundancies. Many members did not think so. One of the Treasurer's Shop Stewards called for a fight to defend jobs and conditions and got the biggest round of applause at the meeting. The workers would have responded to a lead.

Redundancies are threatened in two other sections of the council — 210 in grounds maintenance and 49 in architects. These sections

must not go down the road of the works department! They must fight. They will if the shop stewards and branch officials give a lead to the members.

A recent meeting of the architects division overwhelmingly rejected a call for negotiations on pay cuts linked to a shorter working week. Although another call for immediate industrial action was defeated, it is clear that members would, given a lead, be prepared to take action in defence of jobs and conditions.

The pay cut idea was rejected despite a long speech from senior branch officer, Paul Hudson, arguing that the only way forward was to work with the Leader of the council in the hope that he could force through a pay cut instead of management's policy of making redundancies.

The NALGO branch as a whole must take a firm stand in defence of both jobs and conditions.

A special general meeting on 28 July will consider two proposals. The Branch Executive, made up of the shop stewards, wants to oppose redundancies and cuts in terms and conditions; the Branch leadership wants a three option ballot: a pay cut, industrial action or redundancies.

The current Branch policy advocates pay cuts as an alternative to redundancies. It must be overturned! If the branch leadership refuses to fight, then a new branch leadership must be elected. There are plenty of members and shop stewards in the branch wanting to fight. The left must help them win.

In whose interest: the workers' or the council's?

Leading city council trade unionists need to stop reacting to the employer's offensive in a defensive way. Their current way of looking at the situation is more akin to paternal managers who want to soften the blows rather than trade unionists fighting for the interests of the members. The trade union leaders just regard the situation from the point of view of the councillors — there is a £700 million budget, a £13 million "gap" and cuts have to be made somewhere. Bridging that gap is not the trade unions' responsibility — it's the council's problem.

By their actions the council trade unions must force the council to

try to get more money from central government, instead of implementing the Tories' cuts.

The key thing at the moment, however, is that it is the trade unions' responsibility to act in the interests of their members — by fighting to defend every job and all conditions. It is not their job to come up with solutions for a bankrupt Labour council.

Currently the trade unions are not building a campaign amongst the members — this is crucial — in order to prepare them for a fight over redundancies and cuts. City council trade unions also need to initiate a city-wide campaign involving service users.

History in our genes

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

Continuing an occasional series on genetics inspired by Dr Steve Jones' 1991 Reith Lectures.

Steve Jones' fourth lecture showed how our history can be read or deduced from our genes. This surprising fact is a consequence of the intervention of chance into the spread of genes.

It works like this: if a large population is descended from a relatively small group of founders, then any genes carried perhaps by a single member of that group, no matter how rare in the parent population from which the founders came, will become common.

One striking example of this is to be found in the Afrikaaner people of South Africa. These are descended from a small number of Dutch immigrants as is shown by the fact that one million of them share just twenty surnames, such as Botha and van der Merwe.

It is believed that just one of these founders was carrying a gene for the rare disorder porphyria. She has passed this gene to 30,000 Afrikaaners, the disease being known as Van Roojen Disease since so many sufferers have that surname. There are more porphyria cases in Johannesburg than in the whole of Holland, a striking example of the "founder effect".

Examination of other genetic "surnames" around the world reveal other cases where a large population has grown from a tiny group, acting as a bottleneck. Only the blood group genes (the ABO system) have been examined worldwide but statistical analysis suggests that all human populations outside Africa originate from a group of about one hundred people who left Africa about 100,000 years ago. This is supported by analysis of the genes carried by mitochondria, little bodies inside our cells that produce energy. These are passed to us by our mothers and all modern mitochondrial genes in non-African populations seem to come from just one woman, presumably one of those in the little group of emigrants. (To call her "Eve", as some have, is rather misleading. There must have been other women in the group but their mitochondrial genes did not get passed down very far.)

A later genetic bottleneck was that through which the "native" American population passed about 15,000 years ago. Genetic evidence suggests that all native peoples in the Americas are descended from about ten lineages. Patagonians and Alaskans are more similar than many groups living just a few miles apart in other parts of the world.

Genetic patterns and distributions can help tell us about

the nature of ancient societies. The genes on the Y chromosome, carried by men, are far less variable than those on other chromosomes. This indicates that in the past many and perhaps most men did not get to pass on their genes. Only the most successful and powerful ones had children. The modern hunter-gatherer people known as the Yanomamo illustrate this process: in one village, it was found that four men had more than forty grandchildren, 25 had only one and many more had none. Women tended to bear the same number of offspring.

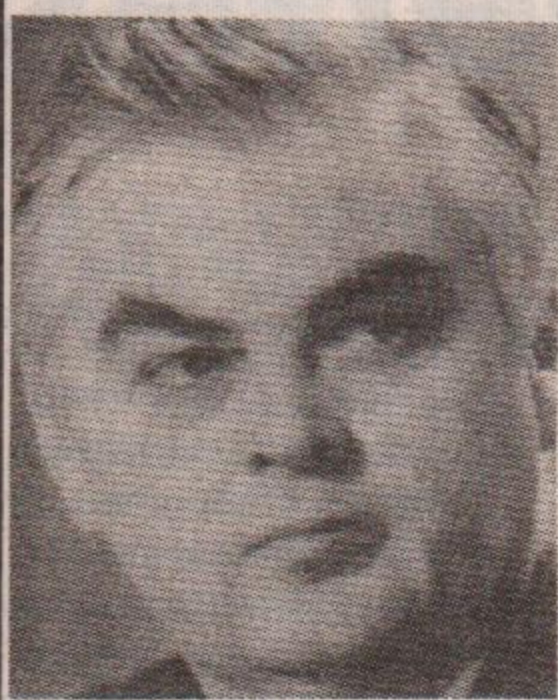
The spread of farming techniques, with the population explosion which accompanied it, had an effect on the distribution of genes. Farming took about 4,000 years to cross Europe from Greece in the south-east, reaching Britain about 5,000 years ago. As the farmers spread, they interbred with the hunter-gatherer population. This is shown by genetic maps based on over twenty variable genes. Most of these show a trend across Europe from south-east to north-west.

Frequently, the distribution of languages (and even of dialects) shadows the distribution of genes. In Wales, there are differences between those who speak the southern dialect, *languê d'oc*, and the northern language, *languê d'oeil*. In the region north and south of the Pyrenees live the Basque people who speak a language completely unrelated to any other in Europe. Perhaps it is the remains of the language spoken before agriculture arrived. At any rate, their genes are different to those of the rest of the European population, showing that they did not mix with the incoming farming peoples, at least until quite late in their history.

Basque genes are found in a wider area than is the Basque language, and gene distribution can indicate ethnic differences even where language differences have died out. Thus the people of the Orkneys, whose Scandinavian language, *Norn*, died out in the last century, are genetically different from the rest of the Scottish population. Even the Etruscans, whose language and civilisation died out over 2,000 years ago, live on in the genes of the people of central Italy. Some linguists have embarked on an ambitious project to link all languages in some fantastic family tree. They have achieved some degree of success in demonstrating similarities between some rather basic words right across the world.

Geneticists have already made up a similar tree for genes, with the Africans in one branch, the Indo-Europeans in another, the American Indians and the Asiatic peoples in another branch and the Australian and New Guinea peoples in another branch. When the two trees, for language and for genes, are put side by side, they look rather similar. Clearly, our DNA carries much information about our history.

Proof: the recession is over!



Norman gets what he wants from the *Economist*

GRAFFITI

Is the bosses' weekly mag, the *Economist*, clutching at straws in its most recent attempt to prove that the recession is over? The magazine ran all the quality papers through a computer programme to count the number of articles using the word recession. Such stories have climbed from 776 in the first quarter of 1990 to a peak of 6,524 in the first quarter of this year. But in the last three months the number of stories mentioning the R-word has fallen below 5,000. So it seems that at last Norman Lamont has what he wants – the first really concrete evidence of recovery. Next week – the *Financial Times* counts the cracks in paving stones to prove that stock prices really are booming.

Rupert Murdoch doesn't run foul of the British government too often, but now it seems that his BSKyB movie channel is set to break the broadcasting ban on members of Sinn Fein in Britain, as well as a similar law in the Irish Republic. TV journalists have successfully circumvented the ban by overdubbing the voice of Sinn Fein members with the voices of actors – saying the same words in lip sync albeit often in some of the most implausible of Irish accents.

The movie which is set to land BSKyB in hot water is Ken Loach's *Hidden Agenda*, a competent political thriller set in Northern Ireland although not without political flaws. The problem with the film is that one of the characters in the film is a Sinn Fein councillor. No problem with that, actors are allowed to play the part of Sinn Fein members. Except the actor who plays the part is the real Sinn Fein councillor Jim McAllister. How the law is interpreted remains to be seen, but we may be left with the situation where any actor playing a part sympathetic to Sinn Fein has to submit themselves to a test to make sure they are not.

It is quite right that the dentists have taken a stand against the Tories at cutting their funding and encouraging creeping privatisation in the NHS. But maybe it is tactically wrong to boycott new NHS work – it might be a better ploy to refuse pri-

vate work. Imagine, the first ministerial aching molar going untreated, then we'd see some action.

Outside a recent London meeting of the "No to Maastricht Campaign" was long term member of the Communist Party Alfred Stalin (aged 76). And what is this he's selling? Why its "Young Communist". And here comes his long term party comrade and internationalist Betty Stalin (we went to war against Germany last time etc.), age 78, who promptly bought a copy of "Young Communist". Before you jump to hasty conclusions bare in mind that by the CPB's standards these are young people, most of their membership are much older.

On the subject of Stalinists dying out, the would-be-bureaucrats club known as *Socialist Action* had their AGM in London last week. Attendance on the Sunday, 20 people. It goes to prove that you don't have to be old to be threatened with extinction, the dodo was just stupid.

Our ouija board department has succeeded in contacting Ted Grant, who having shrugged off the mortal coil of *Militant* has gone to a better place, well slightly, known as *Socialist Appeal*. Grant has started spilling the beans on how big the *Militant* really was at its height, Grant claims that they never had more than 1,500 paid up members, whereas they claimed more than 4 times this amount. Rumour also has it that *Militant* has had to dispense with the services of 30% of its fulltimers.

Whether any of this is true or merely sour grapes from an old man who created a group in his own image and found it incapable of thought remains to be seen.

The reports of the death of US hegemony are certainly premature – and one person who agrees is Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada. He said of last weeks G-7 economic summit of leading world powers – "We could have a G-1. We could move Mr Bush around from year to year, put him in a room so he could cogitate for three days, and then come out and tell everybody what it thinks."



Grant: sour grapes or Marxist insight?

Your soaraway, scrupulous.. Sun?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Last Saturday, the *Sun* worked itself up into a fine old lather of indignation over a case of press "invasion of privacy". Another paper had "sneaked" on a woman, revealing that she had once been an unmarried mother. The *Sun* had known about it, but had nobly decided "it was nobody's business but her own".

Well, that's a turn-up for the books, isn't it? The *Sun*, after all, is usually at the receiving end of that kind of complaint. But this "story" was a little different: the woman in question is Virginia Bottomley, Mr Major's jolly-hockey-sticks Health Secretary. Twenty five years ago she was an unmarried teenage mum for three months, before marrying the child's father.

So what? I hear you asking. Well, for a start, Mrs Bottomley has just

launched a White Paper which proposes amongst other things, the halving of teenage pregnancies. Indeed, it could be argued that (in the words of the *Sun*), "her genuine care is motivated by first hand knowledge of the problems faced by a young girl with a

"the Indie ... holier-than-thou editorial tone and frequent admonition of the tabloid press must have made it an irresistible target for Kelvin and the boys at Wapping."

baby".

Equally, it could be pointed out that the government of which Mrs Bottomley is a member has presided over the closure of a quarter of all local authority family planning clinics and refused to put sex education into the national curriculum. It might also be noted that while Mrs Bottomley's husband Peter (also a Tory MP) rushes off to the Press Complaints Commission, charging "invasion of privacy", unmarried mothers who

apply to the DSS for Income Support are routinely subjected to the most humiliating invasion of privacy – in the form of intimate cross-examination about their private lives – thanks to legislation introduced by the Tory government.

The paper that broke the Bottomley "story" was the *Independent* which may well help explain the ferocity of the *Sun*'s reaction. You don't have to agree with the *Sun*'s extraordinary description of the *Indie* as "a left wing paper" to appreciate that its holier-than-thou editorial tone and frequent admonition of the tabloid press must have made it an irresistible target for Kelvin and the boys at Wapping.

Why, only a couple of years ago the *Independent*'s editor, the saintly Andreas Whittam-Smith, personally drew up a code of practice for editors, laying down rules on press standards.

The suspicion must be that Whittam-Smith himself was unsure of the wisdom of publishing the Bottomley revelation: if he had been confident of its validity as a genuine "public interest" story, he would surely have given it prominence on the front pages.

Instead, it was tucked away at the back, as though the paper was slightly ashamed of publishing it at all. A mistake.

Jewish organisations and many other people who believe that some degree of sensitivity is called for when dealing with matters concerning the holocaust, have been appalled by the *Sunday Times*' £85,000 fee to revisionist "historian" David Irving for transcribing the diaries of Joseph Goebbels. Irving, you may recall, is the man who once described the gas chambers of Auschwitz as "a figment of British war-time propaganda".

Now it turns out that in its efforts to "spoil" the *Sunday Times* "scoop" the *Daily Mail* paid £17,000 to one Francois Genoud, a banker and lawyer who controls the "literary estates" of Hitler, Goebbels and Bormann. Genoud is an active neo-Nazi and gives funds to Nazi war criminals, European fascist groups and "Anti-Zionist" terrorist groups.

Strange, isn't it, that the outcry over this doesn't seem to be as vigorous as that which followed the "Diana" revelations from these same two newspapers?

A right to die?

WOMEN'S EYE



By Rebecca Van Homan

Young people up to the age of 18 have no absolute legal right to choose their own medical care, the Court of Appeal ruled this week. The case was that of a 16 year old anorexic woman who was refusing specialist treatment.

This judgement sets a precedent in over-ruling the Family Law Reform Act which for the last 20 years has regarded 16-18 year olds as adults when

it came to medical care.

The worrying implication for this ruling is that parents have increased rights over their children's bodies. For example, if a 16 year old wanted an abortion, technically now her parents could stop her.

This ruling also reverses the decision made in the *Mother-of-eleven*, Victoria Gillick crusade to prevent under-18 year olds getting contraception. (Her daughter has since had an abortion.)

It also sets a wider agenda, though, in increasing parental choice and reducing young people's rights. 16-18 year olds are invisible people; they have no rights to a grant or income support, they cannot vote or drink alcohol. Yet they are still faced with the pressures

of poverty or slave labour on Government training schemes (if they can get a place).

"The lack of a youth movement denies people political answers, so the logical step is the hedonism of raves and taking mind-numbing drugs."

The lack of a youth movement denies people political answers, so the logical step is the hedonism of raves and taking mind-numbing drugs.

When I was at school, two of my friends died of

anorexia. They simply starved themselves to death. One because of excessive parental pressure to succeed in exams and become a doctor, the other because of the cumulative effect of years of parental abuse.

In a world where children are powerless yet faced with so many pressures, some will rebel in the only aspect of their lives they still control – to refuse food until they die. As socialists we are in favour of increasing rights and freedoms for people. Weighing all things up, I think this young woman should be allowed to die.

Only socialism can change the social conditions to make people's lives better and at the same time give children back their rights.

Resistance grows to Smith's agenda

By Colin Foster

John Smith plans to shift the Labour Party even further towards pale-pink Toryism.

His agenda after being elected as the new Labour Party leader on 18 July — as he is certain to be — is already mapped out.

The right of local Labour Parties to choose Labour candidates for parliament will be cut down. At the Labour Party conference this October, the platform will try to push through proposals to require a "trigger ballot" before any sitting Labour MP can be challenged, and

to do the selection of candidates by "one member, one vote", disenfranchising local trade union affiliates.

The Labour Party conference will be turned into more of a media show — like the Tory Party conference, or the American party conventions — than a democratic gathering. This October, the Party leadership will try to take away the right of trade unions and local Labour Parties to send resolutions to Conference. Under their proposals, all resolutions will have to be sieved through "Standing Commissions", a new "National Policy Forum", the National

Executive, and the Conference Arrangements Committee.

Power will be transferred from the open floor of Conference to the closed chambers of the Shadow Cabinet, the National Executive, and the new "Forum", in which MPs, MEPs, Labour councillors, and the National Executive will outnumber elected representatives from the trade unions and local Labour Parties.

John Smith and his friends also plan to change the method for electing the Labour Party leader. In *Tribune* (10 July), Smith's campaign manager Robin Cook

outlines his ideas.

Local Labour Party members should vote by post, with the count done centrally rather than in each constituency. Levy-paying members of affiliated trade unions should also vote by post, and their votes too should be counted centrally, presumably weighted to be worth less than those of individual Party members. The votes of Labour MPs should then be added in to produce the final result.

This is a scheme for removing any input into the Labour Party from collective working-class deliberation and decision-making, and replacing it with postal plebiscites.

Those postal plebiscites will inevitably be shaped and heavily influenced by the capitalist media, while Labour Party and trade union meetings are left with no powers and little purpose. And, apart from that, the scheme would be ruinously expensive!

These proposals are to be considered by a "commission" set up by Labour's National Executive in May to review relations between the Party and the trade unions.

Fundamentally, John Smith, like Neil Kinnock, sees little use in an active Labour Party membership which may have its own ideas and its own priorities, and little advantage in direct and accountable links with trade unions which are likely to insist on trade union demands.

He wants a passive Party, where all the "campaigning" is done by press releases and media stunts.

On policy, the major new ideas of the Labour right wing are to accept Tory thinking in two further areas — "targetting" (that is, means-testing) of welfare benefits, and

compulsory competitive tendering for public services.

How stupid can the right wing be? They just want to press on down the same road that led to defeat in the General Election on 9 April — making Labour a pale understudy of the Tories, signalling to working-class voters that Labour is a shifty, opportunist outfit with no real alternative to offer and no ideas of its own.

Increasing numbers of Labour Party and trade union members see the futility of that course. Even if they vote for Smith on 18 July — and the way the leadership election was organised left little alternative — they will start to organise against Smith's policies.

The Labour Left conference called by the Campaign Group of MPs in Leeds on 20 June was over 500 strong, the biggest gathering of the Labour Left for many years. Little definite organisation came out of it, but it reflected a change in mood.

The leadership contest started out with John Smith and Bryan Gould competing to see who could be most right-wing, and ended with all the candidates protesting how much they valued Labour's trade union link and how radical their ideas were! That, too, reflects a shifting mood in the Party rank and file.

Local Labour Parties have been deciding their resolutions for the Party conference in October, and it is already clear that there will be several resolutions supporting the trade union link, defending Labour Party democracy, and demanding that Labour commit itself to free the trade unions from the Tories' legal hobbles.



Labour's collaboration with the Tories' poll tax is part of the reason why it lost the election. Smith is no alternative

Tweedledees and Tweedledums in the leadership contest

JOHN SMITH

John Smith has a solid right-wing pedigree, stretching back to his days as chair of Glasgow University Labour Club. A supporter first of the "Manifesto" group and then of the "Solidarity" group, his name has featured regularly on the right-wing slates for the Shadow Cabinet.

Solidly anti-*Militant* (in 1982, when the witch-hunt started, he was to the fore in calling for expulsions) and anti-abortion rights, his one political service of any value is to deflate the myth that there is something inherently progressive in being Scottish.

Smith's policy commitments — continuing membership of the ERM, a positive partnership with private industry, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, etc.,

etc. — are hardly the stuff of which bold socialist programmes are made.

The guiding lights of the manifesto are caution and evasion. Policies "need to be developed", issues "need to be looked at again", ideas "need to be examined in an open-minded way", policy development must be subject to "a searching and wide ranging review."

Where have we heard all this before? We heard it from the outgoing leadership for five solid years prior to the defeat on 9 April: a Policy Review, a "modernisation" of policy, and a "revamping" of party organisation.

John Smith's "New Paths to Victory" turn out to be nothing more than the old paths to defeat.

JOHN PRESCOTT

"With John, what you see is what you get. He represents the core working class support that Labour has got to retain, and they identify with him," writes Joan Lester MP in her rather guarded endorsement of John Prescott's candidature.

In many ways Prescott is a heavier-weight maritime version of Dennis Skinner, but with a list on the starboard side. He has been outspoken against anything to do with Europe (including the Channel Tunnel).

Prescott is standing as the Mr

Fixit who will sort out party organisation on the basis of a three-point "plan of urgent action".

Firstly, we must "understand fully why we lost". After "full participation by Party members", an interim report would go to Party conference.

Point two is to "build a mass membership Party". We must "make the Party more attractive, especially not hostile to women."

But some members of Prescott's campaign team, such as Sheffield MP Richard Caborn, are keener on expelling party members than winning new ones.

Point three in Mr Fixit's action plan is "internal democracy" — a thought not uppermost in the mind of John Prescott in recent years when he has supported all the suspensions, expulsions and imposed candidates.

His public emphasis on defending links between the Labour Party and trade unions also represents a departure from his "action plan", in which he calls for "one member, one vote", and "a proper balance between decisions by individual members and decisions by representative democracy at conference, including reform of the block vote".

BRYAN GOULD

Bryan Gould has played a leading role in the construction of Kinnock's New Model Labour

Party. He has connived in every carve-up to undermine democracy and debate within the Labour Party.

But now Gould finds himself the victim of the same kind of stitch-up, and he is bleating about how "fixing has been substituted for voting" in the leadership contest.

In there is a lot about "empowerment of individuals and communities", "space for people to live their own lives", "the right of people to develop their full potential in whichever way they choose", etc., etc., but no proposals beyond a re-hash of the various right wing policies adopted by Labour in recent years. If Gould's programme is "radical", then the now defunct SDP was revolutionary.

His proposals are so modest that he has to bemoan the fact that "every idea or policy initiative I have put forward has been taken up by one or other of my opponents".

MARGARET BECKETT

In 1976 Margaret Beckett was reckoned a left-winger. Then she took over from Joan Lester as Junior Minister for Education — when Lester had resigned in protest at cuts in education.

Now in the deputy leadership contest, Beckett is making a great play of her left-wing credentials — backing the miners' strike, opposing the expulsion of *Militant* in the



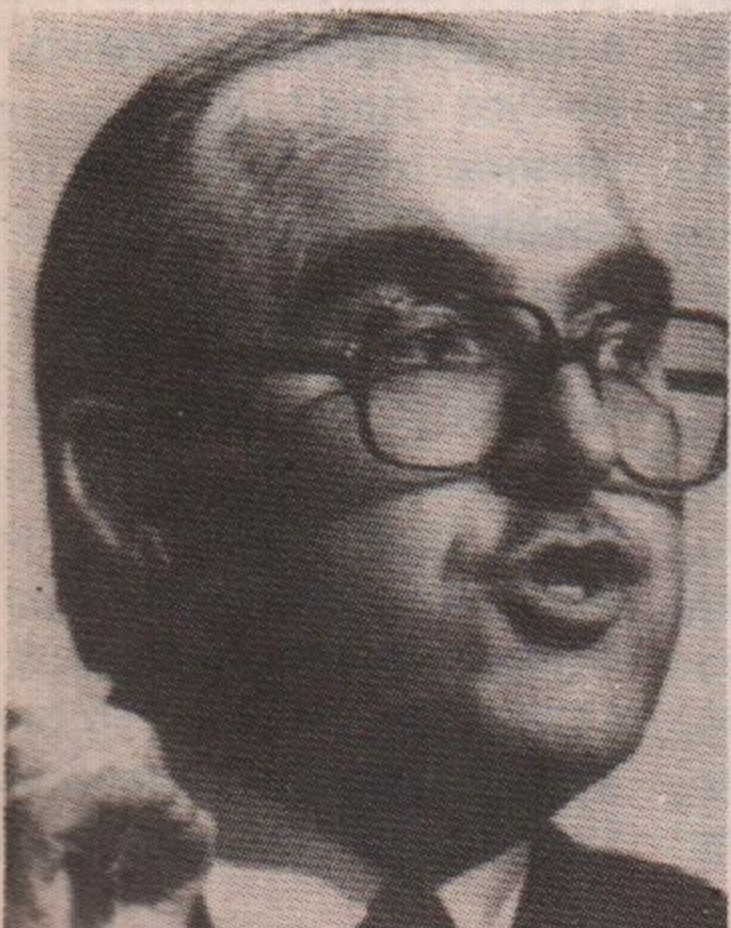
mid-1980s, and keeping up membership of CND.

Strangely, she has not mentioned her most notable left-wing speech: an outspoken attack on Neil Kinnock at a *Tribune* rally in 1981, when Kinnock refused to back Tony Benn for deputy leader.

Beckett backed Kinnock for party leader in 1983, and resigned from the Campaign Group in 1988 when they decided to challenge Kinnock for party leader.

"There is a clear and continuing role for the left in the Labour Party," she recently told *Tribune*. But differences of opinion "are now aired in a much more comradely fashion".

Suspensions, expulsions, bans on left wing newspapers, imposed parliamentary candidates and rigged leadership contests! Is that a "comradely fashion" to run a party?



Britain's New Right: what does it stand for?

The Tories, sex

The Tories, sex and the family is taken from a speech by Martin Durham at Workers' Liberty '92. Martin Durham is a lecturer at Wolverhampton Poly.

In the late 1970s there was a lot of publicity given to the rise in America of what was called the New Right particularly those sections known as the New Christian Right, like Moral Majority and Christian Voice. Those organisations campaigned vigorously against liberalism and feminism.

They were particularly concerned with issues like abortion, sex education and homosexuality. They played an important part in the rise to power of Ronald Reagan and have remained active since then in trying to bring about the changes in American society that they were set up to achieve. They have been most visible recently around the abortion issue.

In the same period in the late '70s we saw the rise in Britain of a New Right and its influence on the higher echelons of the Tory Party - for instance, through Margaret Thatcher, Keith Joseph and Rhodes Boyson.

We saw the Thatcher government come into existence against the background of, among other things, arguments about abortion, pornography, homosexuality and women in the workplace.

The result was that a large number of socialists, feminists and liberal writers argued that in the late '70s and 1980s - just as in the USA - we have a New Right that is centrally concerned with carrying out a sexual counter-revolution, that what you were seeing in Britain was a Thatcher government engaged in a deliberate moral offensive, trying to roll back the 1960s on issues like abortion, pornography and homosexuality. Organisations like SPUC, Life and Mary Whitehouse's Viewers and Listeners Association were all part of the New Right's offensive.

The argument I want to make is that none of this is true.

There is not a New Right in Britain centrally concerned with a sexual counter-revolution. There has not been a Thatcher government moral offensive try-

ing to systematically roll back the 1960s. There is not an involvement of SPUC, Life, the Viewers and Listeners Association or Family and Youth Concern in the New Right as part of a moral offensive.

Much of this fits the USA. Although I think if we look at the USA we would find a lot of the coverage has been misleading. But none of this fits Britain.

If we look at the 1980s we find a New Right which is very different from the American New Right. The American New Right is only a part of the conservative movement. Even the New Right itself, although it made "pro-life", "pro-family" issues part of the cutting edge, is only part of that edge. The US New Right were strongly concerned with other issues, particularly foreign policy and issues like the Contras. This is even more the case with the conservative movement in general which was strongly concerned with economics and social policy.

It may well be that we overstated how important sexual issues were to the American right. Certainly it is true that these issues were more important to them, and remain more important, than is the custom in right-wing politics. However it is true that the British New Right is very different from the American. Still, as late as 1992, no one can be bothered to study, for instance, the main New Right groups in this country. There is no article about the Joseph-Thatcher think-tank the Centre For Policy

"There are also some libertarian New Rightists. The best example in Britain would be Teresa Gorman, subject of a rather favourable profile in *Tribune* and in the past some good coverage in *Marxism Today*. Teresa Gorman and others have been examples of people who take liberal views on sexual issues."

Studies or about the free market think-tank the Institute of Economic Affairs. There is nothing about the Adam Smith Institute.



Lifers demonstrate in favour of the Alton Bill. Despite their best efforts abortion has not been restricted under the

There is not even anything produced about the Salisbury Review (and their importance is overstated).

There is no available study of any of the New Right groups in this country. But if you examine the British New Right I suggest you will find they are overwhelmingly concerned with economic issues and social policy questions such as welfare state dependency.

The welfare dependency question has an impact on the family. But what you do not find in the main New Right groups - the Salisbury Review is an exception, but not the main New Right groups - is any concern with reversing abortion rights or sex education or opposing homosexuality. These groups do not find these issues important.

This is different to saying you can not find any of these issues in the New Right. In one of the

second division groups of the New Right, the Freedom Association, we find not - as has been suggested - a moral offensive but instead that these issues are one of the concerns of some of the prominent people in the Freedom Association. Others in the Freedom Association regard this as a waste of time. There are also some libertarian New Rightists. The best example in Britain would be Teresa Gorman, subject of a rather favourable profile in *Tribune* and in the past some good coverage in *Marxism Today*. Teresa Gorman and others have been examples of people who take liberal views on sexual issues.

There are some individuals in say the Freedom Association, the Centre for Policy Studies and most importantly the Conservative Family Campaign, the last who explicitly compare themselves to the members of the US

Moral Majority. At its peak the Family Campaign had 31 MPs in its ranks. These people are comparable to the Americans - deliberately so. But the bulk of the British New Right, rather than being libertarian or moralist are not concerned with the issues central to the American New Right.

I will go further. If we draw up a balance sheet of the Thatcher years it does not fit the notion of a moral majority offensive. What do we find? We see some rhetoric from Mrs Thatcher and leading ministers about the family.

Secondly, we find some moments of legislation. For instance the Thatcher government introduced Clause 28, which was intended to stop local council "promotion" of homosexuality. The Thatcher government introduced legislation on sex education which

and the family



"Human Concern" or Life's paper "Life News" or Mary Whitehouse's "Viewers and Listeners" or attend their national conferences you will find that these organisations include many who are Conservatives. It is true that many activists in these movements would prefer a Conservative government to the party of "wickedness", the Labour Party or the party of David Steel - introducer of the 1967 Abortion Act - the Liberals.

Nevertheless, the activists are extraordinarily embittered towards the Thatcher government which they regard as their enemy.

What else happened during the Thatcher years? The moral campaigners achieved some concessions on sex education. Now school governors decide if sex education is provided or not. Whatever is provided must be within the context of "family and moral values". But the things the campaigners wanted above all else was that parents should have the right to withdraw children from sex education. The Thatcher and Major governments have refused this right.

Now the Major government has decided to make AIDS education compulsory. Although I have not seen the Department of Education document, according to the moral crusaders this document is not quite what they have in mind for 12 year olds. Phrases like "stop it" and "don't do it" are fairly absent from this document, some detail about *how* you might do things is present in this document.

The moral crusaders are extremely unhappy about the Major government's policies on AIDS education. They were furious with the Thatcher government for, among other things, funding the Terrence Higgins Trust and the Family Planning Association.

Finally, Victoria Gillick. Despite left-wing predictions that the Tory government were behind Gillick's campaign against under-16 contraception and would see it through to completion, she was blocked by the government, not least by Kenneth Clarke. Under-16 contraception is still available.

If you read Victoria Gillick's two books you will find a strong detestation of Thatcher and Joseph who she regards as enemies of the family.

We can look at other examples. For instance, Mary Whitehouse

was more favourable to the Thatcher government than SPUC or Life. Mary Whitehouse takes the view that Margaret Thatcher really cared and did some good things. Her policy is not to frontally attack the Thatcher government, but to try to draw it on.

For SPUC, Life and the Conservative Family Campaign, the Thatcher government was a disaster and the Major government is even worse. Not least because Major is getting ready to lower the age of consent for male homosexuals down to at least 18.

Finally, in America many of the moral crusaders, above all the mainstream of the anti-abortion movement, keep clear of the New Right. There are many Democrats in the US who are anti-abortion - both voters and to a lesser degree members - and it would be unwise for the

"The Thatcher years did not represent some sort of 'moral majority in power'. On balance people looked at the British New Right through an American lens."

main anti-abortion movement to identify with the Republicans. As we will see at the 1992 Republican Convention there are also a significant number of Republicans who think it is an electoral



Mary Whitehouse's viewers and listeners were disappointed

calastrophe to identify with a pro-life position. Although they will probably lose, there are a lot of Republicans who are either pro-choice or who do not want to be identified as anti-abortion.

The result: the main US anti-abortion group is not identified with the New Right.

I think we would make a mistake if we assumed that the American moral crusaders were in general tied up with the New Right. But it is certainly true that in the US there are *entanglements* which we do not have here.

The Thatcher years did not represent some sort of "moral majority in power". On balance people looked at the British New Right through an American lens. We transposed what we thought was happening in the US on to Britain where things were very different. The result was that we did not understand the New Right or the Thatcher government.



The Thatcher years did not represent some sort of 'Moral Majority in Power'

specified it should be taught inside the context of family values".

The government strengthened the law on obscenity, banning

"But the things the campaigners wanted above all else was that parents should have the right to withdraw children from sex education. The Thatcher and Major governments have refused this right."

and bringing the television services under the Obscene Publications Act and putting over them the Broadcasting

Standards Council, a watchdog to look for rudeness on television.

All these things can be rightly cited as examples of government concern with moral, pro-family issues. However, on the other side of the balance sheet, what role did the Thatcher government play on abortion? The answer is that abortion continued to be legal during the Thatcher years and when it came to the main attempt of the pro-lifers to reverse the legislation of the late 1960s, the key people in the government opposed that change. Abortion was not cut to 18 weeks. It was cut to 24 weeks with large exceptions.

Hardly any abortions occur over 24 weeks and the exceptions probably cover nearly every case. Abortion has not been restricted and Thatcher has not tried to restrict it.

If you read SPUC's newspaper

Where today's SWP comes from

A caricature of Leninism

This week the biggest group of the far left in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party holds its annual summer school, "Marxism '92". As in previous years, "Marxism" will be dominated by a rigidly parroted "party line". There will be little real debate, and none with revolutionary Marxist critics of the SWP like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. The SWP was not always like this. This article by Sean Matgamna looks at the SWP's development over the last 40 years, and argues that it has become a caricature of Leninist organisation. It was taken from the pamphlet "A tragedy of the left" (available from AWL, £2)

Why is the Trotskyist left in Britain scattered and divided into competing groups? At the root the divisions are a product of the repeated defeats and the continuing marginalisation of revolutionary socialism. Small groups — and the biggest of the groups in Britain, the SWP, is still a small group — groups without implantation in the working class, have little power of

cohesion when strong political divisions emerge. When members of a small organisation whose raison d'être is propaganda for certain ideas begin to disagree, especially on some emotion-charged issue, then there is little motive for the minority not to break away. Little or no disruption of work follows division; there is no coercion available to the majority except persuasion or moral pressure; in practice the majority is often keen to be shot of the minority; and the minority, given will and determination, can set up a new organisation making more congenial propaganda.

The existing groups are not parties, whatever they call themselves. They are nowhere near being able to play the role of parties vis-à-vis the working class or the existing bourgeois system. This is as true of the biggest groups as of the smallest. The groups are factions, not parties.

These are the structural reasons for the state of things on the left. There are, however, turning points in the history shaped by these basic conditions. The collapse in 1949-50 of the old RCP, a group into which almost all British Trotskyists had been united for some five years, produced what became the *Militant*, the SWP, and the Healy WRP.

The next such "turning point" can be dated exactly: 4 December 1971. On that day the International Socialism (IS) group (which later became the SWP) held a special conference at which, by a vote of roughly 60-40, a motion from the National Committee was carried "defusing" IS and an organised tendency inside IS, *Workers' Fight*,

which had fused with IS three years earlier.

Almost in passing the conference outlawed all groupings in IS which had differences with the leadership across the board and not just on special issues. That is not how it was phrased, but that is what it meant, as those critics of the leadership who tried to stay in the organisation soon found out in the years following the "de-fusion" of *Workers' Fight* on 4 December 1971.

The conference decision produced immediately — we were expelled! — *Workers' Fight* Mark 2, forerunner of today's Alliance for Workers' Liberty and *Socialist Organiser*. In early 1973 a group which soon became the new RCP and RCG was expelled. In 1975, the IS regime set up on 4 December 1971 purged a sizeable chunk of the cadre and leadership of IS as it had been on 4 December 1971! That "IS Opposition" soon disintegrated, but many of its leaders are active today around *Catalyst* magazine and the *socialist* newspaper.

4 December 1971 was the point at which IS changed radically, and set off down the road to becoming what it is today, a caricature "toy-town Bolshevik" party.

"The group was a loose and variegated federation of individuals, with an incoherent and ill-defined but distinctive libertarian tinge to it, combined with a seeming commitment to the idea of an organic ripening towards socialism by the existing mass working class movement."

How did IS get to that stage, having, for 20 years before 4 December 1971, devoted much of its energy to denouncing this sort of politics? After the old RCP broke up in 1949-50, the Healy group was a serious organisation. The other two ex-RCP groups, the future *Militant* and SWP, were tenuous enterprises at best. The group around Cliff began in 1950 with about 70 people (the figure comes from one of the group's then joint secretaries)

Europe: turn and turn again

In the 1960s the SWP (then called the International Socialist Group) held a line that socialists should not focus on opposition to the EEC.

In Spring 1963, for example, John Palmer (then a SWP leader) argued, "In or out of the Common Market, the problems facing the British labour movement are likely to be much the same. Indeed the point is that the issues facing us are more similar to those facing European and American workers than at any time in the past 40 years".

In June 1971 SW switched to a nationalist position, "No to the EEC".

In the 1975 referendum they campaigned frantically for "Britain Out!" The slogan of a Socialist United Europe appeared

here and there, but they never explained how trying to break up or slow down the capitalist integration of Europe would help achieve that.

Last November the SWP changed its mind once more, without explanation. After discussing what further European unity meant, Alex Callinicos declared: "But the alternative preached by that strange alliance of Tory right wingers and Labour left wingers has equally little to offer".

SW of 20 June switches back again. It adopted a line rather similar to that of Tony Benn and much of the Labour left in opposing the EC: "The EC is not in the interest of workers in Britain, Europe or the rest of the world. We are against it".



WHICH WAY forward? The ballot box or struggle?

There are two diametrically opposed socialist strategies that can arise from Labour's election defeat. The first, supported by the majority of the Labour leadership, is that the Labour government should be replaced by a socialist government. The second, supported by a minority, is that the Labour government should be replaced by a socialist government. The first strategy is based on the idea of a ballot box revolution, while the second is based on the idea of a struggle revolution.

The socialist alternative

THE SOCIALIST alternative is a new political force that has emerged in the Labour Party. It is a force that is based on the idea of a socialist alternative to the Labour Party. It is a force that is based on the idea of a socialist alternative to the Labour Party.

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Where do we go from here?

FOR UNFORTUNATELY, it is in an organisationally weak position. This is what revolutionary socialists have argued for throughout the history of the Labour Party and what the Socialist Workers Party stands for today.

Cliff: "An attempt to build any sort of Leninist organisation is 'toy town bolshevism' That was 1959, now everything has changed."

and published *Socialist Review*, a small duplicated (later printed) monthly, which lasted until 1962.

The group seems to have had little life to it, and declined slowly through the '50s.

The decay was not just organisational. In 1950 the group subscribed to all the ideas of Leninism, differing from other Trotskyists only on their characterisation of the USSR. A decade later, they did not seem to know quite what they were.

Cliff, in his big pamphlet on Rosa Luxemburg, published in 1959, said that Lenin's ideas on organisation were not suitable for West European conditions. The group was a loose and variegated federation of individuals, with an incoherent and ill-defined but distinctive libertarian tinge to it, combined with a seeming commitment to the idea of an organic ripening towards socialism by the existing mass working class movement: the job of the revolutionary, said Cliff in *Luxemburg*, was to stay with organisations like the Labour Party all the way through until the socialist revolution.

An attempt to build any sort of Leninist organisation, said Cliff, even one like the SLL in 1959, which continued to work in the Labour Party, was just "toy-town Bolshevism". Polemical opposition to the Healyites' increasing emphasis on the "revolutionary party" lent momentum and emphasis to the *Socialist Review* group's evolution on this question. When, from 1960, the group began to grow, recruiting CND youth, what grew was this federalist, vaguely libertarian, vaguely social-democratic, explicitly anti-Leninist hodgepodge. In the middle 1960s Cliff would, when talking to Leninist critics, tell us that "IS is centrist" (i.e. half-revolutionary, half-reformist), though he himself, he insisted, was a Bolshevik. The others, such as Michael Kidron, had no "Fourth Internationalist

background", but he, Cliff, had, and that was why he remained a Bolshevik despite the group's "centrism".

His writings said otherwise, and so did the group he (and his writings) had built; but he meant it, and it was important for the future. The mistake of his critics — and of some of his supporters — was to take seriously what he wrote polemically and somewhat speculatively, or to serve as ideological buttressing for what he wanted to do at a given moment, when in fact he would casually ditch or re-write such arguments when external pressure, new opportunities or sheer caprice led him to want the opposite.

That would happen in the late '60s.

And yet, when all is said and done, the *Socialist Review*/IS group seemed the most hopeful organisation on the left by the early or middle 1960s. The Healy organisation, the SLL, was still much bigger, but rigidly Stalinist in structure, more and more destructively sectarian, and held in an unbreakable grip by men — in the first place Healy — who were going mad politically (and not only politically). By contrast, Cliff's group was alive, ostentatiously committed to maintain the freedom and the duty of its members to think for themselves, and led by people, in the first place Tony Cliff, who had not yet let their minds become pickled and petrified by dogmatism and the fear-based pseudo-political religiosity which saturated the SLL and made the rank and file of the SLL helpless against the whims of the all-controlling popes and cardinals.

More: in the 1950s Cliff would probably have said that he was trying to recast, redevelop, and refocus the fundamental ideas of the Lenin-Trotsky tradition in the



At the beginning of the '70s the IS grew as the class struggle burgeoned. Cliff began to tighten up the group to give them more control.

new and unexpected conditions of a post-war world dominated by capitalist stabilisation and growth, and by Stalinist expansion in the more backward parts of the world. In his analysis of the USSR and of East Europe and China, and in the early editions of the *International Socialism* magazine (after 1960), he had tried to tackle some of this work. What went wrong?

What went wrong ultimately was that he lost heart and lapsed back into the sort of caricature "Leninism" he then despised. What went wrong also was the quality of Cliff's theoretical work, and Cliff's hints-and-half-thoughts method of work. Cliff uses statistics and quotes like a Stalinist to back up a preconceived thesis or objective. Thus, when he decided

"By 1967, when the youth upsurge was already under way, the Labour Party left had collapsed. IS pulled out of the Labour Party, raggedly. Cliff, who used ideas as buttresses and counters, hastened to produce the necessary rationalisation."

to be a "Leninist" again in 1968, he simply re-wrote a paragraph in the *Luxemburg* pamphlet, with neither explanation for the change nor even reworking of the exposition leading up to the changed conclusion. He was convinced now that Lenin had been right on the question of the party as against Rosa Luxemburg (and as against the Cliff of 1959!) He never explained himself even when visibly embarrassed and under pressure at internal meet-

ings from people like the present writer. How or why he changed his mind remained a close secret. All the observer could know was that Cliff, the scourge of "toy town Bolshevism", had switched tracks "back to Lenin".

Cliff's attempt in the 1950s and '60s to reanalyse reality led not to disciplined constructive development, or enhancement of the traditions or positions the *Socialist Review* group started out with in 1950, but to the group's decay and disintegration both politically and organisationally in the 1950s, and then, in the 1960s, to incoherent political and organisational zig-zags. Cliff the "Bolshevik" found himself at the centre of a middle-class academic-student discussion club trained in anti-Leninism; then in 1968 he took a flying leap backwards, declared himself to be a Leninist again and set about restructuring the organisation on centralist lines.

The group had grown rapidly in the mid-'60s, recruiting vaguely libertarian youth. It started a turn to the working class in 1965 around a pamphlet on the Labour government's incomes policy written by Colin Barker and Tony Cliff. Then came the youth revolt, and the giant demonstrations against the Vietnam War. IS grew steadily. To grow during the anti-Vietnam War movement they had to radically change the position which had differentiated them from the workers' statist Trotskyists in 1950 on the Korean War. In 1950 they had refused to take sides in the Korean war; now they joined the chants of praise to Ho Chi Minh on demonstrations against the Vietnam war. They were defencists!

By 1967, when the youth upsurge was already under way, the Labour Party left had collapsed. IS pulled out of the Labour Party, raggedly. Cliff, who used ideas as buttresses and counters, hastened to produce the

necessary rationalisation. He wrote articles for their paper (renamed *Socialist Worker*, having been *Labour Worker* since 1962) proving that Labour had never been socialist in the first place! As if that was ever the reason why Trotskyists were in it! Keir Hardie, he now discovered, was a fake.

The decisive change governing all the changes in the group, and probably spurring Cliff's re-thinking, was the astonishing political suicide of the Healy SLL, which had overshadowed IS and against which much of IS's anti-Bolshevism was directed. In the late 1960s the SLL started to go mad.

It responded to the big anti-Vietnam war demonstration in October 1968, at which there were over 100,000 people, with a leaflet which explained "Why the SLL is not marching". The march, it said, was a conspiracy set up by the capitalist press to boost the prestige of the march's organisers on the left at the expense of the great Marxist leaders of the SLL.

The SWP and the poll tax

The SWP never really got its act together on the poll tax. The SWP were slow to get involved in Scotland and changed line (for instance, on whether or not non-registration was a viable tactic) on a number of occasions.

For much of 1989 the SWP effectively wrote off any non-workplace opposition to the poll tax.

They dismissed meetings on housing estates because "they only involve a minority... sometimes an extremely

impressive minority but a minority nonetheless."

Anyway, "once the meeting is over, individuals are prey to the distorting and demoralising effects of the media. For once you are back in your home there is no collective debate or feeling of strength to counter them." The SWP counterposed a list of demands upon the STUC/TUC and Labour Party leaders ("Organise a national demonstration", "Labour councils must break the law", "MPs and councillors should

declare they will defy the law", etc etc).

In 1990 the SWP toned down its pessimism and *Socialist Worker* even argued that community-based campaigns could provide the start for a class-wide fight back.

By March 1990 the same people who a year earlier had been writing of any activity not based upon the workplace, were urging on disaffected young people to invade council chambers and denouncing *Militant* supporters for their timidity.

"The incredible arrogance of bogus radicals"

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) eagerly supported *Militant's* little adventure in the Walton by-election last year. They issued an "open letter to the left", insisting that *Militant's* candidacy in Walton was now the main touchstone for left-wing politics: if you back *Militant*, then you are left; if you back the Labour Party then you are a traitor and a scab!

Much of the early part of last year's SWP summer school ("Marxism '91") was given over to denunciations of *Socialist Organiser* for backing the Labour Party. *SO* is no longer socialist but "right-wingers no better than the Tories", many speakers said. As SWP junior guru, Alex Callinicos put it in a meeting on "imperialism", after an *SO* speaker made a point: "How can you talk about imperialism when you back Labour in Walton?"

Instead of teaching people that the only way to defeat Kinnockism is to win the fight for socialism within the trade unions

and the Labour Party, the SWP demagogically exploits their lack of knowledge of the history of the labour movement.

The SWP twins with the Kinnockites as a double act: the SWP works to persuade socialists to give up on the only existing working class political mass movement, while the Kinnockites work to force them out.

There was a time when the SWP (then called International Socialists) aspired to be serious Marxists inside the real labour movement. An editorial (by Paul Foot) in *Socialist Worker* (then called *Labour Worker*) in January 1966 argued — under the headline, "The incredible arrogance of bogus radicals" — against the decision of Richard Gott to stand in the upcoming Hull by-election as a protest against the Labour government's complicity with US action in the Vietnam war.

Going a bit over the top, it described Gott as a "scab" for risking letting in the Tory!

The possibilities for growth facing IS, already now having some hundreds of members, mainly young enthusiastic middle class people, were dazzling in these circumstances.

The barrier to growth was the loose, messy federalist organisation built by people educated by Cliff to equate any centralised small revolutionary group with "toy-town Bolshevism" and "substitutionism". That now stood in Cliff's way. But not for long!

Early in 1968 Cliff and his close friends came out for "Leninism", and conducted a campaign that lasted for the rest of the year to "centralise" IS. It was an astonishing change.

The "de-fusion" conference of 4 December 1971 was the culmination of a long process of "tightening up" the IS group. The organisation was growing, the class struggle was burgeoning. A stropy democratic organisation inhibited the leadership, and constricted its room to manoeuvre. So Cliff and his friends began to substitute themselves and the leading committee for the organisation.

Today the SWP has one central answer to more or less every question posed in politics: "build the Leninist revolutionary party". It must seem strange to anyone familiar only with the present-day SWP to read documents from the 1960s criticising the Cliff tendency for its longstanding anti-Leninism.

Yet those criticisms are central to any explanation of the evolution of the group after it declared itself Leninist. As the document proves, and as the subsequent his-

"They did not know what a Leninist party was then any more than they had known what it was in all the preceding years when they had identified Gerry Healy's sect with Leninism and denounced Leninists as 'toytown Bolsheviks'."

tory also proves, in 1968 Cliff and company did not in fact set about building a Leninist party, but merely creating a centralised small political machine. They did not know what a Leninist party was then any more than they had known what it was in all the preceding years when they had identified Gerry Healy's sect with Leninism and denounced Leninists as "toytown Bolsheviks".

Today the SWP is a largely depoliticised political machine. "Build the party", its central all-purpose slogan, is not politics. A party is merely an instrument of politics, it cannot be a substitute for politics.

Fight for workers' liberty!

By Dave Roberts

I have a friend, a man in his sixties, who was in the Communist Party until the 1960s. He always remained convinced of the "socialism" of the Soviet Union. He was especially convinced by his elder and late brother, a very active member of the CP, a working class Dubliner who went to Moscow in the early 'thirties to receive his political education. A member of the Connolly Brigade, the Irish wing of the International Brigade, he laid his life on the line in the Spanish Civil War. After the war, he remained an active trade unionist until his death.

My friend's political vision was shaped by the CP, by his brother, by Stalinism. As the Stalinist states unravelled, so did his political understanding of the world. At first he reacted with anger; not with himself or with the Stalinist regimes, but with those tearing the regimes down. On one occasion, he proclaimed that they deserved to be blighted with fascism, not appreciating how the subject peoples equated fascism and Stalinism. Then he fell into despondency.

The story of my friend and his brother encapsulates a great political and social tragedy spreading over decades. In the 1920s and 1930s, the millions of Communist workers, would-be revolutionaries, were miseducated and misled into terrible defeats. In the 1930s and 1940s, thousands of young people — often young college students — poured into the Communist Parties to fight fascism and militarism and had their idealism twisted, turned into something rotten.

"The political and social capital of generations who wanted to transform the world was expended in the service of stinking, rotten, Stalinist states. So the Alliance for Workers' Liberty celebrates the collapse of the Stalinist states. It is a good thing."

The political and social capital of generations who wanted to transform the world was expended in the service of stinking, rotten, Stalinist states. So the Alliance for Workers' Liberty celebrates the collapse of the Stalinist states. It is a good thing.

But, comrades, the legacy of Stalinism has exacted a terrible price. It has robbed the workers of Eastern Europe of the language, symbols and vision of socialism. Things which have one meaning for us have another meaning for our brothers and sisters in the East. The Red Flag is virtually and

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty event, *Ideas for Freedom*, held in north London from 3-5 July was a great success. A large number of youth attended *Ideas for Freedom* which helped to make the sessions lively.

We held over 40 sessions including a number of debates.

Over £600 worth of pamphlets and books were sold and 10 comrades joined the AWL. The collection for the work of the AWL and our paper *Socialist Organiser* raised £2,300 in cash and a further £1,200 in pledges.



understandably seen as the flag of fascism. The statues of Lenin are torn down — and rightly so — as the icons of the hated regimes.

The ideas of socialism have been corrupted and corroded throughout the world.

Whole sections of the different national labour movements — those sections which had illusions in the Stalinist states — have been depressed by their collapse.

And those movements have shifted further to the right, enabling Kinnock in this country to argue that socialism doesn't work, that capitalism can only be ameliorated.

It is not surprising that, in this situation, the bourgeoisie proclaims its victory and the death of socialism in an ideological onslaught, not on the Stalinists who are departing the scene but on those who have no political or moral responsibility for Stalinism and who still wish to fight for a better world. They hope to nail us to the floor, to prevent us ever again rising in challenge.

But the bourgeoisie proclaims its victory as marketisation smashes the living standards of the East European working class and as the rising tide of racism and chauvinism turns parts of the world into a slaughterhouse of peoples.

They proclaim their moral superiority while somebody dies of hunger every minute of every day; while the homeless children of Brazil are hunted and shot down; as the United States is shaken by the rioting of the oppressed and exploited; while 4 million languish unemployed in Britain and the homeless swell our streets.

This daily reality of class exploitation, of the market and of class struggle, points to the irreplaceable role and fundamental duty of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty: to reclaim and review the bedrock ideas of socialism from the decades of corruption; to develop a working class political programme which presents a critique of this world from

the perspective of the exploited; a vision of the future world grounded in the productive potential of humanity and working class solidarity; and which identifies the steps necessary to bridge the gap between this world and our vision.

Building the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is not about 'building the party' in the manner of the SWP, as if that is a magical chant which can change society. It is about giving life to this political programme, forging the political leadership the working class needs if it is to cease being the raw material of exploitation.

This we have begun to do. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has been unique in challenging the dogmas and Stalinist influences on the left: on the national question — where the left sides with the 'good nationalism', we have restored the Marxist programme of national reconciliation and working class unity.

"The Alliance for Workers' Liberty has challenged Stalinist influences on the left: on the national question, the Stalinist roots of left anti-semitism, the nature of Stalinism... We have identified anew the centrality of workers' liberty, as opposed to statism, in our socialism."

We have identified the Stalinist roots of left anti-semitism. We have tried to force the left to re-examine the nature of Stalinism, challenging for example — without much success — *Socialist Outlook* to debate us, to reappraise their understanding

of Stalinism.

And we have identified anew the centrality of workers' liberty, as opposed to statism, in our socialism.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is unique in its democracy and debate; in promoting internal discussion and providing space for its competitors and opponents in our papers and meetings. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty does not seek to wall its supporters off from the ideas of others — as *Militant* does — but to win them on the basis of our ideas, developing them as thinking Marxists capable of providing leadership in all struggles and at all levels.

We are not scholars. We wish to change the world in accordance with our ideas.

Thus the Alliance for Workers' Liberty brought together for the first time the anti-Stalinist socialists of East Germany, Hungary and Poland to discuss their common problems and tasks. From the start, we identified how Gorbachev's reforms would create space for the Soviet working class and so fought for British labour movement solidarity with the socialists and genuine trade unionists of Eastern Europe.

We have sought to remodel the British labour movement, never running away from its political wing in the manner of the SWP. Despite now being persecuted, we will not turn away from the Labour Party in the sectarian manner of the *Militant*. We will fight in the '90s, as in the '80s, for the political and organisational remodelling of the labour movement, a task even more urgent with a fourth Tory victory.

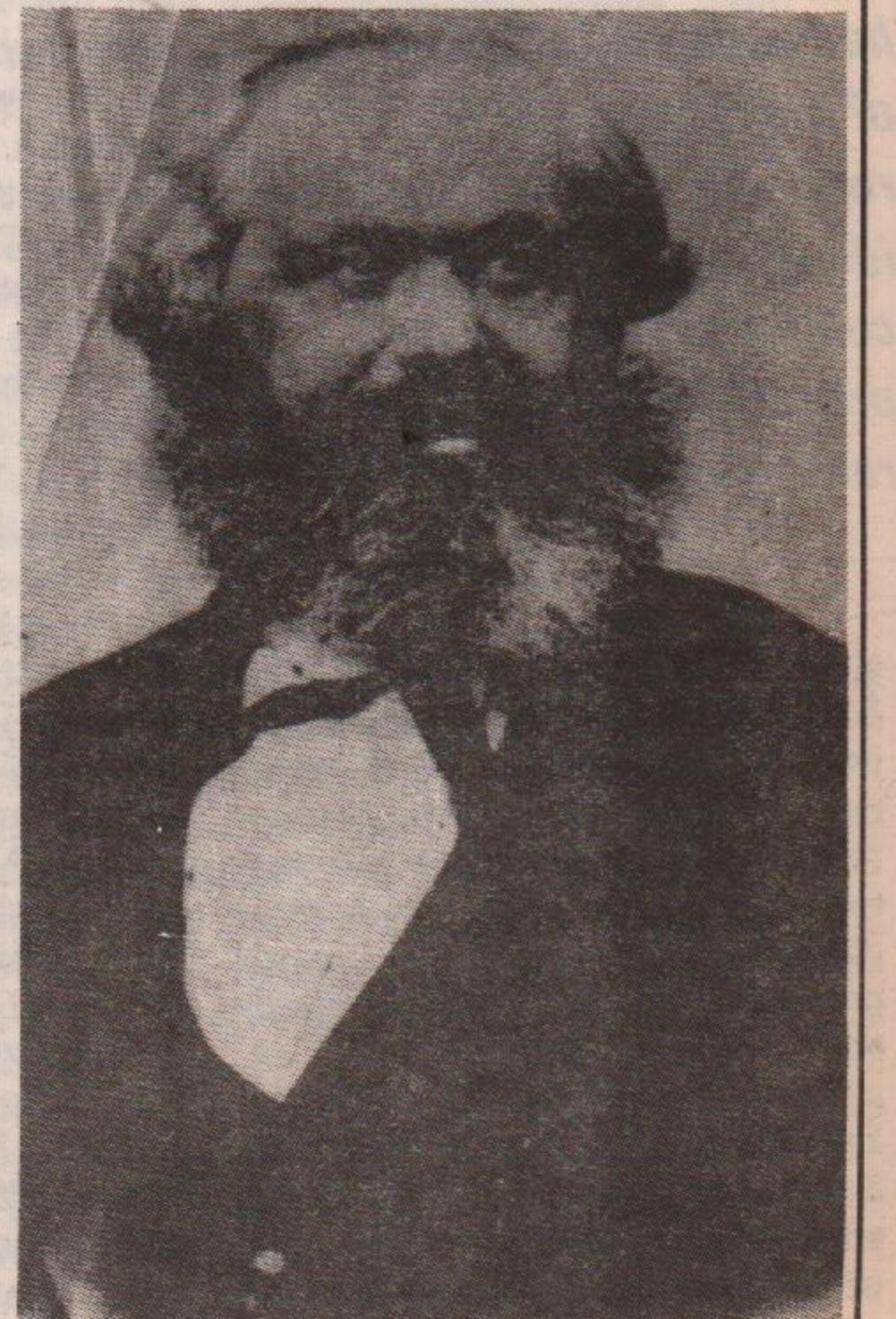
But, comrades, our work would have been immensely more successful if our forces had been greater. Many of you here are not members of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. I would appeal to you to join us.

In doing so, I would like to read to you the last part of Trotsky's "Testament", written shortly before his murder by a Stalinist agent:

"Natasha has come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full".

Comrades, join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty and help us cleanse the world.

This speech was delivered at the close of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty rally at the end of *Ideas for Freedom*.





Batman II is called "Batman Returns". It should be called "The coming of Catwoman". Whereas Batman I showed us how "millionaire playboy Bruce Wayne" became Batman, Batman II shows us how Selina Kyle becomes Catwoman. Michelle Pfeiffer steals the show.

This is a Hollywood multi-million concoction. Its main "value" or attraction is soft-porn sado-masochism.

The story is a mess of broken threads and loose ends, but this film is, I think, better than the first.

It shows a closed-in nightmare world peopled by freaks and grotesques and dark creatures of the subconscious. Yet it is recognisably our political

world, caricatured, with the soft bits and the official hypocrisies and democratic myths faded out. Power is muscle, hardware and money; politics is theatre in which the powerful perform for a mindless, sometimes fickle mob who, most of the time, buy what the powerful want them to believe.

The Penguin (Danny DeVito), looking like Humpty-Dumpty badly put back together again and dressed up to play the villain in a Victorian melodrama, stands for Mayor. The scene where he is presented to the credulous citizens by the capitalist 'prince' is a mix of agitprop theatre and Richard the Third. Crude caricature, but not more than caricature.

It's not cricket

By Dion D'Silva

Accusations of unruly behaviour and bowlers tampering with the ball — what's going on? Yes, you've guessed it, England are having a cricket series.

In the first incident, the Pakistan bowler, Aqib Javed was fined £150 and the captain, Javed Miandad, reprimanded for showing dissent. To me, it looked like six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. The bowler and umpire had obviously wound each other up but it wasn't that serious. Nevertheless, we were then bombarded with lectures about 'respecting the umpire', 'disgraceful behaviour' etc. The well-known commentator, Richie Benaud, complained that the fine was paltry and didn't go far enough.

I have seen worse things on a cricket pitch. There was an occasion when a captain stood shaking his finger at the umpire and had to be dragged away by a team-mate. The microphone picked up a few uncricketing words as well. Yet there weren't many calls for harsh punishment from the press. Indeed, when the team got back they got £1,000 bonus each. The person concerned was England captain, Mike Gatting, on England's tour of Pakistan.

It seems that English umpires can't be criticised — after all, they are the best in the world. No matter that most touring teams want neutral umpires as in other sports. Have you noticed that England has the best umpires, referees, linesmen etc. but the crappiest teams?

There have, coincidentally of course, been many articles about bowlers tampering with the ball. It is alleged that they pick at the ball making one half rough and keeping the other half shiny. This causes the ball to swing more and bounce at a variable height. Rumours started two years ago when New Zealand toured Pakistan. The implication is that Pakistan are doing it now.

I think there is a simpler explanation. The Pakistan bowlers are quicker and better. As CLR James put it, you can tell a lot about society from the way cricket is played. The recent incidents demonstrate the hypocrisy and snobbishness of the media and England's cricket establishment.

I am not one of those people who want England to lose every sporting event — far from it. However, in this test series, nothing would be better than a Pakistan 3-0 thrashing of England.



Best in the world? No way!

A benign send-up

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews "The Player"

"The Player" isn't so much a satire on Hollywood as a benign send-up. Director Robert Altman, who's always been outside the Hollywood system, spells out what's wrong with it, but there's no urgency, no bite to his portrait.

He's telling us the system is crass and ludicrous, that it's primarily about deals, about money and power and position, but he's doing it tongue in cheek. He's almost sorry for the poor philistines. It's a "Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do" picture.

It's had rave reviews, yet it's nothing really new. Maybe people are so desperate for a half-decent movie that they've built up this one into more than it is.

Griffin Mill is a young studio exec who's feeling edgy about his

job. Japanese takeovers are in the air, and rumour has him on the skids. He's also getting threatening postcards from an anonymous, angry writer.

The film looks at what happens when Mill attacks and kills the wrong writer, and uses that to examine how Hollywood operates today.

That's part of the problem with the movie — that it tries to graft a thriller plot on to satire, and fails. But the main problem is the satire; it simply isn't strong enough or fresh enough. We've seen it or heard it before. The trailers on before it (especially one technological blood and guts number with Dolph Lundgren) reveal more of Hollywood's artistic bankruptcy than "The Player" does.

The revelation that Hollywood studios are run by greedy, shallow philistines is hardly earth shattering news. To anyone who has sat through Hollywood films in the last couple of years, this is only too evident.

The Hollywood establishment aren't ruffled by the film, and some studio heads are probably flattered to death by it. Someone actually thinks they're tough enough to wipe out a pesky writer? Move over, Bruce Willis!

"The revelation that Hollywood studios are run by greedy, shallow philistines is hardly earth shattering news. To anyone who has sat through Hollywood films in the last couple of years, this is only too evident."

The film's other selling point — its stars, many of whom worked for free — is also a let down. When Altman had Julie Christie show up in "Nashville", it was to make a point — that Nashville stars, obsessed with their own small world, didn't recognise her. But the stars here are a distraction. You keep thinking — was that so and so? After a while, you realise it doesn't matter, that it doesn't add anything to the film, and you start to wonder what the point of it all is? To flatter us into thinking the film is saying more than it is? Or worse, that we're getting a privileged inside view?

Many of the "star" parts are tiny, or non-speaking, and you start to think Altman corralled them on the GAP ad principle. People do those because other people in the business do them, and if they don't

get on to a billboard soon, someone might think — shock, horror! — that they'd never been asked!

Other star bits are puzzling. Julia Roberts and Bruce Willis appear — why? To have a bet each way? To bite the hand that feeds them? Roberts/Willis would seem to have done pretty well out of crappy movies. What's their beef?

The film huffs and puffs a bit about writers, obviously pitying their fate as the Untouchables of the movie business. At his studio, Mill has been a supporter (financially, anyway) of writers, whereas Levy, the guy he fears will replace him, is not. Levy even suggests dispensing with writers altogether, and just making do with stars, stunts and formula plots. This would resonate more if you didn't feel it had already happened! But most Hollywood movies are so dire now that, were studios to get rid of writers altogether, would anyone really notice?

The film is all over the place. We're meant to be sorry for Mill; we're meant to despise him. We're meant to sneer at the philistines, and laugh at them too. They're paraded like zoo animals, for our entertainment, and that finally makes them pitiful. So what does it all add up to? Comedy? Tragedy? Farce?

Maybe Altman is trying to say that things aren't as simple as Hollywood always says they are, that there's grey as well as black and white. Well, maybe. But that waters down the idea of making this film in the first place.

If Altman's mad at Hollywood, he should say so. If he had, "The Player" would have had more go.

Periscope

General Franco was the nasty little fascist butcher who won the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) with the indirect help of Stalin and the direct and active support of Hitler. When all Spain lay at his feet, he killed perhaps one million of his defeated enemies and ruled Spain for nearly 40 years, dying, unfortunately, of old-age in bed.

"Franco: Behind the Myth" (BBC1, 23 July) explores the now half-forgotten truth about the fascist tyrant.

Healy/Thornett "methods" gaining ground

Outlook hide behind "red baiting" pseudo-scandal

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

Patrick Sikorski has been a very prominent elected full-time union official on the London Underground for some years now.

He is well known to be, or to have been, a supporter of the tendency that publishes *Socialist Outlook*. He still writes in the left press under his own name (in *Briefing* for April 1991, for example, where his trade union credentials and identity were given in full).

It is odd, therefore, to find the latest *Socialist Outlook* accusing us of having "fingered" Sikorski to the Underground bosses when in the course of criticising his activity in the union we identified him as an *Outlook* supporter.

In the highly improbable event that our articles inspired the Underground bosses to try to sack an elected union official, Sikorski would have had little difficulty, other things being equal, in denying and shrugging off our ascription of *Outlook* membership to him.

He would have found it a lot easier to shrug it off before *Outlook*, some five weeks after our articles appeared, came to his "defence" with the cry that he had been "fingered" — that is, in the word's usual meaning, that he had been accurately identified!

Their "defence" of Sikorski is something like an official acknowledgement by *Outlook* itself!

The *Outlook* article is clear evidence that it is not Sikorski's "security" which really concerns *Outlook*. If that was their concern, then they would not repeat and compound the fault — "fingering" Sikorski — which they ascribe to us, just in order to make a polemical point, or rather a polemical smear, against us. They would not use Sikorski's security as so much sand to fling in the eyes of *Outlook* readers, in order to distract attention from our criticism of Sikorski's activities and of *Outlook's* responsibility for them.

Sikorski is an elected union full-timer, not a rank-and-file militant. He should be publicly accountable to his members, and to the left. When *Outlook* tries to shield him from left-wing criticism on the grounds that to tag him for the hard left will get him the sack, the question arises: where has *Outlook* in its general industrial reporting told its readers that Underground workers live under such a reign of terror that even a full-time union official can be casually dismissed? They have not told *Outlook* readers about it because it is not true. The picture they present is hysterically exaggerated.

Rail and Underground militants do have to be careful. Since the late '80s, they can get sacked for writing articles criticising the company on issues like safety. But the Underground bosses are not going to try to sack a full-time union official — and one who toed a moderate line during the recent argument on striking against the Company Plan! — unless they want a full-scale showdown with the union; and if they want that, they will not be spurred forward or held back by what *Socialist Organiser* says.

Yes, our regular writer on the Underground chooses to sign himself "Central Line guard". Another of our comrades, an elected official outside London in a position similar to Sikorski's, regularly signs his articles in *SO* with his name.

This demagogic polemic is pure *Outlook!* They equate "security" for a rank and file tubeworker writing in *SO* — which also, incidentally, publishes an *SO* industrial bulletin on the Tube, while *Outlook* publishes no bulletin — with security for Sikorski, a very visible trade union official!

The clumsy, clodhopping, tripping-over-their-own-feet performance is typical of *Outlook*, who here try to mount a Healyite-style smear operation, and for the typical Healyite reason of avoiding the issue.

Tube strike called off


Pete Williams

THE NATIONAL Executive of the RMT has called off strike action against London Underground's Company Plan.

The settlement commits the management to negotiate any changes through the existing agreed machinery.

Management threats to cancel the 1956 Machinery from June this year, and to impose a new one with or without the agreement of the seven LUL unions, have been withdrawn.

The document contains an explicit instruction to all managers to adhere to the machinery otherwise they will be acting 'against Company policy'.



Knapp — only following orders

The principal culprits for this position are the national full time officials and the right wing majority of the

lost by 18 votes to 2. Had a ballot been called in that period, it would have got a much bigger 'Yes' vote than the 2 to 1 majority registered after Labour's disastrous election defeat.

More importantly there would have been a chance of saving the Depot Foreman's grade, which has now gone. Due to the fatal delay, the workers involved were forced to sign new contracts while the balloting was still taking place.

Crucial also was the last minute turnaround by the full time officials of the engineering Confed unions. At mass meetings in the lead up to the ballot they had told their members that they would ballot with the RMT. But then they used a refusal by

Socialist Outlook May 30: talks of the rail unions climbing down but fails to either mention the role of the London Transport District Council or discuss the options available to RMT members other than accepting the National Executive decision

Healy would have done it with fire and force, and *Outlook* does it in the style of a clumsy actor playing a set role he can not measure up to. "Sand-in-the-eye" dishonesty is common to both, however.

The article fills a page of *Outlook* with flak like the "fingering" nonsense, but the point of it is the Sikorski affair.

What did we say about Sikorski? After RMT members on the Underground had voted two-to-one for strike action against the Company Plan:

"At the April District Council of the RMT Pat Sikorski, a prominent Outlook supporter, and full-time District Council secretary, argued strongly in favour of going back to management to ask for negotiations. He reasoned that socialists aren't opposed to negotiations... and that it would give us time to build for the strike"

Socialist Outlook of 16 May, however, argued that "talks with employers became unavoidable" because management had sent a letter to all workers offering to negotiate within existing

"Whatever Sikorski may have felt bound to do by District Council executive discipline, whatever the rights and wrongs of that, it can not justify Outlook endorsing the decision to go for negotiations and giving it a left gloss by militant talk of unofficial and illegal strike action after the mandate for an official and legal strike had been thrown away!"

machinery and to keep the Promotion Transfer and Redundancy agreement, including the principle of seniority.

The problem is that the District Council met on 28 April, while the letter was not issued until 7 May. In any case, the letter sets out a new PT&R agreement without seniority, and insists management will 'discuss implementation', not negotiation...

The next thing that happened is that management did offer negotiations, and no more, to which the RMT National Executive responded by dropping the strike.

At the May District Council, Patrick Sikorski argued that on a "mature assessment of the balance of forces" it had been correct to call off the strike (no mention is made of this in *Socialist Outlook*), and that we had in fact won a victory in the ballot for strike action...

Outlook of 30 May ends its article: "when management come back demanding more changes only unofficial action that breaks the law will be effective".

And who's going to be capable of organising that action: the District Council leadership, "who threw away a two-to-one majority that united all RMT grades, or rank and file tubeworkers united across unions and grades?" (*SO* 525, 4

June).

Amidst all the flak, the substance of *Outlook's* reply is this — eight and a half lines of their four-column full page! I quote them in full.

[The *SO* articles] "are based on a falsehood: the accusation that Sikorski vigorously supported the calling off of the strike. No mention is made of the fact that at the crucial District Council meeting of 12 May Sikorski was one of the minority of four people who argued that the strike should go ahead".

Probably the key word in this passage is the word "vigorously". That, I think, is a coded way to convey the idea that Sikorski did what he did reluctantly, or under union discipline.

For the uninitiated, for those who will not read the article for encoded messages, their sole reply is in the assertion that on 12 May Sikorski argued that the strike should go ahead. But bourgeois justice has a useful formula in matters like this: you should tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth". Even if what *Outlook* says about 12 May is true, is it the whole truth? No, it is not!

The "District Council" meeting on 12 May was not a full District Council meeting, but a meeting of the District Council executive. If Sikorski did argue as *Outlook* says he did on 12 May, it was in a small elite meeting. Outside that meeting he was either silent, or argued very differently.

By 28 May, at a full District Council meeting, Sikorski was arguing, and very vigorously, so I'm told, for calling off the strike. Other executive members spoke for the strike, so "discipline" can not be the full explanation for Sikorski's role.

What happened between 12 May and 28 May? Did Sikorski change his mind? The issues need to be discussed honestly and openly. Lying about what happened and why will help no-one, and educate no-one.

But whatever Sikorski may have felt bound to do by District Council executive discipline, and whatever the rights and wrongs of that, it can not justify *Outlook* endorsing the decision to go for negotiations and giving it a left gloss by militant talk of unofficial and illegal strike action after the mandate for an official and legal strike had been thrown away!

And it is very strange to find the *Outlook* organisation coming out in political solidarity with Sikorski when that organisation has Alan Thornett in its central leadership — a man who has hitherto, for decades, denounced trade union bureaucrats — too one-sidedly, in my view — almost as if they are a fully-fledged alien class.

There is more — and worse, far worse. The same issue of *Outlook* which indignantly and rather hysterically — and yet, when you probe, unconvincingly — refutes *SO's* account of Sikorski sharing responsibility for the District Council climb-down, also prints a letter from 17 members of the RMT. A few are politically with *Outlook*, others are *Morning Star*. It is, evidently, a solicited letter — and a very curious one.

"It has come to our notice", write the 17, "that in *Socialist Organiser* the RMT London Transport District Council and its Secretary Pat Sikorski has come under sustained attack. This attack is disgraceful. We the undersigned members of the RMT consider it as red baiting, which aids management's ability to victimise those involved. It must stop at once. We fully support the record of the District Council".

Exactly what "it" is which they "consider as red baiting" which will aid "management's ability to victimise those involved", is not clear. Plainly, however, they cannot be just talking about Sikorski, or about *SO* having linked Sikorski to *Outlook*. They themselves are brave enough to have their names appear in association with the defence of *Outlook*, so they are probably not people who go daily in fear of the sack for their politics. (And neither, of course, is Patrick Sikorski!)

The key to understanding what is going on is the last sentence: the 17 "support the record of the District Council". Here we have something very strange.

On page 11 *Outlook* denounces us for saying that Sikorski shared responsibility for the recent misleadership by the District Council; on page 14 it publishes

"Comrades, it is not red-baiting to criticise Sikorski. If you respond to such criticisms in this way, you help poison the labour movement, and line up with a foul line of trade union bureaucrats using demagoguery and witch-hunting to stop the mouths of the left and the rank and file."

a solicited letter, signed by some of its own people, endorsing the record of that same District Council!

They have it both ways. It is not surprising that the 17 stand by the District Council's record: everyone signing the letter who has any connection with the London Underground is either on or on the District Council executive or is an ex-officio member of it!

When *Outlook* raises the cry of "fingering", it is a comic turn by people who fall into the Healyite big boots they try to kick us with. The cry of "fingering" from them is just no-count lamebrain polemic. But when the local leadership of a trade union — or a big part of it, in their "personal capacity" — reply to criticism from the left of the way they treat the rank and file of the union with the charge of "red-baiting", then we have left *Outlook's* world of inconsequential play-acting and arrived at an altogether more serious place.

To criticise the executive, they say in *Outlook* and at *Outlook's* invitation, is to attack the union. The executive majority is the union!

This is an important segment of the lower echelons of the bureaucracy of an important trade union talking. These are trade union office-holders fending off legitimate criticism from the left with the cry — if you criticise us you are helping the bosses! If you criticise us, you are red-baiters!

No, comrades of the RMT London Transport District Council, it is not red-baiting to criticise either you or Sikorski. If you respond to such criticisms in this way, you help poison the labour movement, and line up with a long and foul line of trade union bureaucrats using demagoguery and witch-hunting to stop the mouths of the left and the rank and file.

Here, *Outlook* links arms with people — incumbent trade union officials — who will, if they continue in this vein, wind up stifling the left, as to a serious extent they recently stifled the rank and file. And who is to say that *Outlook* also will not be guilty of "red-baiting" and "aiding management" should it ever nerve itself to sharply criticise the District Council — or Patrick Sikorski?

The *Morning Star* people are the "good" CPers now, those who retain some connection with the labour movement, but we should not forget that they are also the people whose organisation has staffed big sectors of the trade union bureaucracy for many decades past.

The logic is clear. Sikorski does indefensible things — for whatever motive, maybe executive committee discipline — but *Outlook* defends him with factional solidarity (and factional hatred of us, his critics). They wind up defending or half-defending the District Council when it is in the wrong: *Outlook* and the District Council leadership converge, swapping arguments and trading flak, including the "fingering" and "red-baiting" charges, which in the mouth of *Outlook* are a joke, but which become something altogether more serious coming from the trade union officials. *Outlook* solicits and publishes the letter — without comment, obviously feeling hard-pressed and glad of any support.

I put a question to *Outlook*. They should answer it plainly and clearly: are you for or against what the District Council did? Yes or no?

P.S. At a recent meeting of the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, Patrick Sikorski had to be verbally "restrained" by the chair — so I'm told — to the obvious embarrassment of other *Outlook* people present, when someone proposed a discussion of the Company Plan at their forthcoming conference. That episode is not at all out of keeping with the increasing recklessness and violence, and underlying hysteria, of *Outlook's* polemics.

Their polemics are Healyite. The latest is worse in that respect than the one I replied to recently. The last thing they want is to take up what we really say and really do and discuss it, or really reply to what we really say against them. I proved some weeks ago that Phil Hearse invented "quotations" and lied that they were from *SO*. They still have not a thing to say about that.

They prefer the Healy technique — scandal-mongering, heresy-hunting and denouncing as from a pulpit; the substitution of pseudo debate about trivia and concocted "issues" for real debate about the real differences; scandalous lack of scruples. Alan Thornett and what is left of his old friendship network never knew any better: this is always their "method" — under pressure. The old Mandelites see much of their political world collapse with the debacle of Stalinism and they feel it.

A new synthesis seems to be forming between the half-reconstructed ex-Healyite and the traumatised Mandelites. Healyite techniques seem to be the easy option as they once did for Healy and Lambert. That is where these ridiculous polemics come from, with their pseudo-scandals and all too real refusal to engage with the real differences.

Last time I dealt with *Outlook* I promised to come back to the subject in the next *SO*, and didn't. This time I will.

Civil service fightback starts

No to Docklands, yes to strike action

By a DOE civil servant

By a clear majority, NUCPS/CPSA members working in the Departments of Environment and Transport HQs, have voted for a one-day strike on Wednesday 15 July, in protest against the forcible relocation of staff to Docklands.

Although the turnout wasn't as great as we had hoped, both Unions feel confident that we will get a solid turnout on the

day. On Wednesday we will not only picket the HQ buildings, but we will hold a rally and a lobby of Parliament. The day of the strike coincides with Environment Question Time and we expect the government to make an announcement about the relocation.

Although we are at present running around making last minute preparations for the strike, at the back of everybody's minds is the question, what's next? Certainly the

political pressure must be kept up. The government's claim that the move is 'value for money' doesn't hold water. There are numerous empty government buildings in Central London, which could house the HQ staff. If Labour had their wits about them, they could prove that the Ministers had been misleading Parliament, expose the moves as a backdoor method of financing the Tories' developer friends. However, even in this narrow-

est of tests of 'bourgeois democratic' political competence, Labour can't get its act together.

On the industrial action front, we have to honestly tell members that further and much greater action will be needed if the relocation is to be prevented. At present, the national union officials are thinking about selective action with a possible work to rule, but all that will depend, as far as they are concerned, on the turnout on Wednesday. Therefore it is vital that we get as many people out as possible.

Strike against contracting-out

Following a 2-1 ballot majority, Scottish Office NUCPS and CPSA members struck last Friday against the targeting of some 3,000 jobs for contracting-out. This is the first serious action against the Tories' plans to smash up civil service jobs, pay and conditions since the publication of "Competing for Quality". It provides a good opportunity for arguing amongst rank and file members throughout the civil service and across the unions for national action to stop mass contracting-out rather than leaving individual sections to fight alone or - worse still - bid for

their own jobs.

It is clear that, in many areas of the civil service, members are still not aware that the old concept of 'a job for life' (in large measure true for mainstream white-collar workers) is now a thing of the past.

The different national unions ought to be organising frequent mass meetings to explain the Tories' plans to cut our jobs, shifting what remains to private contractors on dreadful conditions. In the predictable absence of such action, each departmental committee and branch should organise such meetings.

RMT conference says Knapp and executive must resign

By RMT member

The big issues facing the RMT AGM this year were restructuring, the Machinery of Negotiation and privatisation. These issues of course aren't all separate. Without breaking up the Machinery of Negotiation, BR can't break up the railways into separate profit centres with different wages and conditions; without restructuring, BR can't undermine our national conditions of service and national wage rates. Both of these changes are aimed at producing profits out of us; because unless profits can be found nobody will be interested in buying shares in a privatised BR.

For 3 years running now the delegates at the AGM have been aware of this and have told the leadership to maintain unity

at all costs. No grade is allowed to face restructuring alone; any changes proposed should, if accepted, be brought in together.

This policy was passed in 1990. The leadership ignored it and met BR in separate Joint Working Parties. In 1991 the AGM repeated the decision. By this time the S & T restructuring had been imposed through pushing individuals to sign personal contracts. By the time of the AGM, BR were claiming a majority of the S & T signed up and had ignored a RMT referendum ballot rejecting the deal.

The RMT leadership were effectively censured and told to carry out Union policy by commencing a ballot for industrial action.

The whole issue came to a head at this year's AGM when the delegates voted to adopt a

resolution from the Grades Conference involving calling for the entire leadership to resign.

However, on the question of the Machinery of Negotiation itself, the delegates failed to adopt a resolution calling for industrial action should BR impose a new machinery.

The delegates took a number of decisions which involved links with other workers in the EEC - notably on the issue of privatisation as this was threatened not just by the Tory government but also by an EEC directive 91/440.

The AGM also agreed to make links to maintain and improve conditions and wages for workers throughout Europe seeking to level these up to the best existing in the EEC. Significantly, a traditional Communist Party-inspired anti-EC "little England" resolution which

sought to defend "Parliamentary sovereignty" etc. was resoundingly defeated.

The AGM also agreed to link up with other working class organisations to fight the growth of racism and fascism throughout Europe. On that also the conference agreed to affiliate to the Anti-Racist Alliance and to the Anti-Nazi League.

And on the Labour Party leadership tussle, abstentions in the 'choice' came second to Smith. Prescott was voted for for deputy.

Over-riding all this was the financial crisis facing the RMT. A last minute report sent to delegates detailed cuts to branch finances and membership contributions up by 25%. Despite delegates pointing out that the leadership had omitted to include themselves in any cuts, the financial report was passed.

All in all there is a clear gulf arising between good policy passed at an AGM and a leadership confident of ignoring it - including the call to resign.

Making sure good policy is acted upon is the job facing the Broad Left and a matter of urgency for all railworkers.

Civil Service Round Up

Strike at Royal Botanic Gardens

NUCPS members at Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens - including five parks police - struck last Friday in protest at management's sacking of two female casuals due to financial problems. This is probably the first strike of any police officers since 1919!

CPSA DHSS election re-run

By a civil servant

In a move which surprised no-one but outraged many, the newly-elected 'Moderate' CPSA General Secretary, Barry Reamsbottom, has ruled that the DHSS Section elections must be re-run.

The announcement came amid rumours that the Broad Left (including four Alliance for Workers' Liberty supporters) had swept the board in the election of the largest and most influential section of the union.

The section is strategically important to the right-wing - misnamed 'Moderates' - who control the National Executive. Broad Left control of the section would allow an opportunity for a fight-backs in the DHSS, particularly over Compulsory Competitive Tendering - a fight which the Moderates have made it clear they are not prepared to lead.

The reasons given for the re-run are dubious. Were they applied to all elections, all unions would re-run all elections! As Reamsbottom himself admits, any irregularities were "not because of malpractice on the part of individuals or groups".

The election re-run is now a common event in the CPSA. If the Moderates don't like the result, they re-run the election! The election of Militant supporter John Macreadie to General Secretary in 1987 and a 'yes' vote for the merger with

NUCPS in 1991, are two notable re-runs in which the Moderates eventually got the results they desired.

The right wing will do all they can to win the DHSS election. The Broad Left must ensure that CPSA members are aware of the real reason for the re-run and convince members that the Broad Left will lead campaigns and fights against the Tories while the right wing simply roll over and die.

This latest outrage against democracy further illustrates the need for a strong rank-and-file in the union and the accountability of all union officers through immediate recall and yearly elections.

Support the resettlement workers

London Resettlement Unit members protested outside NUCPS HQ last Friday at the union's lack of support in their dispute with Resettlement Agency management.

Management intend to implement a new shift pattern - based on flexible rostering - on 13 July. The new shifts will severely disrupt members' personal lives and are being unilaterally introduced without even the offer of extra money.

In March, the London Branch Chair wrote to NEC member, Ian Blackwood (copied to full-timer Mike Sparham) requesting an 'urgent meeting to discuss the way forward'. In June, the branch chair wrote to Mike Sparham (copied to Blackwood!) requesting 'a prompt reply on the question of support, regarding members suspended from duty and clarification on the legal position of flexible shift rostering'. The members want to know their legal rights if they refuse to work the new shifts.

Up to last week's protest, these members had received no response from the union. NUCPS branches should contact the London Resettlement Unit branch, obtain full details and pressurise the union leadership into action.

OILC inaugural conference

The OILC held its inaugural conference at the end of June in Stirling.

Ronnie MacDonald, elected at the conference as the new union's first General Secretary,

explained that the OILC had now reached its initial membership target of 1,500. The union aims to double its membership by early 1993.

The main emphasis at the

conference was on health and safety offshore. One delegate described working conditions in the North Sea as "a jungle with another Piper Alpha just waiting to happen".

The conference resolved to go forward on the health and safety front and to continue to co-operate with and pressurise the Health and Safety Executive.

The OILC's record on health and safety is second to none and activists regard this as one of the union's main strengths in terms of building the membership. This is the other main task, despite the victimisation of activists, particularly health and safety reps.

The OFS, the Norwegian Offshore Union, was represented at the conference and pledged full support to OILC. It was stressed that the interests of all workers on the European Continental Shelf were identical. Real workers' unity across the North Sea is something which must be built.

The conference was run on an open and democratic basis in the traditions of OILC. In his concluding remarks, Ronnie MacDonald pledged that the OILC would be "a union for members, run by the members with the absolute minimum of bureaucracy".

White collar council workers must fight for pay

By Tony Dale

White collar council workers have been offered an average of 4.1% in the 1992 pay talks.

NALGO submitted a flat rate claim for £1,000.

The 4.1% is below inflation. It is below the present going rate for pay settlements which is 7% according to the Guardian and Economist.

NALGO Conference, last month, agreed a strike strategy of 8 days of national strike spread over 6 weeks to be combined with all-out strike action by selected groups.

Branches are now consulting on the offer and the proposed strike strategy. A national delegate meeting will be held in London on 22 July to discuss the offer.

The offer is unacceptable. It does nothing for the low paid. Pay settlements over the last number of years have all been below inflation. Local council pay has been gradually eroded in real terms.

If the offer is accepted the employers are likely to come back with an even more derisory offer next year. Also, acceptance of the offer will strengthen the hand of the

Durham Miners Gala

By Russell Byrne

Last Saturday's Durham Miners' Gala was a well-attended event, seeing at least 3,000 people on the day.

The annual Gala, traditionally known as the "Big meeting" is one of, if not, the largest working class event in the North East.

Benn, Scargill and Skinner were the main speakers. Tony Benn started the ball rolling with an inspiring speech in which he commented on political events throughout the past year, pulling no punches in condemning capitalism as the cause of such fiascoes as Canary Wharf, and warned of our slip into Vic-

torian conditions at the hands of Thatcherite policy.

Giving a brief history of the unions, he stated that "If the Labour Party was ever to separate itself from the trade unions, it would end up like David Owen - done". His speech was later hailed by Scargill as one which would have won the election for Labour had it been given an outlet.

Scargill's speech included an onslaught against new realism, and he coldly condemned it with the truth that "you can't co-operate with the enemy". He also stated: "I am proud to call myself a socialist, and instead of going for the red rose, we need resistance".

Gardner Merchant/GPT dispute

After a fortnight on strike, canteen staff at the GPT plant in Liverpool returned to work on Thursday (25 June).

As a result of the strike, Gardner Merchant dropped its plans to cut rates of pay. But the cut in working hours and the axing of nine jobs (supposedly "sweetened" by enhanced redundancy terms) are to go ahead.

Negotiations between the

GMB and Gardner Merchant are continuing over the latter issues. If no agreement is reached by the end of July, then the workers will be balloted again on strike action.

The wisdom of returning to work without having resolved these issues remains to be seen. Half a loaf might be better than none - but sometimes no deal can be better than half a deal.

Tory asset strippers

unveil rail plans

Labour must keep trade union link!

By Gerry Bates

The Tories have finally announced their detailed plans for the privatisation of British Rail. They have managed to combine 'free market' dogmatism, economic irrationality and plain old asset-stripping to produce a policy that can only spell disaster for rail users and workers.

Let's start with the asset-stripping. The key fact to keep in mind here is that 45% of the cost of the railways goes in maintaining the track in working order. Under the new Tory proposals, this cost is going to be borne by the Treasury, that is, in the final analysis, by the labour of the productive workers who generate the value out of which taxes are paid.

Private capital is only going to get involved in the various passenger, freight and parcel services. Instead of having to maintain 'their own' bit of track, these new 'services' will now only have to pay a limited fee to the track authorities which is by definition insufficient to cover the cost of track maintenance.

This amounts to:
(i) a massive public subsidy to the private capitalist parasites who will buy up parts of British Rail, and

(ii) an admission that BR, as a whole, cannot be made 'profitable'.

Until buyers are found for the various 'services' up for sale — Network South East, Inter-City, Provincial, Parcels and Freight — will all be controlled by a public holding company. Private capital will not even have to undertake to run whole services, just the profitable bits!

Already a few services out of Euston are run by 'Stagecoach', the big private coach company, and Richard Branson's Virgin are preparing more bids. This is hardly going to revolutionise rail travel; as one railworker put it:

"You might get a few silly gimmicks like video coaches and hostesses in short skirts, but I can't see how it can really improve the service".

The Tory proposals provide no answer to the crisis of the transport system. What is needed is a huge expansion of public spending on the rail system as part of an integrated public transport policy geared to meet the real needs of the users and providers of transport services.

Britain is at the bottom of the league table for investment in its rail system. No amount of cosmetics like flash shopping malls built around mainline stations by private developers will change that.

Meanwhile, the only way to make the rail system profitable for private capital is to beat down the workforce. As one railworker put it: "They want us to be Martini people... they can have us anytime, anyplace, anywhere".

Remember, after the Clapham Disaster inquiry, it was found that the worker blamed had been doing 12 hour days for a solid month before the accident and had taken only one day off in the previous three months! Privatisation is going to increase that kind of overwork and corner-cutting.

The problem for BR management and the Tories is that railworkers are a stubborn lot and the idea of a public transport system doesn't seem that absurd to most people.

The recent annual general meeting of the Greater London Labour Party expressed its overwhelming support for maintaining full links between the Labour Party and its affiliated trade unions. The vote provided a glimpse of the real views of the vast majority of people in the labour and trade union movement.

Only a couple of delegates voted against.

Even more significant, however, was the actual substance of the successful resolutions.

It was not just some vague expression of mutual goodwill (even the so-called "modernisers" can manage that, until you study their small print!)

Instead it demanded that the relationship should continue to rest on four basic cornerstones.

- First, substantial representation of trade unions at all party conferences.
- Second, participation of national trade unions in elections for the party's national executive and leadership.
- Third, representation of local trade union branches and other affiliates as delegates to constituency general committees.

Fourth, representation of local trade union branches and



Labour must draw the trade union rank and file — like these Burnsall strikes — into active participation in the party. Breaking the link won't help that task. Photo: Mark Salman

other affiliates at every stage in the selection of parliamentary candidates.

The Labour Party will continue to need the support of the trade unions which originally brought it into being.

Unless the relationship is to be reduced to an expensive one-way platitude, it is vital that all sections of the movement unite round the four principles listed above.

The Tories are always working (remember the political fund ballots, of which the second round will shortly be upon us) to cause rifts between unions and Labour.

We must not let them panic us into doing their dirty work for them.

The campaign to "keep the link" must be a priority over the coming months.

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