

# Drive out the Tories!

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Wages and public services face Tory axe

**C**haos, depression, shutdowns — that's where capitalism and the Tories have got us. In their new plans for state spending, to be announced on 12 November, the Tories intend to make the working class pay the price for their chaos.

Public sector pay rises will probably be held down way below price inflation — which is certain to increase as the falling value of the pound makes imports dearer.

Social security benefits, and welfare spending across the board, will have their real value cut.

The Tories may appease the construction industry by going ahead with big building projects like the new Jubilee Line in London. If so, they will try to balance their figures by even bigger cuts in "revenue" spending — wages and benefits.

Cuts, cuts, cuts: but this time the Tories can be stopped. They are shaky and divided. They can be forced into U-turns, and driven from office.

Labour and the TUC should launch a great campaign of mass protests, and parliamentary obstruction, to bring down the Tories. The TUC should call a Day of Action on a working day. Every trade union should bring forward its disputes.

Other regions should follow the example of the North-West TUC, which has called a Day of Action against the pit closures on a week day, 17 November.

Local miners' support groups, and anti-Tory campaign committees based on Trades Councils and Labour Parties, should agitate and organise against every cut and closure.

Now is the time to fight!



In 1989 strikes by railworkers and local government workers smashed an unofficial Tory pay norm. We can do it again.

# NO PAY

# FREEZE!

# NO CUTS!

## The lie machine



"How much longer can this tragedy go on?" No, not the cuts which are wrecking the Health Service. Not the closures which are ruining industry, destroying communities, and throwing thousands on to the dole. Not the chaos and injustice of Tory rule. After their brief fling with serious politics, over the pit closures, the tabloids have returned to base. The official reason for the visit by Charles and Di to South Korea is said to be boosting British exports. But it could hardly have been better timed if it were consciously designed to distract attention from the Tory Government's crisis and the growing rebellion against pit closures and public service cuts.

# North-West TUC calls Day of Action on weekday

At last activists in the labour movement have a focus in the struggle for solidarity action with the miners. The North West TUC has called a Day of Action on a

weekday. They plan a major demonstration in Manchester on Tuesday 17 November. Activists will now be organising solidarity strike action for that day. Trades

Councils, and the miners' support groups or anti-Tory campaign committees which they have set up, must become centres of agitation for the 17th. Trade unionists outside the

North-West should argue for action in their areas on the same day. An immediate focus in the North-West to build for the 17th will be the demonstration being held

in St Helens this Saturday, 7th: assemble 10.30 at Birchley Street, by St Helens Town Hall, and move off at 11.00 for a rally at Queen's Park Sport Centre.



## Cost-cutting takes lives

At least 20 people avoidably died last Monday (October 26) because of the failure of the London Ambulance Services computer system. Ambulance Service trade unionists had made it clear to management that the system was not working properly. Nevertheless, management pushed ahead with their plans to process all calls in the London area through the central computer. By mid-morning Monday 26 October, the final day of operation, it was clear that the computer was turning into a murderous failure. For instance one 14 year old boy died of an asthma attack because he had to wait 45 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Yet management only abandoned the system under

pressure from the trade unions. "On Tuesday we threatened management with total withdrawal from the computer system" said one NUPE activist. "I think that, combined with the huge media outcry is what made them back down". But, despite the resignation of LAS boss John Wilby the issues are far from settled. "The crunch will come this Friday when the board have to decide what to do" said the NUPE member. "Our position is clear: we'd much rather see it take hundreds of people to deal with the calls in the old fashioned way of notebook and pen than risk a single life."

## Hong Kong: Patten spars with Beijing

# A little democracy, a lot of profits

By Cheung Siu Ming

So Chris Patten, Tory politician and probably the last British Governor of Hong Kong, is now trying to bring democracy to Hong Kong. The White Knight in shining armour is doing battle with the Chinese Stalinist dragons. Hong Kong has a small Executive Council consisting of senior civil servants and some government nominees. There is also a Legislative Council (Legco) of 60, 18 of whom were directly elected for the first time in 1990. The others were government nominees or elected from "functional constituencies" such as lawyers, bankers, industrialists etc. Patten is not proposing to increase the number of directly elected seats in 1995 beyond the 33% previously agreed with Beijing. He has instead broadened the electoral base of nine of the functional constituen-

cies. He has introduced a more open style of running the Hong Kong government, getting rid of some of the colonial pomp. However he has firmly kept the directly elected Legco members at arm's length. His proposals do not even amount to half of Legco being elected by one person one vote. The directly elected members are a coalition of liberals and radicals called the United Democrats who made a virtual clean sweep in 1990, wining against local conservatives and those directly sponsored by Beijing. They came out consistently in support of the Chinese Democracy Movement and some of them were active in leading the million-strong demonstrations in Hong Kong protesting against the Tiananmen massacres in 1989. These councillors, led by barrister Martin Lee, have been publicly labelled by Beijing as subversives. These proposals, which Pat-

ten has said are open to negotiation, are due to go before the existing Legco in March for ratification. There is a logic to this political gamble. China is opening up economically to the west. After over ten years of introducing market reforms more than half the economy is in private hands. China, is a major investor in Hong Kong, with banking and commercial enterprises, because Hong Kong is an excellent base from which to export to the rest of the world. By 1997, China will have so much at stake in Hong Kong and the New Economic Zones that even the most diehard Stalinists will think twice before coming down hard against local government in Hong Kong. Western investments in China look more profitable than in the chaotic mess in the former Soviet Union, provided the regime can be brought under increasing economic leverage while continuing to police the Chinese working class. The Tories are not serious about genuinely representative self-government for Hong Kong. What they are after is leverage and a slice of the action in an increasingly privatised and open Chinese mass-market economy. Hong Kong workers will need to rely on their own organisation to defend their interests. Unlike Patten and the wealthy local Establishment, they can't get up and go in 1997.

## A victory against racist attacks

Tony and Arnold Deane, two black businessmen from East London, say they will sue Forest Gate police for assault and malicious prosecution. Tony and Arnold were attacked by police a year ago, on 4 November 1991. Arnold Deane had to go to hospital. The men were then charged with assaulting the police. In June Arnold Deane was

found not guilty of assault. On Friday 30 October Tony Deane won his appeal on his assault charge. The judge accepted the defence's case that the police evidence was contradictory. Tony Deane has called for the police involved to be dismissed and charged with assault. Further information from the Newham Monitoring Project, 081-555 8151.

## Dennis Skinner in Mansfield "New realism won't win this one"

Well over 2000 people marched through Mansfield last Saturday on the East Midlands TUC's "Campaign For Jobs And Recovery" demonstration. The highlight was a fiery speech by Dennis Skinner MP. This is how Skinner finished his speech: "The industrial and political wings of our movement must join hands and build a powerful protest movement to drive the Tory government out. We are not going to win this dispute with 'new realism'. We've had ten or twelve years of that, and look where it's got us. Let's have no more nonsense like inviting the likes of Paddy Ashdown and the CBI on to TUC platforms. We've got to go on the offensive. We've got to be prepared to take on this government, and defy it with industrial action. Remember, back in 1972 people said we couldn't do anything about the Tory Industrial Relations Act because it was the law. Well, I'll tell you what broke that Act: strike action! The

TUC even called a one-day general strike! We need to do the same today. The miners need solidarity action. The TUC should call a day of action".

**National Miners' Support Network**  
A much needed national miners support network has been launched. It is backed by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, Women Against Pit Closures and the NUM itself. The network can be contacted by writing to the Secretary, Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129A Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG. Tel 071 263 9450, Fax 071 281 5720

## Occupy the pits!

According to the Guardian (3 November), conditions are deteriorating rapidly in nine of the ten pits supposed to be going through the "colliery review procedure" before any closure by British Coal. At Silverhill, in Notts, £5 million worth of machinery has been deliberately allowed to remain buried.

There are similar tales from many of the other pits. Ray Hilton of the deputies' (pit overseers') union NACODS has accused the Tories and British Coal of "deliberate industrial vandalism". It is time for miners to act on Arthur Scargill's call to keep the pits open by any means necessary. Occupy the pits!

## Lectures on the cheap

Plans are currently being discussed at the University of Northumbria to have second and third year students teach first year students the material they have already learned.

The University argues that this will be a cost-effective way of raising standards, but many fear it will mean undermining lecturers' jobs and exploiting students as cheap labour.

**Organise the Labour left!**  
**Back the miners!**  
**Drive out the Tories!**  
**Labour Party Socialists Annual General Meeting**  
**Saturday 5 December, Sheffield Hallam University Students' Union.**  
**Contact: Secretary, LPS, 106 Lyham Road, London SW2**



1917: Worker's self-liberation, the very opposite of Stalinism

75th anniversary of the Russian Revolution of 1917

# When the workers seized control

**S**eventy-five years ago something new and strange appeared in the world - a state ruled by the working class.

The great swirling mass movement of workers - supported by the poor farmers - seized control in the old empire of the Tsars, kicking the bloody Tsar into his

well-deserved grave and chasing away the landlords and capitalists.

They created new structures of power: workers' councils - in the Russian language, "soviets" - allowed the workers to rule themselves in a direct democracy.

Only once before, in Paris in 1871, had such a state existed - and it had been crushed after two months, drowned in the blood of more than 20,000 workers of Paris, killed by the reactionaries after they regained control.

The Russian workers, learning from the fate of their Parisian predecessors, ruthlessly fought for and held on to power. They fought and won a long and destructive civil war.

With Leon Trotsky in command of their Red Army, they defeated the armies of 14 states - one of which was Britain - sent to crush the workers' revolution.

When the workers finally lost power, it was not to the friends of the Tsar or to invading imperialist armies, but to the state bureaucracy led by Stalin, who crushed all vestiges of working-class socialism in the "Soviet Union".

The manner of that defeat was strange and unexpected. Stalin's

new bureaucratic ruling class pretended to be socialist. The pretence was enormously destructive for socialism. We are only now recovering from that destruction.

Yet, though the manner of defeat was unexpected, defeat itself was not. The Marxist leaders of the Revolution always knew that defeat was inevitable unless the workers in the advanced countries followed their lead and overthrew capitalism.

The ex-Tsarist civilisation was too backward to allow the flowering of a new socialist civilisation on its ruins. To flourish, socialism needed the resources and civilisation of the most advanced capitalist countries. But the workers in countries like Germany - and Britain, where there was a General Strike in 1926 - were defeated.

Isolated in Russia's stifling backwardness, the workers' revolution was strangled by Stalin.

Today we commemorate and honour the Russian Revolution, those who made it and those - largely the same people - who fought to the death against Stalin to defend it.

Not so long ago we would have had to argue with people who supported the USSR because they thought it was socialist. We

would have had to produce facts and arguments to show that the Stalinist system in the USSR was, contrary to its official ideology, the very opposite of what the workers who overthrew the Tsar and the capitalists set out to build. We would have had to brand as monstrous lies the ideas that Stalinism was socialism; that Stalinism and Bolshevism were one; that the totalitarian state in the USSR was a form of working-class freedom.

After the collapse of Stalinism, no-one but a few half-deranged stragglers from the once-mighty army of international Stalinism is prepared to defend the Stalinist system, still less to assert that it was socialism.

The assertion that Stalinism was socialism, the natural result of the 1917 working-class revolution and of any future working-class revolution, is now made almost exclusively by the propagandists of capitalism. They have taken over all the old bloodstained Stalinist lies, as they might take over the stock of a bankrupt competitor, and continue to peddle them.

This poisonous nonsense now comes from avowed anti-socialists, where before it came from sincere but confused would-be

socialists. This is progress of a sort!

Stalinism was the murdering negation of the Russian workers' revolution, not its natural development. That fact will slowly become clear again, now that Stalinism outside China has collapsed.

Those socialists who proudly proclaim their adherence to the goals, principles and traditions of the 1917 Russian workers' revolution - as we do now - will make it clear.

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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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# A second front?

Over the last few weeks the pages of *Socialist Organiser* have been full of appeals for industrial action to help the miners. We have focussed on the NUM leaders' call for a TUC day of action on a working day, which could act as a focus for solidarity strikes.

The reason why we have hammered away at this point is simple. The miners do not feel ready to take on the Government on their own. Many see themselves as almost in the same position as the nurses or other health-workers, who can't hit profits when they strike. "With 40 million tons of coal stockpiled, what economic clout have we got?" ask many rank-and-file miners.

Since the two big demonstrations in London, this mood has started to change, but only a little. Miners are going to need a little more than promises before they vote to fight.

This is a basic fact of the present situation, and there is no point ignoring it or hushing it up.

The only way to move forward is to strengthen the miners' own position, or to develop industrial action by other workers alongside the miners.

Elsewhere in this paper we look at the case for occupying the pits as a way of strengthening the miners' fight, and at moves in the North-West for a Day of Action on Tuesday 17 November in support of the miners.

What about other workers taking action in their own battles, alongside the miners? The picture is not as gloomy as it may first appear.

Slowly but surely, a head of steam is building up in the rail unions, particularly ASLEF, for action over the job losses and depot closures that will result from the pit closures. Nothing is definite yet, but many right wingers who have traditionally backed the ASLEF leaders, and who helped Fullick avoid a fight over privatisation at this year's Annual Delegate Meeting, are very far from happy.

The strikes at Drax and Ratcliffe-on-Soar — though mainly by construction workers — show that a fight may be possible in the power stations, which will also face job cuts after the pit closures.

Outside those immediately threatened by the pit closures, the obvious candidates for opening up a second front are public sector workers who face a pay freeze and big job losses this year.

The Tories are doing their best to avoid a battle with the firefighters, who are set to win 5% before any wage freeze is imposed. A battle with the post workers looks a lot more likely.

Uniformed grades have had their offer upped from 2.2% to 2.5%, but that is not going to satisfy the rank and file. The offer is still well below inflation, and prices will rise even faster next year. As one longtime UCW activist put it: "The mood isn't there to accept peanuts".

What seemed like hollow rhetoric from post workers' union leader Alan Tuffin, when at one of the miners' rallies he talked about Mr Major not getting any mail this Christmas, could just turn out to be accurate.

The other immediate possibility of a second front comes from the tubeworkers. This week, RMT members are voting for a series of one-day strikes to stop 5,000 redundancies and attacks on conditions. Let's hope that, this time, the national and local RMT leaders don't lose their bottle like they did this May when they called off strike action.

If the post or tubeworkers do open a second front, then all other public sector workers should urge their union to move into action too.



The miners do not feel ready to take the government on alone

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Gerry Bates

# The pro-IRA, anti-Irish left

## AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

The day cannot be far off now when an IRA bomb in London will kill and maim a sizeable number of people.

The miracle is that it hasn't happened already. Every bomb that goes off makes it more likely, and there are a lot of bombs going off.

Only thin lines of chance, accident and expertise together with the efficiency of coded communication between the Provisional IRA and the police divide these "harmless" explosions from a massacre. A bomb goes off prematurely, a warning is misunderstood or ignored, someone carrying a bomb panics, a bomb is deliberately exploded in a crowd — and you have a lot of dead and maimed people who just happened to be catching a train or having a drink.

**"Only working-class unity offers a way out in Ireland. The romantic 'Troops Out Now' culture of the left has no answers."**

It has happened many times in Northern Ireland in the last 20 years. I repeat: it will probably happen in London. And there is nothing we can do to stop it happening. All we can do is prepare for it politically.

The left is in no state to face the horrified backlash which will follow a new massacre, as it followed the Birmingham pub bomb massacre in 1974, when the Prevention of Terrorism Act was rushed through Parliament by the Labour government, without a single vote against, and shop stewards in the Midlands took the initiative in getting pro-Irish socialists sacked for their politics.

The British left has neither policy nor serious activity where Ireland is concerned, nor does it allow honest discussion of the issue. "Troops Out Now" is the best they have, but "Troops Out Now" is not a policy, and the idea that it betrays a culpable ignorance of Ireland.

"Troops Out" without a political settlement does not imply a united Ireland, still less a socialist united Ireland. It means civil war and repartition.

The new Protestant Irish state emerging at the end would probably be smaller than the Six Counties — though you can't be sure: it would depend on the course of a civil war, on which side could massacre and drive out more of the other's people — but there would still be a second, "Protestant", Irish state. "Troops Out" without a political settlement implies not Ireland united in one state but Yugoslavia, Lebanon, or Sri Lanka and then two Irish states.

Take away the British army now, without a political settlement, and the Catholic/Protestant conflict would still be there, unleashed and murderous. The Protestants, feeling betrayed by Britain, would resist incorporation in an all-Ireland state and try to carve out their own "self-determination" in a territory, Northern

Ireland, where they are only barely a majority overall — according to the 1991 census, 54% as against a Catholic 46% — and a minority in fully half the land area.

In those circumstances "Troops Out Now" translates into another "demand" — "Communal Civil War Now!"

It is no wonder that a big majority of the southern Irish — and of the Six Counties Catholics — are against the "Troops Out" single-plank policy favoured by the British left, and consider the British left to be blinkered political auxiliaries of the Provos.

That is true, but it is also a misunderstanding. In their own politically incoherent way, the Provos are serious: the British left is not. The British left postures and preens itself with "r... r... revolutionary" phrases about "Troops Out, and damn the consequences!", and fawns on the Provisionals, denying that anyone in Britain has the right even to criticise them. But it is all quite hollow, and has been shown repeatedly to be hollow.

The truth is that on Ireland the British left has long been living in an irresponsible fool's paradise sustained by double standards about the realities of the Provisional IRA campaign. Massacres like Enniskillen; the gruesome murder of Irish workers whose jobs, in any way, even remotely, can be said to be "collaborating" with the British or Northern Ireland state; forcing men to drive car bombs to their targets by holding their families hostage — terrible things like that, whose targets are Irish people, Irish workers, have been far away from Britain, and the less spectacular examples scarcely make the papers here. The British left did not have to take notice of things like that, as it notices bombs in London.

It is all unreal. The left can say what it likes. Nobody interferes. It is all of no consequence. Smart operators like the leaders of the SWP, who confuse the skills of an advertising agency technician with principled socialist politics, know it is of no consequence, and indulge themselves.

It was not always thus, and in the face of IRA massacres in London it can not continue.

In the early 1970s, when the Northern Ireland "Troubles" were new, things were different. The contrast was brought home to me two weeks ago on the miners' midweek demonstration, when I saw a man unmolested selling the Provisionals' paper *An Phoblacht* in Hyde Park, with the blackmailing front-page headline, "Britain can stop the bombs".

On the great demonstrations 20 years ago we had our pro-Irish papers ripped up. When Bernadette Devlin, then an MP collaborating with various left groups, went to Pentonville Jail to join the famous demonstration protesting against the jailing of five dockers under the Tory anti-union laws, she was surrounded by a large, very hostile, and threatening crowd, some of whom, on my observation over the two or three days of the "Siege of Pentonville", were seriously committed trade union militants.

When the first bombs started going off in London, early in 1973, the panic on the left was truly disgusting. SWP leaders wrote pathetically in *Socialist Worker* about the futility of fighting the British Army. "When you kill one British sol-



The British left has double standards about the Provisional IRA

dier, there are a hundred to take his place", advised SWP leader Duncan Hallas, in a new inversion of age-old revolutionary rhetoric. *Socialist Worker* had a front page with the appeal, "Stop the Bombings!"

When the London headquarters of the *Workers' Fight* group was subjected to a dawn raid and search by armed police in September 1973, it produced a rare ripple of solidarity. (It was the only such raid; no other left-wing political group has been so raided for many decades). This was London, and it was all very polite. We did not have our place wrecked, as tens of thousands of Northern Ireland Catholic homes were being wrecked by the Army on similar missions, but it served as a warning to the left. Some of the worst and most arrogant sectarians joined us for a protest meeting at Conway Hall, including the WRP and the SWP (then called IS).

**"If things get really hot, these 'pro-IRA' socialists will disgrace themselves — as they did when bombs started going off in London in 1973."**

After the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the left pulled in its horns. It is a strange fact that the first national demonstration against the PTA — under which Irish people were and are at the mercy of the police — was not organised until the middle of 1975, and not by the bigger left groups but by *Workers' Fight* and the London People's Democracy under the ragged umbrella of the Troops Out Movement. Susan Carlyle, Judy Smith and I organised it — and little help we got from the left, or from the hostile officers of the Troops Out Movement, then members of the IMG (forerunner of Socialist Outlook and Socialist Action).

Then things quietened down, and settled into a long stalemate in Northern Ireland. Around the time of the 1981 hunger strikes, in which ten Republicans died, there was a marked shift on the left, even the Labour Left, to vicarious "Provisionalism", putting the finishing touches to the now smog-thick culture of the left on Ireland: vague support for the Provisionals, and "Troops Out Now" — and do not dare discuss the issue. Even the Kinnockites in the National Union of Students would join up with the SWP to attack us for not supporting the Provi-

sionals, and called us Unionists for recognising that the Irish Protestant community also has rights.

This culture can not survive a serious IRA campaign in England. A sign of the times is the SWP's pathetic and cringing Open Letter to the Provos asking them to stop the bombings in Britain, please.

The letter lies about their history. "We have never accepted the view" that the troops are peace keepers, it claims. In fact *SW* made propaganda in support of the troops in 1969 when it mattered most! Most strong in the letter is the British nationalist double standards. Pleading that British workers do not deserve to be bombed — and of course, they don't — they blandly accept the bombings and shootings Northern Irish workers are subjected to as necessities of war.

The people who wrote this fawning letter made a big fuss when I wrote an angry Open Letter to Gerry Adams after Enniskillen, which was an atrocity against the Irish people killed and maimed, and — because it was an attack on a Protestant religious service — an atrocity against the whole idea of the equality of all the Irish.

There is a deep anti-Irish bias at the very heart of the left's abstractly "pro-Irish" politics. One does not react to — or draw conclusions from — an Enniskillen massacre as a human being, or as a socialist, or as an Irish Republican in Tone's or Connolly's or Pearse's sense of that word.

You don't have to take account of the views of the overwhelming majority of the Irish, Protestant and Catholic alike, or even pay attention to the work of Irish academics exploring modern Irish history — the "revolutionary party" is enough. Until the bombs come to... London.

It has been many years since I could listen to a group of SWPers or RCPers chanting "Troops Out Now" without the underlying note of brutal British chauvinism jarring on my Irish ears. If things get really hot these "pro-IRA" socialists will disgrace themselves this time — just like they did last time.

I know no easy answers to the terrible conflict in Ireland. Only working class unity offers a way out. But I know that the proposal to let the conflict resolve itself in the Yugoslav manner has nothing to do with socialist politics. I know that the vaguely romantic "Troops Out Now" culture of the left is no way to prepare for the war the Provisional IRA seems to be preparing to launch on London.

**Alliance for Workers' Liberty Conference**

# Discussing a way forward

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty Conference will be held in London on Saturday 28-Sunday 29 November. Dan Judelson, AWL organiser in Manchester, puts our meeting in the context of the miners-led labour movement upsurge.

I have never been surprised at what the Tories have done. I expect it from them. All that has surprised me is that people have put up with the Tories for so long", said Tony Benn, supporting the miners.

Things have changed. We have had a remarkable three weeks, and now the naked brutality of the Tories is a real issue in the country. The miners have stirred the labour movement.

The tabloid papers and dissident Tories have been part of an incred-

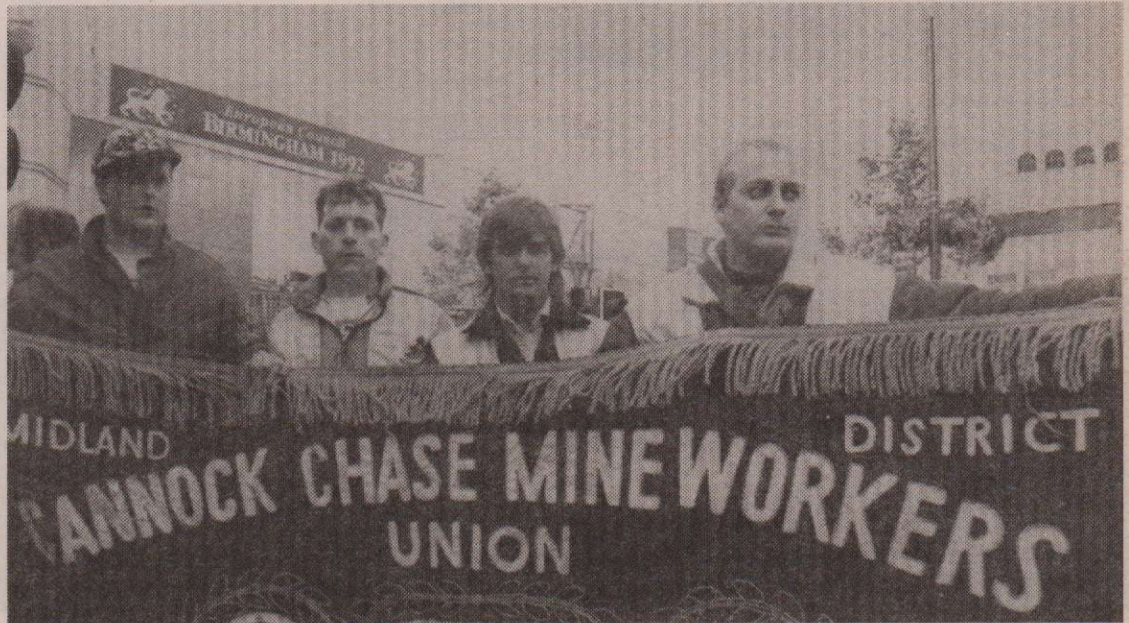
ible assault on the government. Major is pictured as not only thoughtless and uncaring but also vulnerable and incompetent.

Perhaps Major could fall. Perhaps we will force an election. John Smith, nearly invisible during the ERM crisis, has even drawn Labour into confrontation with the government — trying to vote the Tories down on Maastricht. Weak-kneed and not socialist, but to be welcomed: John, this is the sort of thing an opposition does!

The working class is on the move again, pushing Labour.

One of the notable features of the movement so far is its form — we have had a great roar of disgust against the pit closures and job losses, but one not flanked by industrial action — yet. We have had a political response.

According to the latest opinion polls, if there was an election now the Labour Party would win heavily.



The miners have stirred the labour movement

Nevertheless, the movement is still weak. Strikes are still at a long-time low. The Labour Party has done little to justify or organise its lead in the polls.

The forthcoming Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference, in London on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November, aims to answer the question of what we should do now.

Our conference aims to provide socialist answers for Labour, trade union and student activists. We will be discussing and voting on documents and motions which will frame the policy of our organisation over the next year. In particular, we will be addressing the need

for socialists to root their politics in the workplace and in the existing mass organisations of the working class — the Labour Party and the unions.

We aim to help provide a coherent, class struggle alternative to the labour movement as a whole. We want to help transform the existing working class organisations into a class movement which fights to replace capitalism, cuts and unemployment with socialism.

The AWL believes that central to that job will be a socialist organisation capable of providing a clear lead to workers who want to fight.

In the last few weeks we have begun to see what the working

class could be capable of. 200,000 workers marching for the miners have changed the mood in society and set the government back. This great demonstration will have reinvigorated many activists who dropped out of the movement in the 1980s. Many youth, who have never seen such a display of working class action, will be thinking about the possibilities of socialism for the first time.

The AWL invites you to attend our conference and find out about the politics which can win socialism.

For conference details write to: the National Secretary, AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**Socialist Organiser rally - How to fight and win**

Speakers include:

**Billy Pye (NUM Executive)**

**Paul Whetton (Secretary Notts NUM rank and file strike committee 1984-5)**

**John O'Mahony (Editor Socialist Organiser)**

7.00 Saturday 28 November

Kingsway College, Sidmouth Street, London WC1

(Kings Cross rail and tube stations)

Rally sponsored by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

More details: 071-639 7965

# Yeltsin government weakens

**Socialist Organiser spoke to Boris Kagarlitsky about the crisis facing the Russian government.**

For the last six months the Baltic governments have been complaining that the Russian government was running behind its troop withdrawal schedule. The Russians have been complaining that the Baltic states have not been prepared to help solve the technical difficulties in withdrawing the troops.

The Russian troops are without fuel. It is actually true that they are not able to move.

I think the Russian government has now just made a gesture, saying that they now will not be able to leave.

It's funny. Army officers complain on the television that they are not able to move their tanks. People laugh about it in the streets.

The second reason for leaving the troops in the Baltic states is that Yeltsin is scared of the army. Yeltsin is hated by the peo-

ple, and the Baltic troops are unreliable.

It is not that the great majority of the Russian military are Russian nationalists. They just hate the government — and with good reason.

If mass demonstrations or strikes erupt it will be difficult for Yeltsin to use the troops. The army could well join any unrest.

Lots of people are now comparing the Russian situation with 1916: absolutely nothing works; everything the government does immediately fails. The government expects its policies to collapse, and so feels itself morally defeated.

The government muddles on, simply because they can see no other way.

On the other hand there is no organised mass alternative.

The Civic Union is playing a similar role to the committee of the State Duma during the February 1917 revolution. They have no independent strength and are utterly politically unimportant. But nevertheless they will probably soon be in government because the existing Russian gov-

ernment will have to find a reliable replacement when they feel they have to surrender power.

Yeltsin wants to ban his opponents and reimpose dictatorship. But it is already too late. They have missed their opportunity which would have been in September or October 1991.

They are incapable of success and when they try they only make the situation worse.

**"The only difference between the traditional Russian political crisis and the current situation is that the majority of the intellectual élite is supporting the government."**

The National Salvation Front (NSF) had very little support before it was banned. They became popular after Yeltsin moved against them — but the people were simply showing their disapproval of Yeltsin. But the NSF will not consolidate itself — it is simply

parasitic on Yeltsin's unpopularity.

The only difference between the traditional Russian political crisis and the current situation is that the great majority of the intellectual elite is completely supporting the government. It is probably the only layer which does so. This group is completely morally corrupt — they have an intense hatred of ordinary Russian people.

I think the government may survive until the spring. Spring will be very bad economically and it will usher in a year which will be much harder than 1992. I cannot say what the mechanism will be, but by spring I expect them to have handed over power to the Civic Union.

From Monday 2 November the Party of Labour will begin the formal registration of members. We hope for 200 trade union activists to register in Moscow. In today's Moscow that will be a real success. Our main strength lies in the unions — a number of important union leaders will join. The strategy in the unions is heavily influenced by the

Party of Labour's policy. We have frequent, regular meetings with union leaders.

We are very far from becoming a mass party — however things can change very quickly.

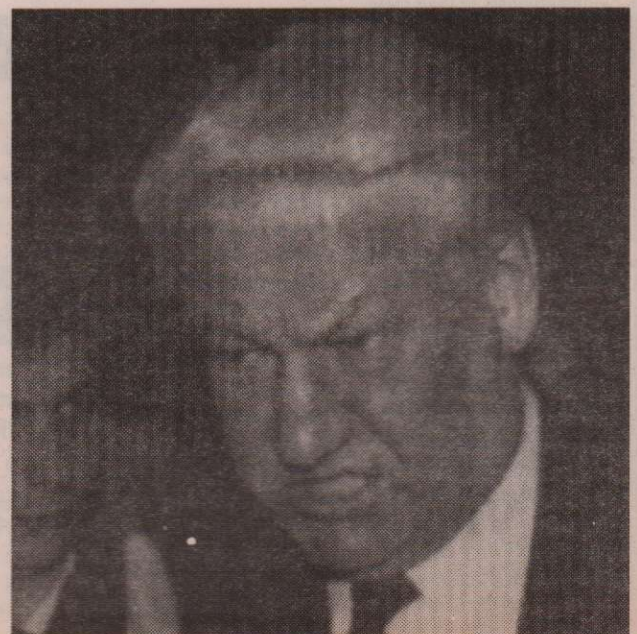
On Tuesday the Presidium of the Russian Union Federation will meet. One of the issues to be discussed will be their attitude towards the Party of

Labour. We will make some gains here.

The Stalinist left is still a factor. However, they are weaker than a year ago; we are stronger.

There is a social democratic left, represented by the Socialist Workers' Party. They are very confused.

Generally things are favourable for the growth of the Party of Labour.



Yeltsin: morally defeated but muddling on



## Pope prudently rehabilitates Galileo

### GRAFFITI

The hot news from the Vatican is that the Pope is expected to rehabilitate Galileo, who incurred the Roman Catholic Church's displeasure in 1633 for stating that the Earth orbited the Sun. Of course the Earth is the centre of God's creation, and the Sun and stars revolve around it, so Galileo was promptly hauled off by the Inquisition and kept under house arrest until his death in 1642.

After a 13 year investigation the Vatican has decided it was "imprudently opposed" to Galileo. This is a great shift for the Church. Welcome to the seventeenth century!

Who knows, in another 350 years' time they may even come round to accepting contraception and divorce.

No such antiquated visions persist in the independent Baptist church of Florida, who, apart from a few strange beliefs in the Garden of Eden, are fully in line with the modern capitalist world and tuned into the uses of the market.

They have just bought, body and soul, the rights to all the orphans in Albania. The Albanian state, which once sponsored atheism as the official state belief and even ran a Museum of Atheism showing how the state had repressed religious groups, has succumbed to the capitalist creed and privatised their orphanages. The American Baptists beat other religious groups to run the orphanages and get a monopoly for adoption rights. Whether the people of Albania, who are 70% Muslim, prefer a group of Christian fundamentalists to their state bureaucracy remains to be seen.

One last word on ramshackle organisations. On a Friday evening a couple of weeks ago Socialist Outlook held a national rally with their international leader Ernest Mandel.

Unlike the Pope, Mandel has not seen fit to set up an inquiry to see if the "Fourth International" acted "imprudently" towards Mao, Tito, Castro and Ortega in calling them "leaders of the world revolution". Unlike the Pope, Mandel could only muster 150 devotees, despite the months of activity to build this as a national rally.

It's hardly surprising that Outlook failed to raise much of a crowd. Where the Catholic church has the concept of original sin to explain the evils of the world, Outlook has only the Maastricht agreement.

One of Outlook's Irish co-thinkers explained that Maastricht is a plan to re-colonise Ireland (one agreed by the Irish government and backed by a referendum, which makes a change from invading armies, the traditional form of making colonies).

Outlook also describes the strike wave in Italy as being "anti-Maastricht", much to the surprise of Italian workers who believed that they were striking against their own government's austerity measures. And a caption in the most recent copy of Outlook reads "Miners against Maastricht", which must make Thatcher the miners' natural ally against pit closures.

Unprofitable industries that should be closed down, part one. The Conservative Party still owes its favorite advertising agency, Saatchi and Saatchi, some £5 million of the £9 million advertising bill for its general election campaign.

Saatchi have reportedly taken a soft line, giving the Tories generous terms to pay the bill off. Saatchi shareholders might have a case asking why, since the company made a £32 million loss in 1991 and will not be paying any dividends until 1995 at the earliest.

Saatchi has however hit back against the Conservatives. A young advertising executive called Rupert Heseltine has been made redundant. And yes, he has got a famous dad.

No economic case for keeping them on, part two. Performance related pay seems to all the rage, but the message doesn't seem to have got through to the rich and powerful in the board room. Top executives' pay is running well ahead of inflation despite falling profits.

Top of the overpaid bosses' league is Bobby McAlpine of the builders McAlpine, who took a 60% pay increase to £309,000 despite profits falling by 28%. National Power's chairman continued the tradition of overpaid bosses in privatised utilities by taking a 160% pay rise, while profits rose by only 21%.

Who ever suggested that there's one rule for them....

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Last week the Sun put John Major's face on a turnip. The significance of this development cannot be over-emphasised. Regular readers of the Soaraway tabloid will know that the turnip is the ultimate symbol of contempt, ridicule and revulsion. It is also the mark of the vendetta: once you've had the turnip treatment you know that the Sun's hostility is no mere passing fancy. The only previous recipient of a Sun turnip-head was Graham Taylor, the England football manager. I understand that Mr Taylor is still in his job, but is generally regarded as a broken man, his prospects and reputation ruined by the Sun's merciless turnip campaign.

It's all jolly good fun, of course. I'm sure that I am not the only good lefty to have taken to buying the once-untouchable tabloid and chortling with glee at its increasingly intemperate attacks on the Tory leadership. This Monday, Sun

columnist Richard Littlejohn extended the attack to Paddy Ashdown and the Liberals, using language that would not be out of place in a publication like the one you are now reading: "What the hell is Paddy Ashdown doing pledging Liberal support to a discredited PM sinking into a stinking mess of his own making? It is the job of an opposition to oppose, not to prevent a government committing political suicide".

So why does all this leave a slightly nasty taste in the mouth? Maybe it's because we all know that the Sun's agenda is, if anything, to the right of Major's. Its present anti-Tory stance is a direct response to the anger and disillusionment felt by the majority of its readers. But the "radicalisation" is a cover for something very nasty. In the late 20s and early 30s the Strasser wing of the Nazi movement used "radical", anti-ruling class rhetoric to compete with the Communists. At least one prominent Sun journalist — Garry Bushall — comes from exactly that political tradition. So have a good laugh by all means: but don't laugh too much.

John Major seems to have only two firm friends among the tabloid political commentators these days: Woodrow Wyatt of the *News of the World* and Bruce Anderson of the *Sunday Express*. Wyatt, a former Bevanite Labour MP turned Thatcher groupie, has long been

known as a preposterous eccentric whose billing as "The Voice of Reason" is a standing joke. "Brute" Anderson is only slightly more credible. A former member of the International Socialists (SWP), the Brute lurched to the right during the 1970s and in the '80s joined the ultra-Thatcherite clique at the *Sunday Telegraph*. Unlike the rest of the clique, however, Brute approved of Thatcher's successor. Sacked from the *Sunday Telegraph* under bizarre circumstances (he'd spilled the beans about a story told in confidence by Prince Charles) Brute joined Major's campaign team during the last election while simultaneously working for the *Sunday Express* and working on a breathlessly enthusiastic biography of his new hero. When the Tory press began baying for Major's blood a couple of weeks ago, Brute wrote a vit-

riolic piece in (of all places) the *Guardian*, denouncing his old chums Charles Moore, Frank Johnson and Simon Heffer as snobs and liars: "In the whole history of modern British politics no important political figure has been portrayed so inaccurately as Major in their writings", he railed. Brute's column in the *Sunday Express* is now just about the only place in any newspaper that Major can turn to for comfort and support. If Major survives his present crisis, Brute can expect to be well rewarded ("arise, Sir Bruce"). But if Major falls, it is difficult to see how his chief acolyte can survive with any credibility. In that event, don't shed too many tears: after all, it was Brute who set about reducing Kinnoch's press secretary Julie Hall to tears at a press conference in the aftermath of the "Jennifer's Ear" row. Those who dish it out ought to be able to take it.



Turnip-head is in trouble

# What about the other hellish jobs?

### WOMEN'S EYE

By Rebecca Van Homan

Last Tuesday's *Guardian* Women's Page had an article entitled, "What makes a student turn to prostitution?" The piece included a quote from the so-called-feminist President of the National Union of Students Lorna Fitzsimmons who squawked, "Students are being forced to take such drastic measures as a matter

of survival."

Yes, students are forced into lots of crap, dangerous, underpaid jobs so what's so special about prostitution?

Under the Tories, many more jobs have become hell, underpaid, unsafe and massively exploitative, as they have attacked unions and employment rights. That's legal, so it's okay by Lorna.

The article's concern was not that students have to do all sorts of crappy work to get through their education, but that they were even turning to prostitution.

The issue of who actually gets harassed and arrested by the police for

**"The women's movement should stand by our sisters who choose prostitution as a better option than other crap but 'legal' jobs"**

this illegal work was not tackled. It's not the kerb crawlers or the clients but the women.

The women's movement should stand by our sisters who choose prostitution as a better option than other crap but "legal" jobs, not join some moral crusade about illegality.

Women are worst hit by the crisis of student financial support in post-16 education. We need a fighting women's campaign that takes up the issue of poverty and fights for proper funding for students to get through their education.

Lorna again shows the need for a fighting NUS leadership, not a moralistic stand from a soap box.



Italian workers have been striking against Italian bosses, not against "Maastricht". Above: union leader, Bruno Trentin, shows two fingers to jeering rank and files

# Where the left goes wrong on Maastricht

**Martin Thomas argues that the Left must oppose the Maastricht Treaty, but in the name of a democratic united Europe, not nationalist Europhobia.**

**S**ocialist Organiser is against the Maastricht Treaty. The Treaty calls for a European Central Bank which will wield economic power independent of all elected political control. It continues the process of European integration on an undemocratic, capitalist basis, regulated by haggling between governments rather than by the elected Euro-parliament which remains powerless.

For socialists to back Maastricht as "not perfect, but the best available" — which is the official Labour Party line — is to give up on the battle for the labour movement to *intervene* in the process of European integration and to influence it in our interest. Instead, we would just pick the "best available" of the options on offer from the bosses at any given time.

However, the common Labour left *version* of opposing Maastricht also *gives up* on Euro-campaigning; instead it tilts at windmills.

*Socialist Organiser* is in favour of a united Europe, even under capitalism. We refuse to make "Maastricht", "Brussels" and "Europe" scapegoats for evils which arise from *capitalism*, not from any treaty or office or geographical unit. When we oppose Maastricht, we oppose equally the immediately available capitalist alternative — continued or heightened barriers between the countries of Western Europe.

But many on the Labour left are against any sort of united Europe. Tony Benn denounces "a federal Europe" of any description, democratic or undemocratic, socialist or capitalist. Others on the left favour a socialist united Europe some time in the future, but oppose all European unity now, under capitalism.

The removal of legal, political, economic and cultural barriers between the countries of Europe will not do away with the evils of capitalism. But it will bring economic and cultural benefits — even now, even under capitalism — and it will make it easier to achieve the cross-Europe workers' unity which we will need for socialism. Isolated national economies are no longer an adequate framework for capitalism, let alone for socialism.

Many on the left also scapegoat "Maastricht" for such evils as welfare cuts — which the Tories were making before the Maastricht Treaty was even thought of — and they look at the political battles over Maastricht through distorting spectacles. To them, somehow, the battles appear to be mainly between them (the anti-Maastricht left) and the Euro-bosses, with the powerful right-wing bourgeois nationalist anti-Maastrichters as a minor sideshow.

**F**or these left-wing anti-Maastrichters, then, the single slogan "No to Maastricht!" *pushes out* all the slogans for a working class intervention into the process of European integration — levelling-up of workers' rights and conditions across Europe; cross-Europe campaigns for such demands as the 35-hour week; democratic control by an elected Euro-parliament over EC affairs. They *give up* on these

issues.

This *version* of anti-Maastricht politics is well illustrated by *Socialist Outlook* of 10 October.

*Outlook* hails the strikes against cuts in Italy as "the first anti-Maastricht strikes" (their emphasis).

But they are not anti-Maastricht strikes! They are "anti-Rome" strikes — directed against the Italian bosses and the Italian government which has ordered the cuts.

In Italy as in Greece (whose recent strikes are also claimed by *Outlook* as "anti-Maastricht"), almost no-one opposes Maastricht.

**When we oppose Maastricht, we oppose equally the immediately available capitalist alternative — continued or heightened barriers between the countries of Western Europe.**

Generally, the poorer EC countries see closer European integration (and EC aid for their farmers) as the only way to dynamic capitalist growth; while the richer EC countries (Denmark, France, Britain, Germany) have sizeable capitalist factions who favour "nationalist" economic alternatives (for Britain, a Thatcherite future as an offshore production site with lower wages and less social legislation than the core of the EC, attracting American and Japanese investment).

Nobody in Italy is striking against Maastricht, or even voting against it. The strike wave has

been sparked by the Italian government *moving away from the Maastricht road* by pulling the lira out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism. (The core of the Maastricht Treaty is to make the ERM tighter and tighter until eventually it produces a single currency). In fact, the Italian government's devastating cuts in health spending and pensions — like the similar cuts due to be announced by the British government on 12 November — are proof that the immediate "anti-Maastricht" capitalist options are no better than the Maastricht options.

*Outlook* argues that "monetary union means massive deflation and the destruction of state welfare systems". But the EC governments would not have signed the "Euro-monetarist" Maastricht Treaty unless they all wanted cuts anyway. The Treaty adds not a new commitment to cuts — the anti-Maastricht Thatcherites are as pro-cuts as any pro-Maastrichter — but a commitment to *coordinated* rather than *uncoordinated* cuts.

The Italian cuts are not imposed by "Maastricht", any more than the British cuts will be. No EC police threatened to arrest Amato and Major if they failed to make cuts; no EC army threatened to invade their countries! In fact, the only change in welfare provision recently *imposed* on Britain by the EC — by diplomatic pressure — is an *improvement* in maternity leave.

**T**o divert blame for the cuts onto "Maastricht" or "Europe" is to let our "own" bosses off the hook and to poison the fight back with nationalism. All proportions guarded, the superstitious thinking here is rather like the left-wing anti-

semitism common in the early years of this century, which blamed the evils of the profit system on "Jewish finance capitalists".

The Jewish finance capitalists, the Rothschilds and the Bleichroders, did exist, and they were no better than the gentile finance capitalists — just as the EC exists, and it is no less capitalist than the governments making it up. But to blame the evils of capitalism on the Jewish minority of capitalists was as foolish and diversionary as blaming them on the EC bureaucracy, which is a very flimsy thing in comparison with the national governments and the great capitalist multinationals.

The picture of the Maastricht Treaty as a powerful foreign demon forcing the Italian and British governments to make cuts is a nationalistic myth. All the more so because, on sober calculations, the ERM crisis has made Maastricht unworkable. There is no prospect of the different currencies "converging" on the Maastricht timetable. The Treaty is a piece of paper, of possible value in future diplomatic haggling, but with no force to compel anyone to do anything.

To set up "Maastricht" as the target of working class struggles is therefore to tilt at windmills and divert from the real targets. It is like anti-semitism in a country with no Jews.

Socialists should give no support to the Maastricht Treaty, and we should fight for Labour to use the Maastricht issue to bring the Tories down; but we should oppose any diversion of working class struggles into nationalist "anti-Maastrichtism", and argue clearly for European workers' unity and a democratic united Europe.

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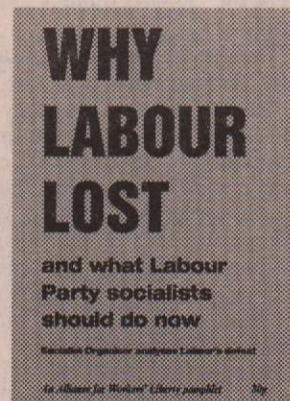
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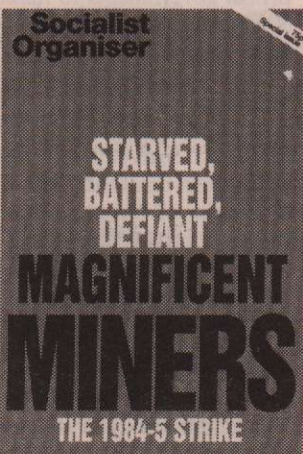
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# US workers need a

**Tony Mazzocchi, an official of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union in the USA, explains that there is growing support among US trade unionists for the idea of a new party, a working class party opposed to both the capitalist parties, Democrats and Republicans.**

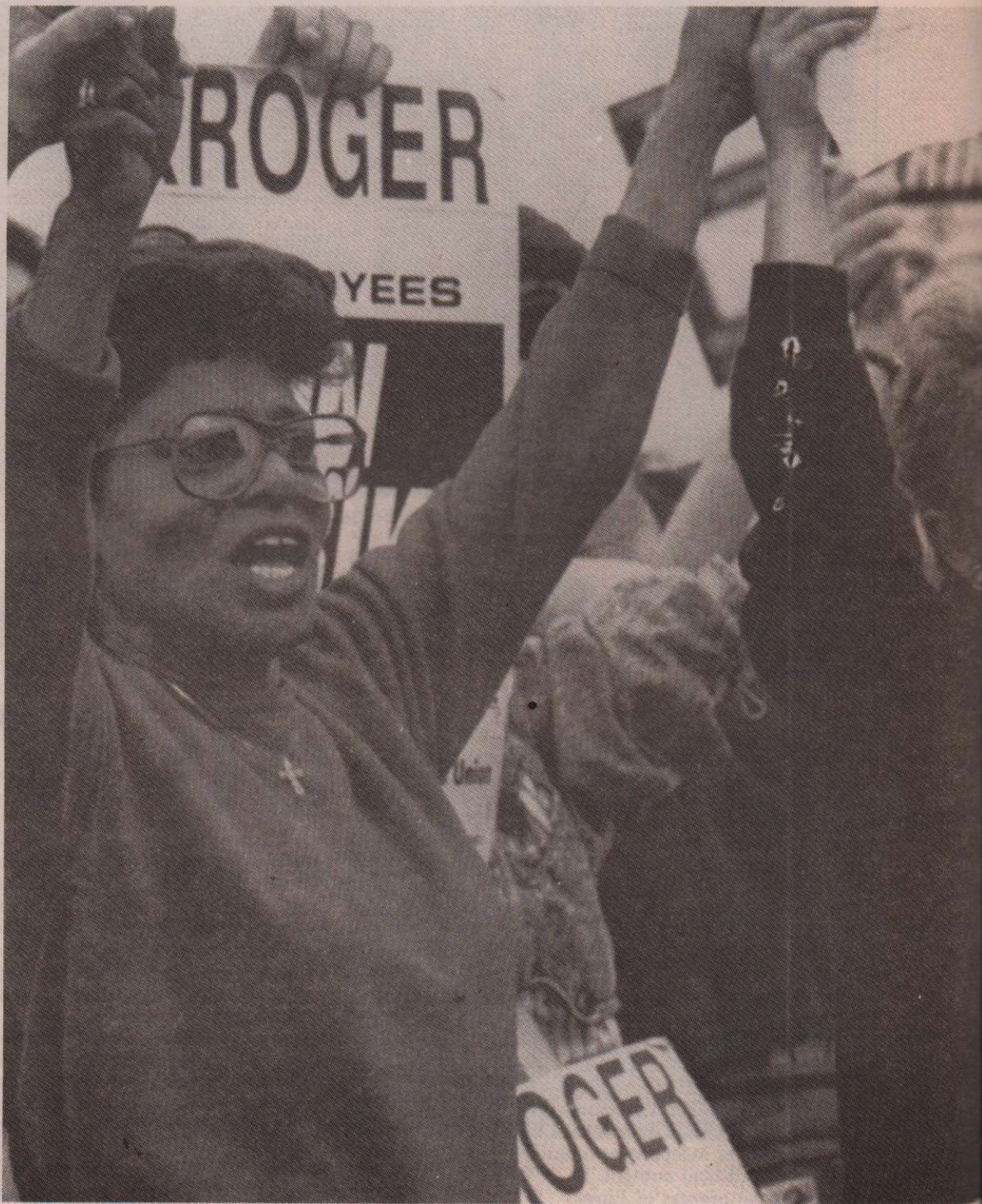
**L**abor Party Advocates is a culmination of an expression, not only of the rank and file from my own union but of other unions. About three years ago, as secretary-treasurer of my union in charge of political activity, I reviewed a resolution passed by our convention in 1981, which essentially said: we've been talking about the political parties and their failure to do what should be done, but we've never consulted our rank and file to see what they feel.

**"We have seen too many programmes from the top down. It was time to really follow the tenets of democratic organisation."**

I thought this was a worthy resolution, and that the time had come to talk to our own rank and file. I therefore had a poll conducted in 1989 among our members on what people thought about the political system in this country, set up by professional pollsters, which went to one of every sixty members, all coded for geography, race, gender and age. Our pollster friends told us we'd need to make sure we really had a broad characterisation of our membership.

We were told to expect a 3% return. Since the mailing had a stamped return envelope, I was expecting some angry letters telling us where to stick the union. Instead we got a 20% return. Some said it was the first letter they'd gotten from an international union officer soliciting their opinion.

People answered the questions and wrote extensively what they thought about the political scene. Amazingly enough, responses were the same by gender, race or geography — whether it was from a small Mormon town in



American workers in struggle need a political organisation

Utah or from Philadelphia didn't matter. The only difference we found was among age groups, where people aged 55-65 tended to be a little more conservative, though not much. Over 55% rejected both parties as the parties of corporate interests, not their interests, and said it was time for a new party, a labor party.

**"A new party will be organised, whether by progressive people or by the right. A vacuum will not continue to exist."**

In our union (Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers) we work with a lot of brain-altering chemicals, so I thought maybe that caused the result! So we

started talking with other union groups on a regional or local level, asking them to take similar polls. About sixty unions have done so, from hospital to state, county and municipal to mine workers to professional workers. By now I can predict any poll coming out of any local union. All polls track the same way within a few percentage points — 55% or a little more call for a new party and reject the existing ones.

We thought that was sufficient direction. We did speak to the rank and file as we'd been instructed. A number of us across the country recognised, of course, that formation of a new party is a formidable undertaking. It's not easy creating a party that will have a meaningful impact on our lives.

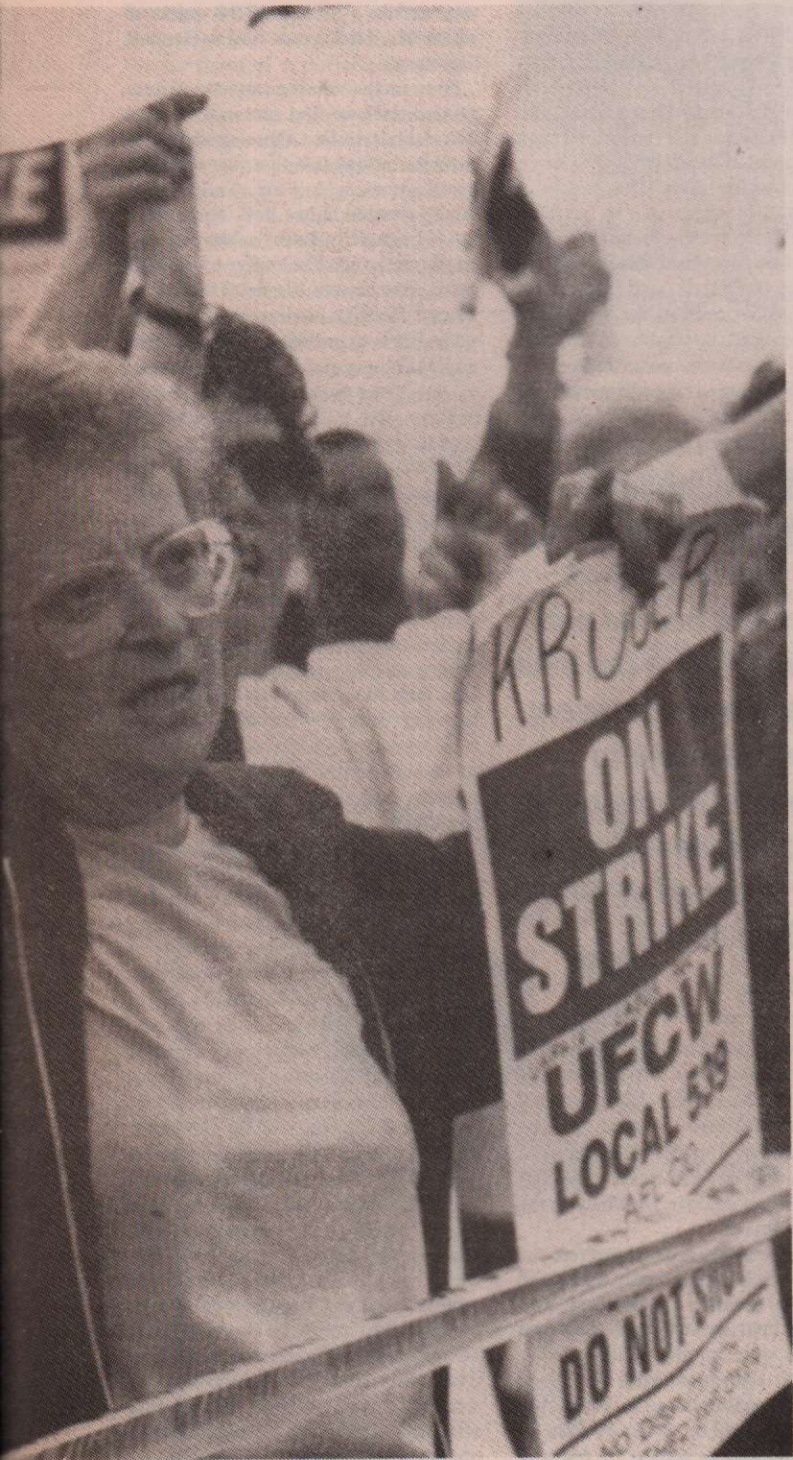
So we developed a long-term strategy and a long view, understanding that this will be

a long, arduous road to the creation of a party and that a party would have to be created before a platform and programme could be developed for it. That programme and platform would have to be developed from its membership — we have seen too many programmes from the top down. It was time to really follow the tenets of democratic organisation.

**L**abor Party Advocates very simply is a group of people, attempting to recruit others to one idea, that there will be a time when we need to form a labor party, a new party of working people. We have an initial target date of late 1993 or early '94. To validate this idea we need approximately 100,000 members, across the United States and representative by gender, certainly by race, and by geography. It must be a truly



# a Labor Party!



representative group, or the effort should be abandoned.

The message that we need a labor party and that it should grow from the bottom up, is resonating among the rank and file of the union movement. It intends to organize working people. That's the term I use for all people who could, should or would work for wages if the opportunity were there. That constitutes 90% of the country, both organized and unorganized.

Our initial effort is among the organized sector, for several reasons: certainly, because it's easier to reach, it has more resources, and also organizing skills. This effort is very simple in its construction. We recruit people to the idea of a labor party with low expectations of what will be done immediately. Right now it's like an organizing drive for a union somewhere that a union doesn't exist, trying

to reach a critical mass of people.

**W**e hope to achieve this, and hold a convention in two years. The delegates will be broadly representative, and then a programme will be developed. Thus we now have no leaders — I'm not the "leader" of Labor Party Advocates, I'm one of the organisers, as anyone can be. I do have the advantage of being a bureaucrat, who can travel a little more extensively allowing the message to be broadcast.

This is an effort with little resources. Our resources come from people who spend \$20 to join. It must be that way, financed by the people themselves; it can't be hooked to the star of a foundation or people with a lot of money.

I am asked whether we will act in coalition with other groups. I say we can only coa-

lesce when we're an entity. Once an entity is created and defines itself, it can decide to coalesce. We don't exist yet; we're an organising drive. We have LPA people who are involved in the NOW efforts, the efforts of Ron Daniels and others. There are also people involved in the existing political configurations, which isn't the choice of many of us.

LPA is a parallel development, one which will take some time. It's also a leap of faith, based on the fact that people are so discontented. Working people unlike ever before feel that things will be worse for their children than for themselves; people are rejecting the existing political structures; they are alienated from most of the institutions.

A new party will be organized, whether by progressive people or by the right. A vacuum will not continue to exist. And if one had to bet on the result, the right, of course, is more powerfully equipped, with a programme that feeds into the biases and frustrations among the American people. So a commitment to build a new party, which truly represents the interest of working people, is an imperative. How it will be done can't be fully spelled out. We are all learning as we go along. We are also recognising that a party can't be built on puff; it has to be based on people. If we can't do it that way, we will definitely abandon what we are about to do.

Given current trends, if there is any labor movement left in a few years, that in itself will be somewhat miraculous. I see no other way than to organize an independent political movement. The message as I said is resonating; I am hopeful.

*This article first appeared in the American socialist journal "Against the Current", 7012 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, MI 48210.*



Clinton represents the interests of big business

## How the Old World infected the New World

### SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

**O**ne of the most striking consequences of the "discovery" of the Americas was the subsequent death of most of the original inhabitants. This occurred not (just) because of the war-like behaviour of the invaders but because of the diseases they unwittingly brought with them.

The US anthropologist, David J Meltzer, writing in *New Scientist*, describes how the native Americans died from smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, diphtheria, typhus, cholera, scarlet fever, chicken pox, yellow fever, and whooping cough.

Some of these are lethal enough but others, such as flu, measles, whooping cough etc., are not normally killers. Healthy adults and children in Europe would usually be expected to recover from these. Native Americans, however, died at such a rate from imported diseases that it is estimated that each year after Columbus, more died than were born.

It is impossible to say accurately how many native Americans there were at the time of Columbus' arrival, but it was certainly many times more than there are now. In the north, for example, there were between 2 and 18 million. By the end of the 19th century, there were only half a million left.

Europeans were amazed by the lack of resistance of the native population to common childhood diseases. The diseases actually spread faster than the European settlers themselves. Earliest and worst affected were farming communities living in dense, permanent settlements. More mobile groups were less affected, due to their encountering the diseases less frequently. In contrast, the European settlers enjoyed good health. In New England, the average age of death of the first settlers was nearly 72.

Meltzer identifies two major questions here: why did native Americans have no resistance to these diseases? Why did they have no diseases of their own to which the Europeans had no resistance?

For the answers, Meltzer goes back over 11,000 years, to when the Americas were first colonised.

Diseases such as smallpox have not always been around. They evolved when people started living in large groups (with the development of agriculture), as opposed to the small bands of a few dozen in which humans spent the majority of their prehistory. A certain population size is necessary to sustain the disease or it will just die out. However, certain disease organisms do not just appear. It is thought that smallpox came originally from cowpox in wild cattle, measles from rinderpest, influenza from hog diseases, and so the other vital part of the equation was the domestication of animals.

No doubt, these diseases were severe in their effects on the early

pastoralists but, as time passed, resistance came to predominate in the population. Quite simply, many or even all of the susceptible people had died out.

So why didn't the early invaders of America carry some resistance with them? The answer is that they were too early! They had reached America at least two thousand years before the first agriculture and domestication of animals had taken place, about 9,000 years ago in the Middle East.

The first Americans arrived in what is now Alaska, probably during the last Ice Age. The massive glaciers of the northern hemisphere had locked up about 5% of the Earth's water, reducing sea levels by some 100 or more metres. This exposed a wide strip of land joining Asia and northern America, now the Bering Straits. Bands of humans walked from Asia, a fact confirmed by the genetic studies which show Native Americans to be most closely related to northeast Asian peoples.

Within a few thousand years, they had populated the Americas, right down to Patagonia. Because of the small number of founders, all Native Americans are closely related to each other, more closely than are groups of people just a few miles apart in most other parts of the world.

So Native Americans could not have carried flu and measles, smallpox and cholera into the New World. These epidemic diseases did not exist yet. But why did not similar diseases develop just as they did in the Old World? After all, agriculture developed more than once in the Americas and very successfully too. If the Native Americans were to domesticate animals, surely they would pick up what diseases were endemic in the wild populations.

The truth is that, for accidental reasons, only three animals were ever domesticated: the South America types of camel (llama etc.), the turkey and the guinea pig. Other suitable animals did not exist, having died out during climatic changes before humans even existed. The most widespread large food animal, the North American bison, was too unruly to domesticate. The llama and its relatives lived in groups too small to sustain infections.

In the Old World, plenty of animals suitable for domestication existed and early farmers must have suffered greatly from epidemics as a result of germs crossing the species barrier. Immunity gradually increased, and disease organisms changed to be less virulent — they spread more easily if they don't kill their victims!

Consequently, the early European settlers had a natural ally in their struggle for American land. Though, in some cases, disease was deliberately spread, it is likely to have had the same effect, eventually, given the absence of adequate medical treatments.

# Disturbed Dublin

This is the last in our series of articles by James Connolly about the 1913 Labour War in Dublin, and the power of the sympathetic strike. There will be one more article summarising the story and tying it all together.

When we began to re-publish Connolly's splendid articles, six weeks ago, the sympathetic strike seemed to be a long way off from the immediate political concerns of the British labour movement. Not so now! The British Tory assault on the miners has already produced a one-day solidarity strike by powerworkers.

There will be more: the British labour movement is rising to its feet again!

**D**isturbed Dublin is the title of a book just published in the interests of the Dublin employers, and with the name of Arnold Wright upon its title page as author. The purpose of this book is to present to the reading public as colourable a presentation as possible of the events from

the employers' point of view of the great dispute of 1913-14. We are not saying so because this book is antagonistic to the cause of labour, but we say so because from the very first paragraph of the preface to the last sentence of the volume itself this bias against labour is so pronounced that

the idea that it found its inspiration in the councils of the employers springs at once to the mind of the thoughtful reader. For instance, let us quote from the second sentence of the preface, where the author describes the result of the employers' conspiracy "The ignominious defeat of the attempt to establish a peculiarly pernicious form of Syndicalism on Irish soil."

This, one must admit, is a good start for an "impartial" history, and the same spirit is in evidence all through the book. In this attempt to present a literary justification for the employers the author does not scruple to distort facts, and even to state deliberate untruths.

One such case will serve as a sample. In the early part of 1913 the Belfast Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union secured an agreement with several shipping firms in that city bringing the wages of their labourers up to the level of the men employed by the same firms on the docks at Dublin. One of the firms so affected was the Clyde Shipping Com-

pany. After a short time the union officials found that the foreman in charge of the London boat of that firm in Belfast was apparently systematically giving preference to non-union men. Several ineffective attempts having been made to check this, the Belfast officials at last called their men off, and refused to allow them to work with non-union men. This step was only taken in obedience to extreme pressure from the men themselves.

The boat upon which this strike took place was the Sanda, and had only a part cargo for Belfast, the remainder being consigned to Dublin. When the boat left Belfast the union officials in that city wired to headquarters in Dublin to "hold up" the boat. This

than those of Dublin was a union inimical to Mr. Larkin. In reality it was, and is, a branch of the union of which Mr. Larkin was and is General Secretary.

Thus in the small compass of nine printed lines we find one mistake and two deliberate lies. Observe that it is entirely unthinkable that this so-called investigator could of his own initiative have invented those lies. They must have been supplied to him by the employers, and, like the good investigator that he was, he never bothered himself to check their account by any such simple expedient as a trip to Liberty Hall, or a question put personally to any of the dockers involved in that dispute. The inference is that he did not do it, because he did not dare to do it. He was brought over here by the employers to do the employers' work, and it must be said of him that he faithfully, if clumsily, tried to earn his money.

As we have said, the story of that incident is a sample of the treatment meted out to the labourer by the author in every chapter in the book. One feels like congratulating the real literary men of Dublin that the employers could not trust one of them to be sufficiently blind to facts as to present a case that would suit the employers.

A stranger, without any knowledge of Dublin people, without any insight into the terrible struggle life involves to a Dublin worker, without any appreciation of the finer elements of character which the Dublin toiler has preserved in spite of the hell of poverty and misery in which he or she was born and reared, without any grasp of the blended squalor and heroism, pride and abasement that environment has woven into the Dublin character, and absolutely blind and deaf to all knowledge of the countless cross-currents, interests and traditions that played their part in moulding and shaping that historic struggle — it is only such a fatuously ignorant stranger that the employers of Dublin could count upon to describe that struggle as they wanted it described. The achievement of the employers is written of as if the book was dealing with the struggle of a puny David against a mighty Goliath, the employers being David and Jim Larkin the giant Goliath.

No epic story of heroism that was ever written could surpass in admiring sentences the description of the employers' battle against the working men and women as this hack writer tells it. Told by a labour writer, or even told by one of those literary men who, although not of the manual labour ranks stood so grandly by the workers during that titanic struggle, the story would indeed read like an epic, but it would be an epic of which the heroes and heroines were the humble men and women who went out in the street to suffer and starve rather than surrender their right to combine as they chose for the uplifting of their class.

Some day that story will be written from that standpoint, meanwhile let us briefly cast up the elements out of which that story will be composed.

It must tell how four hundred Dublin employers covenanted together, and pledged each other by solemn vows, and by still more binding financial pledges, that there would be no more resumption of work in Dublin until the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was wiped off the map. How they agreed upon a document to be forced upon all workers that they would neither join nor help that union.

How they had all the press of every shade of politics and religion upon

**"Told by a labour writer, the story would read like an epic of which the heroes and heroines were the men and women who went out in the street to suffer and starve rather than surrender their right to combine for the uplifting of their class."**

was at first done, but after a few hours delay the boat was worked by the Dublin members, their officials having brought pressure to bear on the Belfast secretary to allow the cargo to be discharged in order to keep the contract they had made in Dublin with the Clyde company.

Thus, as it afterwards transpired, the Dublin officials practically sacrificed their own members in Belfast, and worked a boat against which their own members were on strike, in order to keep their agreement with the Clyde Shipping Company, and in hopes that the matter would be settled by friendly discussion. It was settled by friendly discussion, but the spectacle of the Dublin members out of loyalty to an agreement working a boat struck by their fellow members in Belfast was so unexpected and bewildering that some two hundred members were lost to the union in the latter city as a consequence. Now here is how this "impartial" author tells the story. Page 108:

"Some men who were working on a vessel called the Sandow, belonging to the Clyde Shipping Company, without a moment's notice ceased work. On inquiry by Mr. Young it was found that the grievance was that the men were not receiving such large wages as the company's employees in Belfast. This, it was represented, was the more important matter, as there existed in the northern port a union which was inimical to Mr. Larkin, and which he regarded with a mutual feeling of aversion."

Now observe all the misstatements in those three sentences. First: The wrong name of the vessel; showing a most slipshod inaccuracy of investigation.

Second: The statement that the Dublin men were receiving lower wages than the Belfast men, whereas the fact was that the Belfast men had only recently joined the union in an endeavour to raise their wages to the level of Dublin.

Third: The allegation that the union in the northern port which had established the wages alleged to be higher

On Easter Monday 1916, James Connolly led the Irish Citizen Army out to take part in proclaiming an Irish Republic, in defiance of Britain. The Dublin Chamber of Commerce would later describe the rising as "Larkinism run amok".

On the Tuesday Connolly was badly wounded but continued as military commander in Dublin, directing operations from a stretcher. By the end of the week, when they surrendered, Dublin was in flames. A Navy gunboat had sailed up the Liffey and shelled the ITGWU headquarters, Liberty Hall.

Immediately, the British military started to shoot the leaders, a few at a time, under Military Law. A wave of protest mounted. By 10 May, 13 men had been shot. Over 100 had had death sentences commuted to life imprisonment. Connolly was recovering from his wounds in prison. It looked as if he might escape with his life.

On Wednesday 10 May, the *Irish Independent*, owned by W.M. Murphy, the Home Rule nationalist who had organised the lockouts in 1913, carried an editorial which, in effect, called on the British to shoot the wounded Connolly (extracts below).

A photo of Connolly was published with this caption: "Mr James Connolly still lies in Dublin Castle slowly recovering from his wounds". Murphy had not forgiven "Larkin's Lieutenant!"

On Friday May 12, the British obliged Murphy and the Irish capitalists he represented. Connolly was carried out on a stretcher, propped up in a chair, and shot to death.

## Irish Independent

DUBLIN, WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 1916

Lighting-up Time, 8.44.  
High Water (Dublin)—4.39 a.m.; 5.9 p.m.

### 7-DAY ENGAGEMENTS.

Royal—War Picture, 2 to 7.45.  
Admiral—Irish Picture, 3.50.  
Rotunda Picture—From 2 o'clock.  
Picture Picture House—From 12 noon.  
Viper Court—Meeting of Politicians, 12 noon.  
N. and S. Public Unions.  
Dublin Corporation—Special meeting, 11.

### THE CLEMENCY PLEA.

Mr Asquith stated in the House of Commons, in reply to a question by Mr Redmond, that the general instructions to General Sir John Maxwell, who had been in direct and personal communication with the Cabinet on the subject of the punishment of those connected with the Dublin rising, were to sanction the infliction of the extreme penalty "as sparingly as possible". Up to the present, twelve executions have been officially announced, including those of the seven men who signed the proclamation. The *Manchester Guardian* asserts that the executions are "becoming an atrocity", and adds that further severity

inflicted by troops sitting in secret will be a sign of weakness. On the Unionist side, the *Daily Express* states that now is the time to show that the Government can be merciful as well as strong. We do not think that extreme severity should be generally applied, nor do we think that there should be extreme leniency all round ... In a terrible crisis like this the Government must ... be stern and strong, and take such measures as will put an end once and for all to the criminal madness which inspired the recent rising.

Our view is that all prisoners under the age of 21 should be let off unless some grave charge against them individually can be proved. When, however, we come to some of the ringleaders, instigators, and fomentors not yet dealt with, we must make an exception. If these men are treated with too great leniency they will take it as an indication of weakness on the part of the Government, and the consequences may not be satisfactory. They may be more truculent than ever, and it is, therefore, necessary, that society should be protected against their activity. Some

of these leaders are more guilty and played a more sinister part in the campaign than those who have been already punished with severity. Let the worst of the ringleaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve; but we hope there will be no holocaust or slaughter and no consigning of hundreds of irresponsible and misguided youths to dungeons for long periods.

*Irish Independent,*  
Wednesday 10 May, 1916



their side. How they obtained beforehand the promise of swift and relentless use of Government forces, of batons, bullets, and jails to destroy the resistance of the workers. How that promise was faithfully kept by the Government. How they were able to override the law, and to fill the prisons with old and young, men and women, boys and girls, who attempted to exercise the picketing rights guaranteed to them by British law.

How they instituted a reign of terror in which the life of every worker was at the mercy of every callous brute in the uniform of a policeman or the vocation of a scab. How starvation was sent into the homes of thousands of the poor, until their lives were shortened by the sufferings enforced.

How one bright young girl was shot, two honest workers batoned to death, and one other destroyed in his bright manhood by the hirings of the Government. How the domestic privacy of the poor was violated, their poor household treasures ruthlessly smashed and the most sacred feelings of womanhood outraged by hordes of drunken policemen.

And how through all this long-drawn-out agony every agency of every organised political, journalistic, social or religious kind in Ireland, not directly controlled by labour, joined in one great unanimous chorus in vilification of the sufferers, and in praise of their oppressors.

When that story is written by a man or woman with an honest heart, and

CLERGY PREVENT SHIPMENT OF DUBLIN CHILDREN TO ENGLAND.



Dramatic scenes were witnessed in Dublin and Kingstown yesterday in connection with the attempt, which ended in failure owing to the timely intervention of the priests, to ship the poor children of Dublin to England. Our photographs show children being escorted to Westland row Station and the scene outside the Tara street Baths, where the little ones were taken to be washed.

The reactionary intervention of the priests in Dublin lauded in the 'Irish Independent'

with a sympathetic insight into the travail of the poor, it will be a record of which Ireland may well be proud. It will tell of how the old women and young girls, long crushed and enslaved, dared to risk all, even life itself, in the struggle to make life more tolerable, more free of the grinding tyranny of the soulless Dublin employers. It will tell of how, like an inspira-

tion, there came to those Irish women and girls the thought that no free nation could be reared which tolerated the enslavement of its daughters to the worst forms of wage-slavery, and how in the glow of that inspiration they arose from their seats in the workshop or factory, and went out to suffer and struggle along with their men.

with all, how that spectacle caught the imagination of all unselfish souls so that the artisan took his place also in the place of conflict and danger, and the men and women of genius, the artistic and the literati, hastened to honour and serve those humble workers whom all had hitherto despised and scorned.

And that story will tell how, despite the wealth and the power of the masters, despite jails and batons, despite starvation and death, victory was within sight for the Dublin workers, and only eluded their grasp because of the failure of a part of their allies to remain keyed up to the battle pitch. Because others outside their ranks were not able to realise the grandeur of the opportunity, the sublimity of the issues at stake.

The battle was a drawn battle. The employers, despite their Napoleonic plan of campaign, and their more than Napoleonic ruthlessness and unscrupulous use of foul means, were unable to carry on their business without men and women who remained loyal to their union. The workers were unable to force the employers to a formal recognition of the union, and to give preference to organised labour. From the effects of this drawn battle both sides are still bearing heavy scars. How deep those scars are none will ever reveal.

But the working class has lost none of its aggressiveness, none of its confidence, none of its hope in the ultimate triumph. No traitor amongst the ranks of that class has permanently gained, even materially, by his or her treachery. The flag of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union still flies proudly in the van of the Irish working class, and that working class still marches proudly and defiantly at the head of the gathering hosts who stand for a regenerated nation, resting upon a people industrially free.

Ah, yes, that story of the Dublin dis-

pute of 1913-14 is meet subject for an epic poem with which some Irish genius of the future can win an immortality as great as did the humble fighters who in it fought the battle of labour.

Irish Worker,  
November 18, 1914.

**"Despite the wealth and the power of the masters, despite jails and batons, victory was within sight for the Dublin workers, and only eluded their grasp because of the failure of a part of their allies to remain keyed up to the battle pitch."**

It will tell of how the general labourers, the men upon whose crushed lives is built the fair fabric of civilisation, from whose squalid tenements the sweet-smelling flowers of capitalist culture derive their aroma, by whose horny hands and mangled bodies are bought the ease and safety of a class that hates and despises them, by whose ignorance their masters purchase their knowledge — it will tell how these labourers dared to straighten their bent backs, and looking in the faces of their rulers and employers dared to express the will to be free.

And it will tell how that spectacle of the slave of the underworld looking his masters in the face without terror, and fearlessly proclaiming the kinship and unity of all with each and each

# Man of men

By Dominic Behan,  
*Irish Workers' Voice*,  
Dublin, June '55  
Tune:  
Brennan on the Moor

There lies a page in history,  
When workers first fought back,  
And the might of exploitation  
At last began to crack.

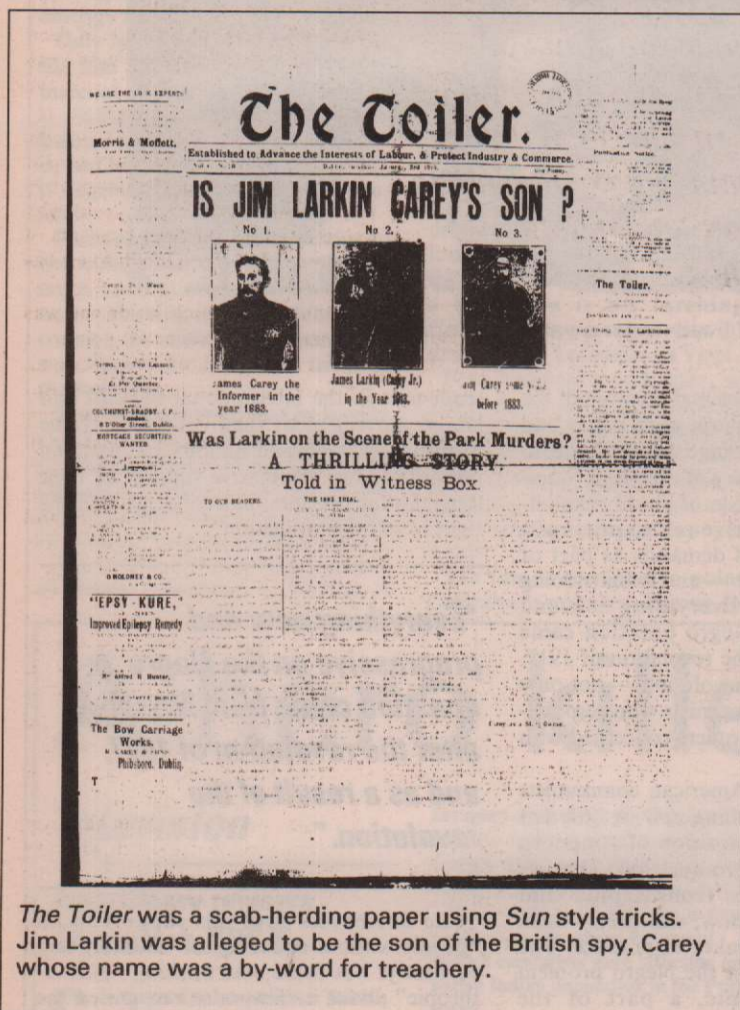
**Chorus:**  
*For Connolly was there,  
Connolly was there,  
Great, brave, undaunted,  
James Connolly was there.*

When the bosses tried to sweat  
the men,  
Away on Glasgow's Clyde,  
A voice like rolling thunder  
Soon stopped them in their stride.

**Chorus**  
And then in Belfast City  
The workers lived in Hell,  
Until at last they organised,  
And all the world can tell.

**Chorus**  
To smash the Dublin unions  
The scabs they did enlist,  
But all their graft was shattered  
By a scarlet, iron fist.

**Chorus**  
They say that he was murdered,  
Shot, dying, in a chair,  
But go, march on to freedom,  
Irish workers, don't despair.  
For Connolly will be there,  
Connolly will be there,  
Great, brave, undaunted,  
James Connolly will be there.



The Toiler was a scab-herding paper using Sun style tricks. Jim Larkin was alleged to be the son of the British spy, Carey whose name was a by-word for treachery.

# One big union?

The central question of working-class socialism is this: how does a subordinate class of wage-slaves — the main exploited class under capitalism, kept poor and ignorant — prepare and organise itself within capitalist society to take over from the capitalist ruling class?

Lenin answered this basic question by the proposal to build a revolutionary party rooted in industry, which would integrate the class struggle on its three main levels — ideas, politics, and trade unionism — into a coherent strategy-governed struggle for power.

In the years before World War 1 other revolutionary militants,

some of them reacting one-sidedly against the one-sided, socialist emphasis on parliamentary party politics dominant in western Europe, offered a different, though parallel, answer: *build one big union.*

The workers must go beyond sectional and craft unionism and combine to build "one industrial union grand". Fighting the class struggle day to day, the union, built in the struggle, would also be a structure of potential working-class political power within the womb of capitalism — the framework for the future "workers' republic" which would be won when the great union could seize industry and run it under workers'

control, breaking the power of capital

This idea came alloyed with anti-political anarchism, when it was "syndicalism", and also with attempts to regenerate working-class politics. The idea of "one big union" guided Larkin and Connolly, but both were members of the small Socialist Party of Ireland, and both tried to found a mass trade-union-based Irish Labour Party in 1912.

After World War 1, the idea of One Big Union led in Britain to giant unions like the TGWU. In Ireland the ITGWU embraced half the trade unionists in the country by 1920 (Larkin was in jail in America by then).

But without the leadership of a politically-selected revolutionary party, the Big Unions fell into the hands of self-serving bureaucrats. The Irish workers missed their chance

In 1917 history provided a different answer to the problem that the builders of One Big Union tried to answer by deliberately building — so they thought — the skeleton of the workers' republic. The new answer was the soviets, or workers' councils. They were the framework of the workers' republic created after 1917, embracing trade unionism but bigger, broader, and more democratically versatile than even the best of trade unions.

# The Russian Revolution roused the oppressed

The anti-socialist liars now tell us that the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was a crime and a mistake from which nothing good ever came. The truth is the opposite. Before it was destroyed by the Stalinist counter-revolution, the beneficent effects of the great workers' revolution of 1917 were felt all across the world and in the most unexpected places. Black people in the USA then lived under an American version of apartheid. Inspired by the Bolsheviks, US socialists adopted a radical new approach to the black struggle in America. In this article, James P Cannon, a leader of the early US Communist Party, expelled in 1928 for Trotskyism, describes what the Russian Revolution meant for black liberation in the USA. It is only one of many possible examples.

Under constant prodding and pressure from the Russians in the Comintern, the party made a beginning with Negro work in its first ten years; but it recruited very few Negroes and its influence in the Negro community didn't amount to much. From this it is easy to draw the pragmatic conclusion that all the talk and bother about policy in that decade, from New York to Moscow, was much ado about nothing, and that the results of Russian intervention were completely negative.

The earlier socialist movement, out of which the Communist Party was formed, never recognised any need for a special programme on the Negro question. It was considered purely and simply as an economic problem, part of the struggle between the workers and the capitalists; nothing could be done about the special problems of discrimination and inequality this side of socialism. The best of the earlier socialists were represented by Debs, who was friendly to all races and purely free from prejudice. But the limitedness of the great agitator's view on this far from simple problem was expressed in his statement: "We have nothing special to offer the Negro, and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races. The Socialist Party is the party of the whole working class, regardless of colour — the whole working class of the world" (Ray Ginger: *The Bending Cross*). That was considered a very advanced position at the time, but it made no provision for active support of the Negro's special claim for a little equality here and now, or in the foreseeable future, on the road to socialism. And even Debs, with his general formula that missed the main point — the burning issue of ever present discrimination against the Negroes every way they turned — was far superior in this regard, as in all others, to Victor Berger, who was an outspoken white supremacist.



James P Cannon



At the time of the Russian Revolution, black people in America lived under a version of apartheid

Here is a summary pronouncement from a Berger editorial in his Milwaukee paper, the *Social Democratic Herald*: "There can be no doubt that the Negroes and mulattoes constitute a lower race." That was "Milwaukee socialism" on the Negro question, as expounded by its ignorant and impudent leader boss. A harried and hounded Negro couldn't mix that very well with his Milwaukee beer, even if he had a nickel and could find a white man's saloon where he could drink a glass of beer at the back end of the bar.

***"The best early socialists were free from prejudice, but made no provision for active support of the Negro's special claim here and now, on the road to socialism."***

Berger's undisguised chauvinism was never the official position of the party. There were other socialists, like William English Walling, who was an advocate of equal rights for the Negroes, and one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People in 1909. But such individuals were a small minority among the socialists and radicals before the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Such was the traditional position inherited by the early Communist Party from the preceding socialist movement out of which it had come. The policy and practice of the trade union movement was even worse. The IWW barred nobody from membership because of "race, colour or creed". But the predominant AFL unions, with only a few exceptions, were lily-white job trusts. They also had nothing special to offer the Negroes; nothing at all, in fact. The difference, and it was a profound difference, between the Communist Party of the Twenties and its socialist and radical ancestors, was signified by its break with this tradition. The American Communists in the early

days, under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern, were slowly and painfully learning to change their attitude; to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a special question of doubly-exploited second class citizens, requiring a programme of special demands as part of the overall programme — and to start doing something about it. Everything new and progressive on the Negro question came from Moscow, after the revolution of 1917, and as a result of the revolution — not only for the American communists who responded directly, but for all others concerned with the question.

By themselves, the American communists never thought of anything new or different from the traditional position of American radicalism on the Negro question. That, as the above quotations from Kipnis' and Shannon's histories show, was pretty weak in theory and still weaker in practice. The simplistic formula that the Negro problem was merely economic, a part of the capital/labour problem, never struck fire among the Negroes — who knew better even if they didn't say so; they had to live with brutal discrimination every day and every hour. There was nothing subtle or concealed about this discrimination. Everybody knew that the Negro was getting the worst of it at every turn, but hardly anybody cared about it or wanted to do anything to try to moderate or change it. The 90 percent white majority of American society, including its working class sector, north as well as south, was saturated with prejudice against the Negro; and the socialist movement reflected this prejudice to a considerable extent — even though, in deference to the ideal of human brotherhood, the socialist attitude was muted and took the form of evasion. The old theory of American radicalism turned out in practice to be a formula for inaction on the Negro front, and incidentally a convenient shield for the dormant racial prejudices of the white radicals themselves.

The Russian intervention changed all that, and changed it drastically, and for the better. Even before the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were distinguished from all the other

tendencies in the international socialist and labour movement by their concern with the problems of oppressed nations and national minorities, and affirmative support of their struggles for freedom, independence and the right of self-determination.

***"Everything new and progressive on the Negro question came from Moscow, after the revolution of 1917, and as a result of the revolution."***

The Bolsheviks gave this support to all "people without equal rights" sincerely and earnestly, but there was nothing "philanthropic" about it. They also recognised the great revolutionary potential in the situation of oppressed peoples and nations, and saw them as important allies of the international working class in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. After November 1917 this new doctrine with special emphasis on the Negroes began to be transmitted to the American communist movement with the authority of the Russian Revolution behind it. The Russians in the Comintern started on the American communists with the harsh, insistent demand that they shake off their own unspoken prejudices, pay attention to the special problems and grievances of the American Negroes, go to work among them, and champion their cause in the white community. It took time for the Americans, raised in a different tradition, to assimilate the new Leninist doctrine. But the Russians followed up year after year, piling up the arguments and increasing the pressure on the American communists until they finally learned and changed, and went to work in earnest. And the change in the attitude of the American communists, gradually effected in the Twenties, was to exert a profound influence in far wider circles in the later years.

# Columbus the Hollywood liberal

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews  
1492 — Conquest of  
Paradise

Of all the Christopher Columbus re-inventions we've seen in this five hundredth anniversary year, perhaps the most unlikely is Ridley Scott's version of the man as a white Hollywood liberal. Scott would probably jeer at the black-and-white morality of old Hollywood costume dramas, with their good guys and bad guys, but *1492 — Conquest of Paradise* is no more objective than they were.

This is not the past, but the past rewritten and re-invented, tidied up to match the sentiments of the 1990s.

Scott's Columbus is a visionary and a dreamer, a man bent on finding new worlds and re-making them to match his visions. It's a conventional treatment of a "great man". At first, people jeer at Columbus; he's an immigrant and an outsider. But with the aid of Queen Isabella, he gets his ships and sets off for the Indies, and after much hardship, emerges triumphant.

Only he doesn't, and this is where the film falls down. In bending the material to the "great man" format, it fudges Columbus's failures. Instead of telling the truth, it twists it, and having lost sight of the story, it degenerates into chaos and violence.

Perhaps no film can do justice to the Columbus story. There is so much myth to contend with, and so many differing versions. What was triumph for some — the Spanish — was disaster for the native tribes of the Americas.

Scott skates over all that by leaving things vague, and by absolving Columbus at least of any blame. His Columbus wants to be fair to the natives, and to treat them as equals. He seeks to learn as well as teach.

The reality, that many natives died of disease, overwork or cruelty, is



Gerald Depardieu makes this film almost worth seeing. Otherwise it's a piece of white liberal Hollywood trash

hidden, or blamed on others, like the evil Spanish nobleman, Moxica.

Moxica is a villain and a typically Hollywood one. He lounges around in diamante-studded breeches, drinks and sneers menacingly at the lowly-born Columbus and his toiling followers. But what proves him to be a barbarian is his torching of Columbus's precious city plans drawn up by Leonardo da Vinci.

Five hundred years later, we're meant to recoil from such vandalism, and we do. But it weakens the film, this constant intrusion of hindsight. We rarely get the feeling we're watching a "then" — the camera itself seems to have the eyes of "now".

The film is too kind to point up Columbus's mistakes. Having found

the West Indies (which he mistook for Asia) he might have been content. But, driven by ambition, he had to oversell his findings, and boast of gold and treasures where there were none, as a means of obtaining backing for further expeditions.

Having received it, he had to produce, and to produce, he had to enslave and harry the natives. To do Scott justice, he does show this, but then lets Columbus off, first by blaming the bloodshed on Moxica, then by wrapping Columbus in the mantle of historical glory.

There are good moments. The sight of the three ships, the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria, at sea, is splendid and nothing can detract from the first sighting of land after so long and wearisome a journey.

The coastline emerges from the mist, green and full of promise, and the exhausted mariners land on the beach and fall to their knees in thankfulness. These few scenes match Scott's deliberately heroic scale.

But then the natives appear, and we're back with the 1990s hindsight. Scott, with lashings of white liberal guilt, shows these people as perfect in their unspoiled Eden. Why? Of course, the coming of the Spanish, and the French and the English after them was an unparalleled disaster for the Indians, nine-tenths of whom were wiped out, and whose way of life was destroyed forever.

For that alone, they deserve our sympathy. They don't need to earn it, as Scott seems to imply, by being

perfect as well.

The film has its foolish moments. There is much huffing and puffing to lift a great bell into the tower of the newly built settlement. Scott scores this with momentous music, as if it were a great feat of faith and engineering, and then drops it altogether. We never get any sense at all of what religion means to these men, far from home, and facing the terrors of a new world, so the scene has no resonance.

We're often in the dark about what's happening, or how long things last. When Moxica complains they have spent four useless years in Santo Domingo, you wonder why his clothes still look so new.

## A hero killed by Britain

### Television

Jack Cleary reviews  
*Timewatch*, BBC 2

Sir Roger Casement was a British traitor who died on the gallows at Pentonville jail in July 1916. And he was an Irish hero, the sixteenth of the "Sixteen Dead Men" killed by the British after the Easter Rising. But Casement, who from the dock denied that he, an Irishman, could be a traitor to Britain, was much more than an Irish hero.

Of the 16 men killed in cold blood by the vengeful British state almost all, though they had broad sympathies, were narrowly Irish in their active political concerns. Casement and James Connolly were the exceptions. Connolly, though Ireland was central to him, saw Ireland as only one part of a world-wide socialist and anti-imperialist struggle. Casement had spent his entire life championing the victims of colonialism and oppression throughout the world — Africans in the Belgian Congo, enslaved Indians in Latin America, and then his own people, the Irish.

And when they hanged him at 52, he had had quite a life. Single-handedly, he had exposed and brought to the attention of the world the unbelievable

savagery with which the Belgian king's servants were treating the people of the Congo, which was effectively a private estate of the king, the people his serfs.

He then did the same work in exposing the equally savage treatment British capitalists were inflicting on the native Indian population in the Puta-mayo.

Casement's was a fine, heroic and selfless life and in the years before 1914, Casement was widely known for the hero he was. Resigning from the British Civil Service, he devoted himself to securing Irish independence and therefore worked against the British Empire. He wrote pamphlets explaining that the British Navy's control of the seas, which was then almost absolute, should not be tolerated by the rest of the world. He had a rather one-sided view of imperialism, believing that Germany was relatively progressive.

When the Protestants of north-east Ulster, encouraged by the British Tory Party, organised an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) for armed resistance to the British Liberal Government and the All-Ireland Home Rule Parliament it was trying to set up in Dublin, Casement was one of those who organised an Irish Nationalist Volunteer Force to win Home Rule.

Soon war broke out, and he went to Germany, where he published denunciations of Britain's role in the world and tried to induce captured Irish prisoners

of war to form an Irish brigade to fight with Germany against the British — the sort of work Pilsudski successfully did in creating a Polish legion in alliance with Austria against Russia, which occupied most of Poland.

Casement failed. On Good Friday, 1916, he landed off a German submarine on the coast of Kerry intent on getting the planned Irish rising, which he believed doomed without Germany's help, called off. He was captured immediately, and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

At his trial, where he made a magnificent 'speech from the dock', he was confronted by the Unionist Attorney General, FE Smith, a leader of the UVF, who had, two years before, on the eve of a war, organised the importation of guns from Germany with which to fight the British Liberal Government! "If treason prosper, none dare call it treason!"

Casement's reputation, the consistency of his activities whether for the Congolese, the South American Indians or the Irish, and the fact that he had influenced friends able to bring pressure to bear on the Government on his behalf, created problems for that Government, which was determined to resist the pressure for a reprieve and hang him.

They solved it by circulating pages of Casement's alleged diaries which seemed to show him to have been an energetic homosexual all his life.

Whether the diaries are genuine or were forged by the British secret service dirty tricks department is still a subject of argument: there is no argument but that the diaries were used to hang Roger Casement. You could say that Roger Casement was the last man hanged in Britain for alleged homosexuality!

They buried him in quicklime in the yard of Pentonville jail, refusing to give the body to the independent Irish state set up in 1922. One of the first acts of the Labour Government when it took power in 1964 was to give up Casement's body, and he was re-buried in Glasnevin Cemetery in February 1965.

Kenneth Griffith's *Timewatch* account of Casement set out to restore his pre-1914 reputation. Griffith is a Welsh actor whose TV 'histories' are idiosyncratic to say the least. His views on the Northern Irish Protestants — 'Planters' — would embarrass the less rabidly chauvinist of the Provisional IRA! He refers to Casement's judge, Rufus Isaacs, and Lloyd George as "the Welshman and the Jew" as if there could be no such thing as a Welsh Jew. Even so, Griffith did a good job, and for the splendid contempt he expressed for the royal mass murderers and the other coiners of human blood into gold whom Casement exposed I would forgive Griffith a lot.

*"This is not the past, but the past rewritten and re-invented, tidied up to match the sentiments of the 1990s."*

The film is filled with anachronisms. Columbus's brother tells him the local natives are too weak for the work, and that black slaves are needed, decades before black slavery in America began. The same brother utters the memorable words, more California than Columbus, "I've always been here for you", not to mention his outburst, "For Christ's sake!", a sure route to the stake in Spain under the Inquisition.

The film is also too violent. Bloodshed, torture and combat do not have to be so graphically shown. Too often, film-makers use it because they can portray it realistically. Rarely do they ask themselves whether they should.

In Scott's view of history, a great man found the Americas, but then people killed the Indians and destroyed the rainforests, making Columbus look bad. Luckily, Scott came along to salvage his name. End of story.

Yet Columbus himself is not what matters. What matters is what happened since, and why. For that, you need history books, not Hollywood.

## The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

**W**e live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private.

Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship of productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

From that comes the cultural blight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap.

From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides; twice this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism, and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich, who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own exploitation

and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing with the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary.

Against this system we seek to convince the working class — the wage slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism.

Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

**To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to:**  
**The AWL,**  
**PO Box 823,**  
**London SE15 4NA.**

## ORGANISING

# Why I joined the SWP six times

### EYE ON THE LEFT

**Dan Katz joined the SWP a number of times on the recent TUC march for the miners**

**F**ranksly, I was carried away. I'll admit it now, I was wrong. I've seen sense.

It's just... well... the young men looked so *militant* in their leather jackets and 501s... I've always been attracted to men in uniforms.

"General Strike Now!" shouted the SWPers. Nice, clean, young college boys.

"I can get my workplace out!" I volunteered — rather rashly as it happens, as I'm unemployed. I couldn't help myself, I was just carried away.

"Why not join the party?" they suggested.

"But I'm a member of the

Labour Party," I revealed, rather ashamedly.

"We're the socialist alternative," the young man explained, as I signed on the dotted line.

Any nagging disquiet was suppressed by the warm joy of realising I would now have a group of friends to go drinking with every Thursday evening.

Still, with the smell of their wet hair in my nostrils, I marched on, pleased that I was helping the revolution which was now, surely, near at hand. "Why, if we all turn round and spit together, we can wash the Tories into the Thames," shouted the next, wet sister, with slightly glazed eyes.

I tried to bite my lip, but it still came out: "Can I join?"

"Oh good," she said, "are you from the Poly?" "Eh?" I replied.

Once I had done it twice, joining the other four times came relatively easily.

"You've read the paper, carried the placard, now join the party!" shrieked a very slightly unhinged,

but sincere and dedicated teacher. I filled in the form as he wiped the spittle from his beard.

Who could disappoint him? I thought my dad might want a general strike, so I signed up for him too. "He voted Labour, you know," I informed the teacher.

I picked up my party card, got another one at the tube and one on the coach home. I've put my dad's in the post. He will be surprised.

On the way back, I picked up quite a bit of theory. There was the question of food distribution and the police during the forthcoming general strike. Apparently these are issues solved "in struggle", not to be bothered with right now. I also had a number of offers to speak at SWSS meetings.

As we parted, I thought of something left-wing to say: "Norman Willis is a bastard!"

"Yes, he's a bloody bastard," they agreed, "but remember, he should call a general strike!" I wonder where they are now.

## Alliance for Workers' Liberty meetings

### Thur 5 November

"James Connolly", Glasgow AWL meeting. 7.30, Langside Halls. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

"Does God exist?" Brighton AWL meeting. 7.30, Unemployed Centre. Debate with the Christian Union.

"How to fight the pit closures", Newcastle AWL meeting. 3.00, Students Union, University of Northumbria.

"Which way for women's liberation?" London AWL forum. 7.30, Queen's Head, Acton Street, WC1. Speakers: Wages for Housework and Jill Mountford (AWL).

### Sat 7 November

"The legacy of the Russian Revolution", Glasgow AWL meeting. 1.30, City Halls. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

### Mon 9 November

"How to beat the Tories", Manchester Metropolitan University AWL meeting. 1.00, Students Union. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

"How to beat the Tories", Merseyside AWL meeting. 7.30, Unemployed Centre, Wallasey. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

### Tue 10 November

"How to beat the Tories", Sheffield AWL meeting. 1.00, Sheffield Hallam University. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

### Thur 12 November

"How to beat the Tories", Sheffield AWL meeting. 1.00, Sheffield University Students Union.

"How to beat the Tories", Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street.

"Ireland: what solution?" Debate between AWL and Labour Campaign on Ireland at University of Central England, Birmingham.

### Marxist schools

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty organises twice-yearly "cadre" schools. These schools are five-day crash courses in Marxist politics.

The next school will be in London from Fri to Tue 18-22 December.

For details, write to: The AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

### Sat/Sun 7-8 November

Alliance for Workers' Liberty student school. Manchester Poly Students Union, All Saints (previously advertised as Manchester Town Hall). Details from: Jill, 071-639 7967.

### Fighting racism

#### Sat 7 November

March against the racist murder of Rohit Duggal. Assemble: 11.30, recreation ground, Eltham, London SE9.

#### Sun 8 November

Stop the National Front! Remembrance Sunday counter-demonstration. Assemble: 1.00, Westminster City Hall, London SW1.

#### Sat 21 November

National demonstration against the Asylum Bill. Assemble: 12.00, Hyde Park, London.

### Also coming up...

#### Sat 28 November

Burnsall Strikers Support March. Assemble: 10.30, Fenton Street, Smethwick. Called by GMBU.

**Don't sign the new contracts! Vote yes for strike action!**

# Make or break on the Tube

## By a Central Line guard

So the "negotiations" are over and the gloves are off. Management never had any intention of genuinely negotiating. The whole process has been a farce with management changing nothing of substance from their original position. Management's final "improved" offer is a joke. Another £500 for drivers and £300 for guards isn't going to persuade anyone the Company Plan was a good idea all along. Management know the money isn't enough to buy us off. They're estimating that a combined campaign of threats, bribes and intimidation will be enough to undermine any strike or strike ballot by us. Well it's up to us to prove them wrong. The next four weeks are going to be crucial in deciding our

future — or if we have a future at all! Management are going to pull out all the stops. Their campaign is going to be one of division, trying to divide one union against the other and trying to divide us by lying about how many people have signed the new contracts and playing on our fears about what will happen if we don't sign. They're going to interview us all individually so they can put on more pressure behind closed doors.

This is now make or break for us. On the one hand, management are going on the offensive. If they succeed they will quite simply destroy our wages, conditions and job security (for those of us who still have jobs — because there are bound to be compulsory redundancies). We're all in the same boat — no-one is safe. If you're a guard who's only been on the job a few years, you face compulsory redundancy. If you're a

guard/motorman or a rostered driver with a few more years seniority then you'll be displaced. Guards/motormen will only get paid drivers' rates when they drive and rostered drivers with protection of earnings. But when that runs out then tough, when there are no drivers' jobs for you. But what if you're a senior driver — surely you're okay? If you pass the strict medical and requalify for your own job you are alright, as long as your train crew manager likes you — because they'll have the power of hire and fire! The bottom line is no one will be safe — no one has got a guaranteed job.

So is it all inevitable? Does the company hold all the cards? You must be joking! LUL management are the Tories' creatures and the Tories are in a terrible state. The uproar over the miners has shaken the Government to its foundations. It's

difficult to think of when any government in Britain has been in a weaker and more feeble state. Their weakness is our strength!

If we stand firm now, we can force management and the Tories to do a real U-turn. The last and most important thing is not to sign the new contracts. The unions are united on this. All the unions are saying don't sign. This is the crucial question. This is where we must have unity. Anyone who signs the new contract is not only signing their own life away, they're weakening everyone else as well. We're all in the same position, we must stand together. RMT is building for strike action. It would be better if both unions were. What we need now is united action. In any case, we must respect all unions' picket lines. That's what will kick out the Company Plan and the Tories.

# Lyons Maid occupation ends

With a sledgehammer in one hand and a summons to appear in the High Court in the other, a private investigator appeared at the gates of the Lyons Maid factory in Kirkby a week last Tuesday night, 27 October.

For the previous week and a half the factory was occupied by the workforce, in a fight to save their jobs after the firm had gone into receivership.

The private dick served the summons by throwing it through the factory-gates.

At the High Court hearing in London the next day, the judge granted a land possession order to Robson Rhodes, the receivers brought in by the National Westminster Bank to take over the running of Lyons Maid from its parent company (Clarke Foods).

A mass meeting of the workforce held in Kirkby in the evening after the court hearing decided to comply with the land possession order. Steve Alcock, convenor at the factory, explained the reasons for this:

"If the bailiffs implementing the land possession order were anything like the individual who served the summons, then some of us might have got a hiding, and this could have frightened off some of our members.

"We could have been done for contempt of court and ended up in the nick. This would have led to major problems at what is the most important time for us to carry on the dispute.

"So far we have had nothing but good publicity, even from the right-wing media. If we had tried to slog it out with the bailiffs, then we would have lost

the good media coverage, in a situation where we need as much coverage as possible.

"So we decided to carry on the dispute by leaving the factory in an orderly fashion and by putting on a round-the-clock picket. Since we came out we have been picketing 24 hours a day, and the resolve is still there. The picketing is just as effective as the occupation."

As the Lyons Maid workers continue their fight for jobs, more and more questions are being asked about the financial dealing of Clarke Foods and Robson Rhodes:

- Was it in order for the stockbrokers Guinness-Mahon to advise its clients to buy shares in Clarke Foods earlier this year when one of its directors is also a director of Clarke Foods?

- Was it coincidence that the holder of the double-directorship sold £400,000 worth of shares in Clarke Foods just when shares peaked at 168p, after Guinness-Mahon had been encouraging their purchase?

- What has happened to the £1.5 millions due to be used in redundancy payments for workers at the Bridgepark factory, which Henry Clarke bought along with the Kirkby factory from Allied Lyons?

- What has happened to the pension funds of workers at the Kirkby factory and of workers at Clarke's other factories in Stourbridge and Telford?

- Are the receivers hindering potential buyers of the Kirkby factory from putting in a bid for it, in order to allow Lyons Maid to go into bankruptcy after the £700,000 worth of ice lollies stored in Kirkby have been sold

off to clear debts to the banks?

- Does Henry Clarke plan to buy back Lyons Maid in the event of bankruptcy being declared, and the £15 millions worth of bad debts being written off. Does this explain Clark's comments at a recent conference of ice-cream manufacturers: "Watch this space — I'll be back"?

The ending of the occupation has done nothing to dampen the spirits of the workers in Kirkby. They are determined to continue fighting until a new buyer for the factory is found. As Steve Alcock put it:

"We are defiant, not despondent. We are leaving the facto-

ry, but this whole thing is by no means over.

"With the continued support of the local and wider community, we will carry on fighting".

As we go to press, final preparations are being made for a march through Kirkby this Saturday (7 November) in support of the Lyons Maid workers. Details available from Kirkby Unemployed Centre, 051-548 0001.

Messages of support/financial donations to: Denis Daniels, TGWU 6/556 branch, 2 Melrose Road, Melling Mount, Merseyside. Cheques payable to: TGWU 6/556 branch.

## Jinkinson supports the miners?

The mood was electric in Lambeth on Tuesday 20 October. NALGO members throughout the borough were pushing the branch executive to take action to support the miners on the Wednesday demo.

Workers all over the borough understood the links between the brutal treatment meted out to the miners and the Tories' attacks on the class as a whole. The Tories have already said public spending will suffer massive cuts meaning job losses in the public sector, hospital closures, etc.

A unanimous decision to hold an unofficial one-day strike was taken. NALGO nationally had urged members to support the miners. But, on the day of the strike, Alan Jinkinson, General

Secretary of NALGO mailed this intimidating letter to every Lambeth NALGO member:

"In my letter to all branches dated 16 October encouraging members to participate in the march and lobby I did not request or authorise members to take strike action and I must therefore formally repudiate on behalf of the union this unlawful action.

"Your union... will give no support to unofficial industrial action taken in response to it (or them). If you are dismissed while taking unofficial industrial action, you will have no right to complain of unfair dismissal".

The membership were shaken by this letter — it has affected future support for action such as the "London Day of Action"

## Setback in Sheffield

Sheffield Council workers have voted for a 3 day pay cut to partially fund a "voluntary" early retirement scheme and possibly stave off compulsory redundancies until April 1993.

The vote in the biggest council union, NALGO, was 3,138 in favour of taking three days unpaid leave, 1,139 against. 6,063 ballot papers were issued. In the next few months local union leaders who negotiated and advocated this strategy must be pressurised into arguing for effective strike action to oppose compulsory redundancies next year.

The council budget "gap" next year is rumoured to be around £47 million. This would equate to employees giving back over 1/4 of their annual salary! The people who voted for a 3 day pay cut will not accept a pay cut next year!

Activists need to start arguing now for an effective rank and file mobilisation against redundancies and in defence of services. If this is not done by next year the union leaders will just be arguing about redundancy criteria and not opposing them outright and the workforce will have been softened up for privatisation.

## Contracting-out fight heats up

On Friday 30 October, over 2,000 CPSA members working for DVLA, the agency responsible for driving licences and car registrations, struck for the day over contracting-out.

Late the previous Friday a document had been leaked to the trade unions outlining plans to contract out the vast bulk of the agency's work. The leaked document indicated that only about 300 of the DVLA's 4,500 staff would remain civil servants, and that the main office, DVLC Swansea, with a workforce of just over 3,000, would most likely be shut down.

Staff at Swansea, faced with the possible loss of their jobs in an area of high unemployment, reacted with anger. On Monday a mass meeting of over 1,500 agreed that both CPSA and NUCPS members should be balloted for a one-day strike along with the national network of 53 Vehicle Registration Offices (VROs) which channel work to DVLC. CPSA nationally refused a request for the whole of the Department of Transport to be balloted.

By Thursday morning all the offices had been balloted. The the CPSA vote was 1,247 to 836 in favour of action. Unfortunately NUCPS lost the strike vote two-to-one.

One local activist said: "We should have walked out on the Monday. Waiting for the ballot allowed senior management to talk to staff and change minds".

From when the ballot was announced, on Monday afternoon, to the close of voting on Wednesday night, Agency bosses pulled out all the stops for a "no" vote. In DVLC, senior management walked the floors, talking to staff and trying to persuade them not to strike.

In the VROs, two staff notices were issued warning members against action. Local office managers held staff briefings to explain that the leaked documents were not real proposals but merely options being worked on. CPSA reacted vigorously.

Each office was talked to; circulars were faxed tackling management's arguments; in DVLC the union walked the floors to counteract the senior management walk-rounds. A tremendous amount of hard work was put in to get action.

After the ballot results, unfortunately, the unity between the two unions broke down. In Swansea, the local NUCPS branch instructed their members to cross CPSA picket lines, and they also pulled out of a lunchtime rally arranged for midday Friday.

Despite the NUCPS result, the turnout on the day for CPSA was very good, with 90% of union members coming out in Swansea and a high turnout in the VROs, too. Over 100 people joined the union in order to take strike action.

The rally in Swansea was attended by over 400 people, and the atmosphere was electric. When a motion was moved calling for the resignation of the Chief Executive who had written the leaked document, or the withdrawal of the document, it was amended from the floor to ask for both resignation and withdrawal.

Welsh Labour MPs were out in strength, emboldened by the movement against pit closures.

Immediate demands now must include:

- \* The withdrawal of the document and a pledge by the Agency that there will be no contracting-out.
- \* The Chief Executive to resign.
- \* Local campaigns, especially in Swansea, to include petitions, press coverage, and rallies.
- \* A parliamentary campaign to pressurise the Tories.

It is vital that we do not lose the momentum after Friday's strike. If any area in DVLC or the VROs is up for contracting-out, industrial action should be sought not only in the agency but across the whole Department of Transport. No contracting-out! No job losses!

## Left victory in CPSA

Candidates standing on the Broad Left ticket have won an overwhelming election victory against the right wing in the DHSS section of the low paid civil servants union CPSA. The only position the right wing held against the left was that of section chair.

This is a particularly important victory as the right wing pulled out all the stops in an attempt to defeat the left.

- \* The original left victory last May was declared void by the union's right wing leadership despite there being no serious evidence of ballot irregularities. It was just that members had voted the wrong way.

- \* The ballot papers for the re-run were tampered with by head office: they put "Militant/Broad left" next to all left wingers' names including those of *Socialist Organiser* supporters and non-aligned people. The same ballot paper did not give details of people's record in the union or even their sex, which is important in a union with mostly women members but dominated by men).

- \* Head office officials used every excuse available to impose postal balloting on branches where they could. Postal ballots get lower turnouts than branch ballots, so the more postal ballots in left wing branches the better for the right wing. The result also shows up as defeatists those in the Broad Left who want to take the union to court over the wording of the ballot papers! Now we have seen that determined campaigning amongst the rank and file is the best way to beat the right wing.

The new executive must link up with activists to rebuild the union, priorities being a staffing campaign, a fight against a public sector pay freeze and a mass campaign against market testing.

**How to stop Tomlinson**  
Public meeting  
7.00pm  
Tuesday  
November 10  
Camden Town Hall,  
Judd Street, WC1

## The Industrial Front

Rolls Royce workers at Parkside and Ansty have started an overtime ban against the threat of 400 redundancies. This is one of the first examples of action against job losses in engineering in the last few months, since the GEC Openshaw strike was betrayed.

About 4000 Aerospace workers turned up to lobby Parliament last Thursday, 29 October, in protest against job losses in the industry and

in defence of the 40,000 jobs now on the line.

NATFHE members in the new university have voted to strike this Wednesday, 4 November. The issue is pay: the employers have offered 3.9%.

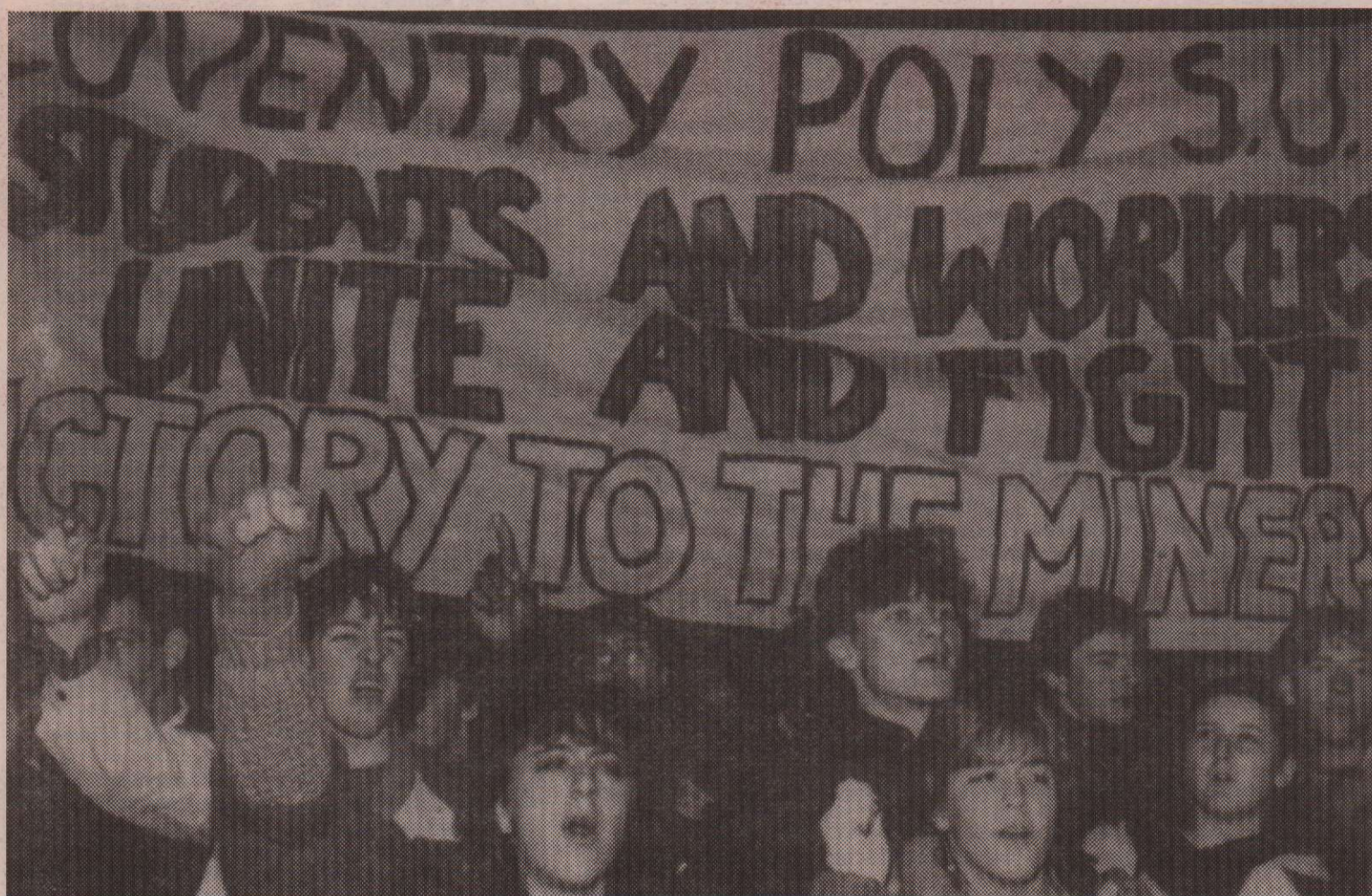
The strike at Spartan Redheugh steel rolling mill in Gateshead has now entered its 17th week, in defence of jobs and union organisation.

Messages of support, donations, and requests for speakers to: Brian Quinn, ISTC Redheugh branch, 35 Lovett Walk, Clasper Village, Gateshead NE8 2NX.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## We need £5,000 for our paper



Students need to unite with workers to win their demands

## Students organise to support the miners

By Elaine Jones, National Union of Students National Executive (in a personal capacity)

The student movement must throw its full support behind the miners. Not only because the miners have a just case, but because a miners' victory will ensure that students are better placed to win their own demands.

During the 1984-5 strike, the Tories tried to introduce loans. This had two effects: as the Tories were already in trouble, they didn't want to open up another source of discontent, and there was a revolt amongst middle class parents.

Secondly, and more importantly, the miners' struggle had an immensely radicalising effect in the colleges. Students took their lead from the battling mining communities and fought back.

Forty thousand students assem-

bled in Jubilee Gardens, next to the old GLC buildings on the South Bank in London. A large number of miners joined the protest. Students moved across Westminster Bridge to deliver letters to their MPs. They were met with the response that the pit men and women had become used to: they were charged by mounted police, beaten and arrested.

There were running battles as the demonstration found its way blocked and attempted to get to Waterloo Bridge and then on to Parliament.

The Tories were forced to back down, but only temporarily. When the miners were beaten and the labour movement in retreat, the Tories moved against the print workers, the dockers, the teachers, the NHS and the students. They introduced loans in 1989.

The student movement has an objective interest in supporting the miners and the labour and working class movement. In the short term, if the working class is

strong, so will the student movement be strong. Now that means making concrete links between our demands for better funding for education, higher grants and an end to the attacks on the National Union of Students (NUS).

In 1984-5, the main slogan on campus was "No pit closures! No college closures!" But more than that, students should join with the working class to fight for a system of democratic self-government and planning of the economy, a socialist society.

Already, "Students support the miners" groups are being set up in many colleges.

No doubt students will come up against people arguing that supporting the miners is "ultra vires", i.e. that it is illegal to spend student union funds on 'non-student' issues. Already, sabbatical officers at Manchester Metropolitan University Students Union have refused to send coaches to the demonstrations. And Lorna

Fitzsimmons, NUS President, has been telling colleges not to back the miners concretely.

Something only becomes ultra vires if a judge, acting on a complaint, rules that the law has been broken. In reality, there is little chance of a college being taken to court. Here are some ideas for getting round arguments about illegal payments:

- Buy materials from the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), such as *The Miner*, for 'educational' purposes;
- Using video machines as 'collection tins' for the miners;
- Putting a penny or more on the drinks in the union bars 'for the miners', which people can opt out of;
- Organise a 'Rave for the miners'.

Where there's a will, there's a way — to bring students into battles against the Tories, alongside the working class.

**S**ocialist Organiser is raising money to help expand our organisation and the influence of our paper. We aim to raise £5,000 in extra money by the end of January 1993.

Last week we received £353 in fundraising and donations. Thanks to Newcastle AWL for £63, Hull AWL for £200, Nottingham AWL for £50 and Glasgow AWL for £40.

Our total stands at £2,002.80.

### Help us!

We ask our readers for help. Right now we are organising meetings, producing leaflets and extra copies of our paper in support of the miners.

You can help, in a very practical way, to spread the influence of socialist ideas.

Why not send us a donation? Post cheques (payable to "Socialist Organiser") to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

### Join our 200 Club!

Help your paper stabilise its finances — and give yourself a chance to win £100 in our draw each month!

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