


SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

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Timex shows

the way

SOME 400 pickets turned up at the Timex factory in Dundee last Monday morning (22 March) to give the scabs a warm reception.

The size of the turnout forced the police to delay the arrival of the scabs buses for two hours. Only after a series of running

clashes with the police, during which six pickets were arrested, did the scabs manage to crawl in.

The mass picket comes just 2 days after a massive 8,000 strong demonstration in Dundee called by the Scottish TUC in support of the Timex strikers.

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Strike with the miners on 2nd April

Timex pickets show the way

From page 1

THE CITY square was filled with trade union and labour movement banners in an inspiring display of solidarity with the 340 workers. They have been on strike since 29 January over redundancies and wage cuts. Timex management regards them as sacked and is trying to bus-in scab labour.

Timex union convenor, John Kydd told the rally that either all the workers would go back to work united or the factory would close down for good.

Timex management have been pulling out all the stops to

defeat the determined campaign of the sacked workforce. Fortunately their use of the anti-union laws has now backfired on them. Last Friday's Court of Session ruling means that management's attempt to stop the mass pickets has failed. The court was not satisfied that a nuisance was being committed, as Timex alleged, and threw out the bid to stop the gatherings.

The AEEU are also appealing against an earlier ruling forbidding two AEEU officials and two shop stewards from organising or initiating mass pickets of the factory.

As well as challenging the court order the stewards have also tackled the issue head on by asking for continued sup-

port for the mass pickets every Monday. Convenor John Kydd told Saturday's rally:

"I cordially invite you to visit

the picket line on Monday morning. As far as I am concerned, there isn't a police force in the country that can keep

those roads open. If the choice has to be made to break the law to win this dispute then the law might have to be broken".

"Join us every Monday" says sacked Timex workers

"THE LAW is not on the side of the working class. The police and the judiciary are here for one reason only — to protect the property of Timex. They are not non-political. They are here to defend the employers against the workers.

We've had 14 years of the Tory anti-union laws. They were introduced to push down wages

and destroy union organisation. We're having none of it.

There were six people arrested today for the honour of attempting to stop scabs from going into the factory. For two hours the unity of working people stopped the scabs. Our thoughts are with those arrested.

The sacked Timex workers take great heart from the 8,000

strong demonstration in Dundee last Saturday and from today's turnout. We, the sacked Timex workers, are calling for this type of demonstration every Monday morning"

Willie Leslie, Timex deputy convenor

Turn up for the next mass picket at the Timex factory — 7am, Monday 29 March.

Bad news in France

THE LANDSLIDE victory of the right wing in France's parliamentary election is very bad news for the French working class, but not entirely so for Michel Rocard of the Socialist Party.

After the second round of voting, on 28 March, the right-wing coalition will have about 450 of the 577 seats in Parliament. Slashing attacks on the working class are certain, and a labour movement weakened and demoralised by the years of Socialist Party government and by this election defeat will find them hard to resist. Lame-duck Socialist Party president Francois Mitterrand will not block those attacks.

The fascist National Front won about 13 per cent of the vote. It will get few or no parliamentary seats because of the electoral system, but clearly remains a threatening force.

Michel Rocard, however, is looking towards the presidential election in 1995. The feeble showing of all the centre and left parties — the Socialist Party got about 20 per cent of the vote, the Communist Party 9 per cent, and the Greens a lower-than-expected 8 per cent — must increase the chances for Rocard's proclaimed project of a new party representing a grand alliance of the centre-left.

The new right-wing government, with its huge parliamentary majority, will rule with the support of only 40 per cent of voters, or fewer than 30 per cent of potential voters. (The parliamentary landslide is due to the electoral system and the disarray of the centre and left, not to any special rise in the right-wing vote). Rocard must have a good chance of breaking away a few splinters from the always-ramshackle right-wing alliance to his centre-left project.

Rocard's new centre-left party, if it is formed, will be of no use to the French working class. It will lack even those feeble links to the working class which the present Socialist Party and Communist Party have.

It may, however, do one good thing. It may clear the ground for the building of a genuine socialist and communist party, on a terrain free of counterfeits and false rivals.

The far-left candidates in this election — 247 from Lutte Ouvriere, 70 from the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, and 84 from the Parti des Travailleurs — got 448,000 votes between them.

Scottish nationalists help Labour's right wing

By Harry Tuttle

THE SCOTTISH Labour Party conference in Inverness last weekend came in the aftermath of the SNP marching through government lobbies with the Tories and Scottish Labour leader Tom Clarke's apparent move away from complete commitment to taking water back into public ownership.

Neither of the two debates which had been given the most pre-conference coverage, democracy in the Scottish Party and water privatisation provoked much controversy.

Scottish Labour Action, the soft left pressure group, backed down on its push for autonomy for the Scottish party, feeling that perhaps the mood was against its sort of nationalism. Attacks on the "tartan Tories" of the SNP were the order of the day, allowing the pale pink right wing of Labour in Scotland to gain ground.

A composite on a series of positive rights for workers was passed, albeit with a commitment to the repeal of all anti-trade union laws since 1979 removed. How a future Labour government can keep the anti-union laws and introduce a workers' charter which contradicts it, was beyond the ken of many delegates. Despite this, resisting the latest Tory attacks in the Employment Act and arguing for positive rights does provide the Labour Party with a basis to move forward. Socialists now have a framework which can be firmed up in the future.

This reflected an unwillingness to go along with the union bashing line of Tony Blair and the London leadership also shown by the success of the Keep the Link petition at conference.

The Youth Campaigns Committee presented a report to conference along the lines of the national recommendations, giving no autonomy to the youth organisation, observer status only to 23-26 year olds, and a division of the committee which gives equal representation to Scottish Labour Students, Trade Unionists and constituency members.

Such a division only insults trade union and constituency activists. In a stage managed debate, which set a pattern of

Stalinist conference management for the weekend an amendment calling for an upper age limit of 26 and proper status for the youth organisation was not taken. The recognition of the need to recruit youth is obviously to be welcomed, even if it comes from the same people who smashed LPYS. The problem is that no recognition was made of the real problem, that Labour's policies are a barrier to recruiting working class youth who want to fight the Tories. In Scotland the Labour Party is in competition with the SNP and Scottish Militant Labour and politics will be central to our ability to build a genuine youth section.

There is a real danger of the proposals backed by conference being no more than a career ladder for the people who have pushed them through.

Plenty of rhetoric was on offer in the debate on water privatisation, with Clarke making a verbal commitment to take water back into public ownership in Scotland. A resolution which called for civil disobedience in preventing cut offs by private water companies was remitted, although there was no lack of advocates for this kind of motion at the conference. This strategy looks like a repeat of Labour's feeble "Stop It" campaign against the poll tax.

The Nationalist blunder at Westminster let the Labour leadership in Scotland off the hook, leaving them able to make broad statement of opposition but no practical commitments to positive activities from constituency level upwards against the Tory attacks.

Saturday 27 March
Albion workers march and rally
Assemble 10.30 am
 Albion works,
 Scotstown Glasgow
March off 11am,
Rally 12 noon
Partick Burgh Halls
Speakers include
Campbell Christie
 Supported by STUC



Local government workers take action

Walsall NALGO struck on the National Day of Action on 18 March. Fighting the threat of 400 compulsory redundancies, they organised a mass picket outside Walsall Town Hall.

Photo: Mark Salmon

Hillingdon cuts campaign

The Tory council in Hillingdon despite, a 700-strong lobby, has forced through a £16 million cuts package, on the mayor's vote. The package involves the closing of nurseries, old people's day centres, disabled services and an increase in council rents. A meeting of 80 activists from the commu-

nity resolved on Monday to continue the campaign focusing around a by-election on 22 April. The Labour candidate has promised to restore £850,000 of the cuts. The next meeting of the campaign to beat the cuts is on Monday 29 March, 7.30pm at the Civic Centre.

Keep Labour's union link

The Keep the Link campaign has put out this statement

A. The Conference decision
 The 1992 Party Conference instructed the National Executive Committee's Party/Union Review Group "to concentrate its efforts on how to strengthen the traditional links between Labour's industrial and political wings at all levels of the Party". More specifically conference affirmed its support for:
 "1. continued substantial union representation at the Labour Party conference whilst welcoming the introduction of a fairer distribu-

tion of votes between constituency parties and unions;
 2. representation of trade union branches, co-operative parties and other affiliates at every stage in the selection of parliamentary candidates by Constituency Labour Parties;
 3. participation of national trade unions in the election of the party leadership".
B. The Review Group Report
 Unfortunately, the Review Group and the NEC have since seen fit to ignore this clear mandate. The questionnaire which they have circulated includes some options which deliberately flout the Conference decision and many more which would

effectively reduce the influence of affiliated trade unions and their branches. The questionnaire and the interim report which accompanies it contain two consistent themes. The first is an unexplained fear of collective decision-making. The second is an unacceptable desire to transfer power from Labour's affiliates to Labour's parliamentarians. Neither of these presumptions can be allowed to go unchallenged.
C. The need to respond
 Some options in the questionnaire would explicitly exclude trade unions, while others are so impractical that they would in practice have

the same effect. A third category may seem acceptable in headline but are clearly not so when the accompanying small print is examined. The deadline for responding to the questionnaire is Saturday 10 July. It is essential that all affiliated trade unions make it crystal clear that they will not stand for further attacks on the links. Otherwise the 1993 Party Conference could sound the Labour/Union death-knell. Neither Party nor unions can afford to let this happen.

Keep the Link Campaign
March 1993
 120 Northcote Road, London
 E17

Don't excuse the Provos; but don't swallow the tabloids' hypocrisy

Horror in Warrington

KILLING BRITISH children by setting off bombs in a crowded street in Warrington will not help the Catholic people of Northern Ireland.

It is unlikely that even the addle-headed mystics who lead the Provisional Irish Republican Army believe it will. Within their nationalist blinkers, they are skilled politicians. They must know that mindless savagery like the Warrington bomb will help rally non-political people in Britain against them and in support of the British Government and its policies in Ireland.

The bombs in Warrington were set off without even the usual warnings. They wanted carnage, it seems. So a four year old was ripped apart, and a 12 year old had his face torn off and his skull broken (he is not expected to survive).

"The tabloids have never made any fuss about children killed in Northern Ireland by plastic bullets".

This is made all the more terrible by its utter senselessness.

Yet we should resist and oppose the attempts of the British press to use this horror to win support for repressive British policy in Ireland.



Johnathan Ball — blown to bits by an IRA bomb.



Carol Ann Kelly — killed by a British Army plastic bullet

The killing of children naturally and rightly arouses great feeling, but for the tabloid editors it is just one more sensation to milk for circulation. They are hypocrites with shameless double standards.

A lot of children have been killed in Northern Ireland, and not only by Provisional IRA

bombs. Children, mainly Catholic children, have proved especially vulnerable to rubber and plastic bullets fired into crowds by the RUC (the police) or the British Army. Between April 1972 and August 1989, 17 people were killed in Northern Ireland by rubber or plastic bullets, and eight of them were chil-

dren. It is one of the big emotive issues in the Catholic community there.

Yet the British tabloids have never made any fuss about that, or given the killing of those children front-page coverage. Like the Provisional IRA, the British press has double standards, and looks at events through nationalist and, indeed, chauvinist spectacles.

Socialists in Britain should reject and repudiate British press

tion is needed, establishing a free federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area.

The bombs in Warrington show that the Provisional IRA is going deeper and deeper into the blind alley of national hatred and senseless slaughter. The Provos' entire military campaign now makes no sense. The central problem in Ireland is that the Northern Ireland unit is untenable, yet one million Irish Protestant-Unionists do not want to be in a Catholic-dominated united Ireland, and they are the majority in Northern Ireland. Guns and bombs cannot change that, least of all bombs used to kill small children.

RMT vote for strike action

A boost for the fightback

THE OVERWHELMING vote by the railworkers to strike alongside the miners on 2 April will provide a huge boost to everyone who wants to fight back against the Tories and the bosses.

Socialists and trade union activists in every workplace across the land must now work flat out to win strike action alongside the NUM and RMT on 2 April.

The national officials of the TUC and every TUC affiliated union should be taking the lead in calling for action. Every group of workers are facing attacks of one sort or another so it is perfectly possible to get legal ballots for action on 2 April, even at this

late stage.

National officials who rule out solidarity action with the miners by talking about the law are simply looking for excuses to avoid joining the fightback.

If no lead is forthcoming from the national unions then it is up to activists on the ground to deliver what action they can. Ballots should be organised for action over local disputes on 2 April or if this is not possible, workplace meetings should be held on the day and miners and railworkers invited to put the case for solidarity action.

At last the tide is beginning to turn. As well as the miners and railworkers other groups of workers are moving into action.

The Timex mass pickets are standing firm, the London busworkers are fighting back, civil servants and local government workers have walked out in protest against cuts and sell-offs. At Fords unofficial strikes have got management worried.

What is needed now is a clear demonstration of the strength of organised labour and our determination to fight back.

2 April could be a landmark in the revival of the movement after 14 years of Tory rule. Wide-ranging strike action on that day will provide a boost not just to the miners and railworkers or to the Timex pickets who face the Tory laws, but to everyone else who wants to fight back.

"A political solution is needed, establishing a free federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area".

double standards, just as we reject the nationalist double standards of the Provisional IRA. British Army repression will not solve the problems of Northern Ireland: over the last 20-odd years it has only made those problems worse, and destroyed lives and caused much suffering along the way. A political solu-

"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 summer of discontent?

SPRING IS IN the air, and the sap is rising. Members of the rail union RMT have voted to strike against redundancies, alongside the miners. Ken Cameron, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, is busy telling anyone who will listen that a firefighters' strike over pay is "inevitable".

NALGO has started a campaign against the 1.5% pay limit, and white collar staff at Ford have voted for action against redundancies.

Now, don't get too excited. We've seen some false dawns before — like last October when the public outcry over pit closures forced a partial U-turn on the Government and some people even started sloganising about a general strike. The issue has not gone away, and the Government may yet reap the whirlwind, but the predicted upsurge in industrial struggle failed to materialise. The general strike shouters quietly dropped the slogan. Green shoots, as Norman Lamont can testify, often let you down.

But with the coming of spring, there really do seem to be signs of a revival in industrial militancy. The vote for action by the miners, for instance, is quite remarkable when you consider the pessimism of even the best NUM militants at the end of last year. The RMT result is another pleasant surprise, given the lack of any serious campaigning by Jimmy Knapp and the leadership.

The ace in the hole is the prospect of action by the firefighters. So far, the signs of resistance to the 1.5% public sector pay limit have been patchy. The Government must have been hopeful of riding roughshod over NALGO and the other "town hall" unions. But a showdown with the FBU is an altogether different matter. If the Tories have any sense at all, they'll be quaking in their boots right now.

The FBU's only previous national strike, in 1977-8, was a bitter nine-week affair that smashed the Callaghan government's incomes policy and forced an automatic pay formula linking fire brigade pay to the "upper quartile" of male manual workers' earnings.

That formula has ensured industrial peace in the fire service ever since, but the struggle to achieve it has entered into the folklore of the firefighters. Ken Cameron is not bluffing when he says that any attempt to scrap the formula will be met with strike action.

Sensible ministers will also remember the wave of public sympathy that accompanied the 1977-8 strike and the similar public response to the 1989-90 ambulance dispute. Another firefighters' strike, taking place at a time of serious upheaval elsewhere in the public sector and making skillful use of emergency cover (as they did last time), would shatter the 1.5% limit.

Cameron intends to ask the FBU conference in May for a free hand to go for a strike ballot whenever the prospects of coordinating action with other public sector unions seem best. It's a good strategy, and there is little doubt that it will be approved.

The intervention of the FBU would create a whole new ball game in the public sector, making the defeat of the 1.5% limit a real possibility. All of which makes the creation of a genuine, rank-and-file-based public sector alliance (as opposed to the *Militant*-dominated charade now calling itself the Public Sector Alliance) a vital task.

It's a strange situation when the leaderships of the NUM and RMT can see the need to coordinate their action against redundancies and when the ex-Stalinist Ken Cameron is basing his strategy upon synchronised action with other public sector workers, but the largest organisations of the revolutionary left can't even organise a decent public sector alliance. Meanwhile, at the other end of the spectrum, the TUC shies away from any suggestion of a coordinated industrial assault upon the government and the 'Public Sector Liaison Committee' maintains its usual Trappist monk-like silence.

Spring is sprung, the grass is risin' wonder where the leadership is? Despite all the failings of the TUC and of the revolutionary left, the sap is rising. This time, the green shoots look like flowering into a Summer of Discontent.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

National Union of Students m Testing time fo

Jill Mountford looks at the issues for the National Union of Students annual conference which takes place in Blackpool next week.

Further Education Union Development (FEUD)

THIS YEAR the FEUD campaign has been appalling — the worst for

many years.

The Vice President FEUD is a right wing, Higher Education student who has managed to ignore one of the worst ever attacks on union autonomy and representation. FE students feel isolated and ignored by NUS.

Left Unity supporters have submitted motions calling for:

- all campaigns to relate to FE students;
- an affiliation drive in this sector;
- the right for students in sixth forms in schools to be members of NUS;
- a fight back against the Tory attacks;
- a campaign for trade union rights and rates of pay for all young people on youth training;

- the election of the VP FEUD by FE students only.

Towards One Union

THIS IS REFORM by another name. For the last eleven national conferences activists have been forced to discuss internal reforms. Not one reform was ever passed democratically. In the end the right wing made unconstitutional rulings to get their way.

Simply giving the debate a new name will not fool the conference. If the leadership wants to pass the remainder of their reforms they'll have to carry on cheating!

Israel/Palestine

FOR YEARS, NUS conferences debated international issues, and supported causes all over the world. This year the leadership are determined not to allow any international debate. The Tories don't like it!

That's what President Lorna Fitzsimmons says, and she's done everything she can to get the debate ruled out.

Building the Fightback

THE CONFERENCE is dominated by eighteen different sets of elections and many bureaucratic sessions that have to take place.

When the right wing abolished winter conference they made no arrangements for the various elections, commissions and structures written into the constitution and usually covered at the now abolished winter conference.

Such a clumsy and cumbersome conference no doubt suits them. In such a conference the average first-time delegate will have great difficulty just knowing what is going on! All the better to manipulate them, think the right wing!

Maybe they will find a good excuse for closing this one down too!

The left at this conference will attempt to build a fightback against voluntary membership. The right wing leadership will retaliate with a witch hunt against Left Unity supporters.

It is as important for the left to unite against a witch hunt as it is

Fight to save our unions!

DECISIONS taken at next week's NUS conference in Blackpool look set to change the mood in the student movement.

The Tories might announce voluntary membership on the same day as NUS debates it. Activists will demand an extended debate to allow the fullest discussion on strategy to defeat the Tories.

The Labour (National Organisation of Labour Students [NOLS]) leadership of NUS have produced a "consultative document" that waves the flag for the Tories' proposals.

They are keen to meet the Tories more than half-way, in the hope of retaining some national structures which will allow scope for these little careerists to continue to flourish.

But, while they will wag their tails, sit up and beg, or roll over and kick their legs in the air and do all sorts of other doggy tricks for the Tories, NOLS are in a mad dog mode where the left is concerned.

NOLS's mad dog phase started when they cheated in order to abolish one of the two national annual conferences. Since then they have bludgeoned and cheated like people who care nothing for either the national union's constitution or democracy in general.

These people are not only scared

witless by the Tories, they are politically bankrupt. More and more students know it, too.

The leadership's Student Rights Charter (SRC), launched in the full gaze of the press, angered students on both the left and the right.

This "Charter" condemned the Tories for failing to "consult people" — yet students had not been consulted about this charter! Tory MPs and Tory newspapers saw it at least a week before any student union ever laid eyes on it!

Similarly with their "consultative document" on voluntary membership. John Patten was congratulating NUS leaders on its contents before the membership even knew of its existence. But then, they care about Patten and his friends, and don't give a damn about the members of the NUS.

The "consultative document" is suicide! A clear strategy to defeat voluntary membership has to be fought for and won at the conference! But then it will have to be implemented.

Left Unity supporters have clear proposals to fight for on the issue. Already Left Unity has launched a broad national campaign under the banner "Save our Unions". We expect a big fringe meeting at the conference. There we will discuss and plan the strategy for the campaign.

Meetings in Blackpool for students



The NUS leaders' current proposals will stifle student union campaigning

for them to unite against voluntary membership.

Supporters of the Socialist Workers' Party have for many years voted alongside the National Organisation of Labour Students (right wing Labour) for unsubstantiated attacks on Left Unity supporters. And just as consistently they have transferred their vote

to NOLS candidates in the elections.

Their actions are divisive and destructive and have nothing to do with their so-called revolutionary politics.

This year's conference is make or break for student unions and the NUS — which side is the SWP going to be on?

NUS women vow to fight

AT LAST WEEK'S annual NUS Women's Conference Left Unity supporters proposed and won policy for fighting voluntary membership.

The women's campaign now has a sound policy on which to build a mass fightback. It has to be a campaign based on action against the Tories and against college authorities who implement voluntary membership. The NUS should not tie its own hands and feet and deliver itself like a parcel to the Tories, which is what the right wing want us to do. The right wing were defeated massively on this question.

Many women will now go to National Conference next week and argue for this policy to be adopted by the whole of NUS.

The NUS leadership can be beaten back!

Though this will be a victory for the left, we must do more than win the policy debates! We have to make the incumbent NUS leadership implement this policy. When they refuse to we must do it ourselves.

The left *did* suffer a defeat though. We lost the position of National Women's Officer. Alice Sharp, Left Unity supporter and currently the NUS Women's Officer, lost by four votes to Siobhan Edean, National Organisation of Labour Students supporter. In fact they cheated! This matter is not settled yet.

PS: the three SWP votes in this election were transferred to the right wing Labour NOLS candidate!

WORKERS' LIBERTY 1993

Ideas for freedom

Workers' Liberty 1993 is an annual event to promote political debate on the left. All the major issues which face socialists — from the politics of defeating the Tories to questions of culture and sexuality — are discussed.

Cheap, good food, a bar and entertainment are available. There is a professionally staffed creche.

Accommodation can be provided.

Questions of race...



Including...

- Lessons from black history — slave revolts to Malcolm X
- Black nationalism
- Where do racist ideas come from?
- Is black and white unity possible?

Why won't Labour fight?



We debate the Labour right.

Why won't they fight? Is Labour a working class party? Is Marxism out of date?

We look at the current debates inside the unions — about the Labour and union link, the issues in the workplace.

Plus:

Lectures on Marxist economics. Debates on the social crisis, sex and sexuality, international issues and questions of everyday life. And much, much more...

To book for Workers' Liberty 1993 at the cheap rate before 1 May, send £6 (unwaged), £10 (low-waged/student), or £14, to WL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques payable to 'WL Publications'

Friday 2 - Sunday 4 July
Caxton House, Archway, North London

Malcolm X, black nationalism, and socialism

Pretending or debating?



And now: how to die Green

Hatton: innocent but guilty

DEREK HATTON, one-time *Militant* Deputy Leader of Liverpool City Council, has been acquitted of corruption charges, along with two co-defendants at Mold Crown Court.

The prosecution case was so weak it collapsed of its own accord. The man in charge of the investigation, Detective Superintendent Bill Coady, said "At the start we didn't know what we were looking for". They only knew they had to 'get' Hatton.

The police called it "Operation Cheetah". It should have been called "The Big Trawl" for it was a fishing expedition on a huge scale, the biggest investigation Merseyside Police ever organised. Over 300 officers used 60 search warrants to gather 6,400 documents and details on 5,800 people. All of this information is now in police files somewhere.

The *Militant's* response to their former comrades' acquittal has been to pretend to see it as a political exoneration. Hatton may not have acted illegally, but politically he was always deeply corrupt. The police court at Mold is one thing: a political court of revolutionary socialists would have found Hatton — and *Militant* which covered for him — guilty of political and moral corruption.

Hatton was the front man for *Militant* on Liverpool City Council, and there he disregarded and undermined independent trade union action, spat contempt at the local black community, and worked a scandalously bureaucratic style of politics that led to Liverpool's defeat. Hatton betrayed the NUM during the miners strike, when he made deals with Tories and Swiss bankers and left them in the lurch. Of all this *Militant* and Hatton still stand accused.

After the Liverpool debacle, Hatton used his national profile to line his own pocket as a sharp suited media wide-boy more interested in fame and wealth than in socialism. His property deals may not have been against the bosses' law, but they were not the acts of a revolutionary or even a decent reform socialist. This is the Hatton that *Militant* ignores because it bred him, ran him, and covered for him up to the day he walked away from them.

THE LIBERALS gained control of Tower Hamlets Council in East London with the help of fake Labour leaflets designed to whip up a racist vote.

Now they are forcing Asian families to move into the Teviot Estate, which may well rank as one of Britain's most racist housing estates.

The local law centre knows of 228 incidents on the estate,

47 of them assaults. This is the highest incidence in the country despite there only being 30 Asian families on the estate.

The council forces people to accept the first offer — refusal means they are removed from the council's lists. The right to appeal was abolished last September.

The council neither acts against the perpetrators of the attacks when identified or offers their victims alternative accommodation. The council does not collect figures on the racist attacks reported to it.

AFTER YEARS IN the sporting wilderness, South Africa has finally arrived in the mainstream of international sport.

The Yugoslav Red Stars water polo team played their first match in a projected tour of South Africa on Monday. On Tuesday they were packing for the long trip home. Pretoria did not want them. The Red Stars were primly told that South Africa supports the UN sanctions against the rump of Yugoslavia.

NICHOLAS ALBERY of the Natural Death Centre of Cricklewood has now published "The Natural Death Handbook", full of hints on how to leave the world greener after your demise. Suggestions start with rain-forest friendly cardboard coffins and directions on how to be buried in your own back garden — although this could have dire consequences for the departed's nearest and dearest should they try to sell their house.

For the more radically minded the mortal remains can be boiled down in a specially designed pressure cooker. The resulting slurry mixed with straw produces good quality compost in about 12 weeks.

THE STORMS that swept along the east coast of the US last week were not the product of global warming but of divine wrath, according to the organisers of a St. Patrick's Day parade in Boston. A court ruled that the organisers of the St. Patrick's Day parade, heavily under the influence of the local Catholic church, had no right to ban gays and lesbians of Irish descent from the parade. The local state god in Massachusetts must have whipped up the storm in a fit of heavenly homophobic fury.

Meanwhile the local god of New York is more progressive. There the courts ruled that the Ancient Order of Hibernians (the Catholic Orange Order) had the right to ban gay people from their parade. Bad weather intervened here causing that parade to be cancelled as well.

RACE AND CLASS

Martin Thomas looks at *The Life and Legacy of Malcolm X, a Militant* pamphlet by Andrea Enisuoh

SUCH IS the way that *Militant* educates its members that Andrea Enisuoh has had banned from her mind the idea that anyone can be an honest and courageous revolutionary, yet disagree with *Militant*.

Malcolm X was an honest and courageous revolutionary who disagreed a great deal with Marxism, and would have disagreed even more with *Militant's* added version of socialist ideas.

Enisuoh's pamphlet copes with the contradictions by blurring them. Maybe (so her pamphlet suggests) Malcolm was not precisely on the *Militant* line, but surely he was moving towards it, almost automatically.

It is right, I think, for socialists to try to relate positively to the interest in Malcolm X among black (and some white) youth, and to highlight Malcolm's shift in his last year away from pure and simple black nationalism and towards anti-capitalism and an increasing interest in socialism.

But then we have to argue

out the issues of socialism, workers' unity, and black nationalism plainly and clearly — not resort to the manipulative and condescending approach of claiming that black nationalism is only an infant, undeveloped version of socialism. For socialists to try to claim Malcolm for ourselves by claims about what he would have thought if he had lived longer and his ideas had moved in our direction can only anger black nationalists who respect Malcolm, not win them over.

Enisuoh writes that "Malcolm X was assassinated... but his ideas lived on... From Malcolm X... to the present day the ideas of struggle and socialist revolution live on".

Yet George Breitman's book, *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, on which Enisuoh, like all other socialists, bases herself, is very careful not to claim that Malcolm became a clear-cut socialist. It claims only that he was "a revolutionary — increasingly anti-capitalist and pro-socialist".

Breitman also notes that Malcolm started looking for alliances with white radicals, but not specifically with white workers. "He did not share the belief of Marxists [about] the working class..." Enisuoh blurs all the distinctions: "Malcolm X... travelled down the road of believing black liberation could be achieved under capitalism [but was] forced to conclude the need for revolution and class unity".

Where Enisuoh cannot

avoid discussing black nationalism directly, she makes a muddle of it. She identifies black nationalism exclusively with the extreme black separatism of the Black Muslims, who demanded a separate state for African-Americans and rejected any joint campaigns, or even any social contact, with white people. Her purpose must be to suggest that such extreme separatism is the only alternative to *Militant's* mechanical line of "no 'diversions' - class unity, class unity, class unity".

Yet as against *Militant* Leon Trotsky would have been a "black nationalist".

TROTSKY argued for the American Trotskyists to launch an autonomous black movement on a basic programme of working-class and anti-racist demands. "You may say that in Germany or in England we do not organise such semi-political, semi-trade-union, or semi-cultural organisations: we reply that we must adapt ourselves to the genuine Negro masses in the United States... The Negroes were enslaved by the whites... They were led and misled by the whites, and they did not have their own political independence. They were in need of a pre-political activity as Negroes". (At that time "Negro" was the term used by African-Americans to describe themselves).

Trotsky also argued that African-Americans should be

supported if they called for a separate state of their own. "To fight for the possibility of realising an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening..."

Such arguments guided those American Trotskyists, like Breitman, who invited Malcolm X to speak at their meetings and took a friendly attitude towards his movement. They have never seemed to have much impact on *Militant*, whose general attitude has been to condemn any autonomous black movement as divisive and destructive and whose new "black power" and "feminist" profile is plainly catchpenny opportunist.

Today we need to discuss whether the call for African-American "self-determination" still has any sense: at the time when Trotsky discussed it, three-quarters of African-Americans were concentrated in a fairly compact area of the American South, but now they are spread across all the big cities of the USA.

We also need to look at how Trotsky's ideas on autonomous black organisation, developed for African-Americans, relate to Britain. African-Americans are a cohesive minority with some of the elements of a national identity; the black minority in Britain is a complex mixture of widely differing nationalities from across the world. Enisuoh's pamphlet can only blur over these issues, not clarify them.

The politics of class and nation

WOMEN'S EYE



By Jean Lane

THE ONLY way you could justify putting a bomb in a bin outside McDonalds at midday on a Saturday is if you think that all English people, of whatever class, are guilty of the crimes of the British state against the Catholics in Ireland. This is ridiculous. Is the mother of the dead boy really responsible for the actions of the British govern-

ment and the army? Working class people do not have to answer for the actions of their own oppressors, any more than the Iraqi people are responsible for Saddam Hussein's butchery or every Protestant in Northern Ireland is responsible for the actions of the Orange Order.

The only other way you could justify it is if you think that by blowing people up you will convince them of the justice of your cause. "Oh, yes, my son has been blinded. I can see what you were getting at now".

The only time I have heard words similar to these is from an ex-soldier who was a striking miner in 1984-5 who, seeing the way the repressive apparatus of the state was used against him, could recognise the justified anger and resentment of the Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Perhaps the IRA thought that they can bomb British workers out of their complacency about what their government is doing in Northern

Ireland. If that is so, they are misguided. But I don't believe that is the reason. I think the bombs in Warrington are meant to punish the guilty English people.

"This is not politics. It is taking sides on the level of communal, race and national antagonisms."

It is not only the IRA who hold this view. Most of the British left also believe that if you are British you are bad when it comes to Northern Ireland, if you are Israeli (a Hebrew-speaking Jew) you are bad when it comes to Palestine, if you are a white South African you are per-

sonally responsible for the apartheid regime.

This view takes no account whatsoever of the class system, of the position of the working class vis-a-vis the state. It sees the world in terms of nations and you either belong to a good one or a bad one.

All people in a so-called 'good' nation become defensible — even butcher-like Saddam. And all people of a 'bad' nation are demonised — even ordinary powerless, working class people — and they have to take the consequences, including getting blown up. This approach puts the 'left' in a quandary when two 'good' nations start kicking shit out of each other — witness the SWP's position changes during the Iran/Iraq war.

This is not politics. It is taking sides on the level of communal, race and national antagonisms and thus having no answers to those antagonisms. The fight for working class unity and for consistent democracy is far bigger.

CPSA: left presidential candidate Mark Serwotka writes an appeal to Steve Cawkwell:

Don't help the right wing!

Mark Serwotka's campaign as left candidate for president of the civil service union CPSA has upset some supporters of the centre candidate Albert Astbury. Steve Cawkwell, backed by the Militant tendency, has said he will "teach Mark a lesson" by standing against him for deputy chair of the union's DHSS Section Executive Committee. Mark Serwotka replies.

Dear Steve,

LIKE MANY activists in the union, I just can not see what purpose will be served by your decision to stand against me in the election for deputy-chair of the DHSS Section Executive Committee of the Union.

As you must know by now, the members of our union face the most serious attack in our history: Market Testing. Tens of thousands of jobs are on the line.

Every action, every initiative in the union has to be judged by one simple criterion: will it help or hinder a united fight to defeat Market Testing?

All your candidature can do is to increase the chances of [right winger] Christine Galligan squeezing in. Do you want that? Do you think that such an outcome will further the struggle against Market Testing? Do you think it will help typists in the DSS or any

other CPSA member who faces Market Testing?

I can only conclude that your decision to nominate yourself for deputy-chair, and then to take it upon yourself to call and chair a highly irregular — in fact bogus and unconstitutional — "DHSS BL conference" has nothing whatsoever to do with the burning issues facing ordinary members.

It looks to me — and to many activists in the section — that you are letting your personal anger at my decision to stand for CPSA president get in the way of your political judgement and sense of proportion.

Steve, surely you can see the difference between my decision to stand in the presidential election so as to put the case for a fighting and democratic union committed to national action to defeat Market Testing, and your own decision to stand against me for DHSS deputy-chair so as to "teach me a lesson", as you put it.

WHAT PRINCIPLE are you defending?

My candidature is an attempt to raise an issue of principle. I am the only presidential candidate advocating effective national action to defeat Market Testing.

What issue of principle are you raising, Steve?

Your candidature in DHSS appears to be nothing more than an attempt to assert the politics of factional control. You seem to think that 22 people voting for

you in Manchester have some God-given right to decide who can and who can not stand for the chair of a 36,000-strong section.

If you really think that you and your allies do have this right then you should argue openly and forcefully, you should tell members why asserting this "right" is so important that it is worth risking letting in a right-winger.

But, Steve, you can not cover up your own narrow factional motives with reference to higher principles like "respect for collective decisions". It is you, Steve, who has no respect for the collective decisions of two properly convened and properly representative meetings of the DHSS Broad Left. Meetings which, as you know, supported my candidature in the DHSS without any opposition.

Nor can you claim that I have broken the constitution of the Broad Left — you have already said that I should not be expelled from the Broad Left, and you know that the Broad Left constitution only says that members are "deemed to have resigned" if they stand against "Broad Left candidates".

Astbury is not a Broad Left candidate

You know that Astbury is not a Broad Left candidate. The motion to support him at the emergency BL conference was explicitly counterposed to the call for a full-scale of Broad Left candidates. Astbury certainly does not consid-

er himself a Broad Left candidate. He is not a BL member and is accountable to no-one. So, you can not be defending the Broad Left constitution. What are you defending then, Steve? Left unity?

Standing against another left-winger for DHSS deputy-chair is a very strange way of demonstrating your commitment to left unity.

Steve, what matters above all else in politics are the issues. I believe that left unity which is not built around an all-out struggle to defeat Market Testing is not left unity at all; that is why I can not support Albert Astbury. You think differently. You are an enthusiastic supporter of Astbury. That is a legitimate difference; let us discuss it. I am certainly prepared to debate it with you any time, in any place.

But your support for Astbury can not be a reason for helping the right wing by standing against me.

Instead of expending your energy in fighting another left-winger and deepening existing divisions on the left you should pause and think.

If you care about building a united, democratic left in CPSA you should stand down while there is still time.

Yours in
comradeship,
Mark Serwotka.

**So what's
your star
sign,
comrade
Benn?**

**POLITICAL
FRONT**

By Jack Cleary

ALL DIPLOMACY aside, I have considerable respect for Tony Benn — as a genuine left-winger, I mean, not just as an operator in labour movement affairs.

He is not *Socialist Organiser's* type of left-winger — which his House of Commons colleague, the late Eric Heffer, largely was — nor any sort of revolutionary left-winger, but a parliamentarian who came over to the left from the Wilsonite mainstream of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and stayed.

The tide turned, and very sharply, but Benn didn't. He has been solid in resisting the craven but vicious Labour Establishment, while others who were "left" when it was profitable, safe, and fashionable have gone over, made peace, or let themselves be browbeaten. Benn has "stuck".

While I respect him for that reason, I never feel that I have made complete sense of Benn, or seen him whole.

A year or two ago Benn had a series of late-night chat shows on TV, called, I think, "Burning Embers". People sat around braziers and discussed politics. One night Benn's guests included someone called "the rainbow witch".

Who was she? Did they find her at the end of the rainbow? Was she a rainmaker? I don't know, because I tuned in late and, to tell you the truth, I didn't stay very long. But there she was, Benn's rainbow witch.

I used to think that such things could be explained as Benn trying to put together, and personally represent, the broadest possible socialist and radical church from the existing left. But I'm not sure. How would the witch feel in bed with the bishop?

I'm most confused by the question of Benn's religion. Last week he was in the *Independent on Sunday*, coupled with the venerable left-wing Methodist priest Donald Soper, and we were told that they have in common "a passion for Christianity".

But is Benn a Christian? From many newspaper items like the *Independent on Sunday's*, and from many proprietary references made by Benn to Christianity, I had formed the strong opinion — like most people, I guess — that Benn was a Christian socialist.

Then I read John Mortimer's interview with Benn. According to Mortimer, he asked Benn the question "do you believe in God?" point-blank. He had to ask it half a dozen times before he finally got an answer. The answer was *no*. Benn the publicly ostentatious Christian is... an atheist!

If you assume, as I do, that Mortimer was truthful, then Benn's pseudo-Christianity, together with his pseudo-Stalinism, might stand as a metaphor for the British left in the later 1980s and (so far) the 1990s — at root unserious, and to a considerable extent not really there at all!

Genuine religious feeling I understand, but why this pretend religion, this aping of the ancient Roman senator worshipping in the temple with the plebs at rites he privately despises? The English plebs don't go to the temple much more. That, as anyone who has ever lived in a society dominated by the chapel, the temple, or the mosque, is progress of a sort.

And yet, of course, we have not shed religion. Our minds are clogged with the debris of the broken dogmas and rituals. Religious dogmas have been banished by science, but they are replaced by mass belief in astrology and tarotry. The old power of the parson is replaced by the power of Mystic Meg and Russell Grant.

All the more bizarre for a prominent socialist who is in fact an atheist to pose as a believer in obscurantist claptrap. While we are on the subject: what is your star sign, comrade Benn?

When strike action freed jailed pickets

This week three trade unionists face jail. Their crime? Being trade unionists!

John Kydd Junior, convenor at Timex Dundee, his deputy Willie Leslie and AEEU Divisional organiser John Kydd Snr could be sent down for defying interdicts (injunctions) banning mass pickets outside the plant.

But all that the three men have done is what any serious and self-respecting trade unionist would do: they have refused to allow Timex to get away with the mass sacking of 320 people. They have fought back with the traditional methods of working class struggle.

If the three go to jail then there must be immediate and escalating solidarity strikes demanding their release.

Such action can be built and it can be successful. That is the lesson of the Pentonville 5.

John McIlroy tells the story in his 'History of the Shop Stewards' Movement':

"On July 22 1972 the National Industrial Relations Court ordered the imprisonment of five dockers for defying an injunction under Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

It was the age of Gary Glitter and T Rex. Donny Osmond was number one with 'Puppy Love'. Leeds had beaten Arsenal in the FA Cup Final. Roberto had won the Derby and Muhammed Ali's comeback continued as he

stopped Al 'Blue' Lewis in eleven rounds in Dublin.

It was also the finest hour of the modern shop steward's movement.

As the dockers were hauled off the Pentonville Jail by the tipstaff, the cadre of working class and file leaders who had developed through the long boom went into action. Stewards' committees, union branches and trades councils laid plans for emergency meetings.

Group after group of workers came out, not 'spontaneously', but because they were given a lead by their stewards. The links were there, the wheels clicked into place.

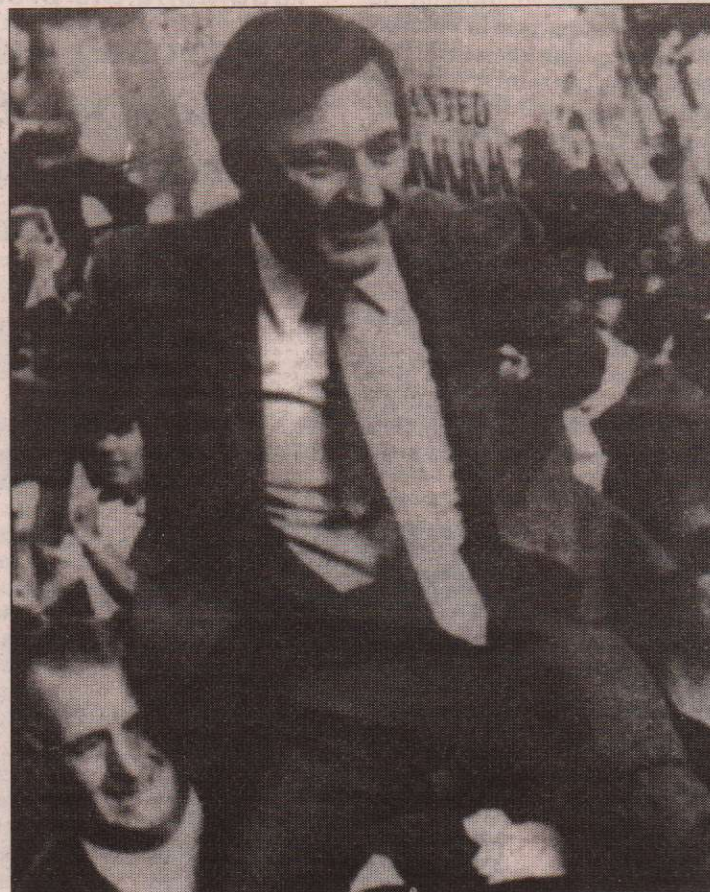
With 250,000 workers out on strike and the numbers increasing every day, the TUC called a one-day General Strike. The government and judiciary caved in.

In the hot summer of 1972 the British labour movement had what is most lacking in the unions today: a strong stewards' organisation in the workplace, able to mobilise the membership independently of the top official leaders of the trade unions, able to push the union leaders into action by the very strength of that mobilisation and — this is the crucial point — able to mobilise their members, not only on the bread and butter sectional issues of wages and conditions, but on class wide issues, in this case the use of state laws to fetter the unions".

The memory of the Pentonville 5 shows what working class action can achieve.

It also shows that even the TUC can be forced into calling generalised strike action in defiance of the law.

Today we need to rebuild the kind of rank and file organisation in the work-



Vic Turner, one of the Pentonville Five, being carried in triumph after being freed from jail

places and across industry that freed the Pentonville 5. But to do so in today's difficult conditions requires that the trade union rank and file

should also be equipped with a broader political perspective and a thorough-going commitment to fighting for trade union democracy.

Karl Marx died 110 years ago

Marxism is science

KARL MARX WAS BORN into a middle-class family in Trier, West Prussia, in 1818. Going to university, he was soon drawn into the radical democratic politics of the day.

The working class was small, but Marx was impressed by an uprising of the weavers in Silesia (East Prussia) in 1844, and influenced by his contacts with radical workers in Paris where he went in 1843-4. In Paris he also met Frederick Engels.

He became a communist. At this time, as Engels wrote later, "socialist" meant utopian or social quack, "in both cases, people who stood outside the labour movement and who looked for support rather to the 'educated' classes. The section of the working class, however, which demanded a radical reconstruction of society, convinced that mere political revolutions were not enough, then called itself Communist... And since we were very decidedly of the opinion as early as then that 'the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself', we could have no hesitations as to which of the two names we should choose".

Marx was banished from Paris in 1845, and went to Brussels, where he continued discussions and activity with the communist groups of the time and also, with Engels, worked out his theoretical ideas. Marx, together with Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto (1848).

Marx took an active part in the revolutions of 1848, mainly in Cologne (West Prussia). He was banished from Germany in 1849 and went into

exile in London. By 1857-9 he had developed the main ideas of his great work, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy', and written a rough draft.

He returned to practical activity from 1864, when the International Working Men's Association — the First International — was initiated by English and French trade unionists. Marx fought to educate and organise the movement on the basis of class politics. In this period also he finished and published 'Capital' volume I (1867).

In 1871 the defeat of France in war with Prussia led to the workers seizing power in Paris for two months. For the First International Marx wrote a rousing defence of the Commune: "Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society" — but the International collapsed under the pressure of the official witch-hunt that followed the crushing of the Paris workers.

The last ten years of Marx's life were dogged by ill-health. It was after his death that mass Marxist workers' parties developed in Europe, along with the rapid extension of large-scale capitalist industry.

Rosa Luxemburg, who wrote this brief account of Karl Marx's place in the development of socialist thought, was one of the main leaders and theorists of the left wing in the socialist movement before World War I and of the German Communist Party until 15 January 1919, when she was murdered by paramilitary forces operating under the right-wing Social Democratic government.

AS AN IDEAL about a social order built on equality and fraternity for all men, as an ideal about a communist commonwealth, socialism was thousands of years old.

Among the first apostles of Christianity, among the various religious sects of the Middle Ages, in the peasant wars, the socialist ideal had always flared up as the most radical expression of the revolt against contemporary society. But as an ideal which could be advocated at all times, in any historical milieu, socialism was only the beautiful vision of a few enthusiasts, a golden fantasy, always out of reach, like the airy image of the rainbow in the skies.

At the close of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth centuries the socialist idea, freed from all religious sectarian frenzy, as a reaction to the horrors and the devastations which ascendant capitalism perpetrated in society, appeared for the first time with real force behind it. But, even at that time, socialism basically was only a dream, the invention of a few bold minds. If

we listen to the first vanguard fighter of the revolutionary upheavals set into motion by the proletariat, Gracchus Babeuf, who attempted a coup de main during the Great French Revolution for the purpose of introducing social equality forcibly, then we shall find that the sole argument on which he is able to base his communist aspirations is the crying injustice of the existing social order. In his impassioned articles, pamphlets, and also in his defence plea before the tribunal which sentenced him to death, he never tired of picking the contemporary social order to pieces.

"These same laws regulating the present economy work towards its collapse, ... by assembling a chain of devastating economic and political catastrophes."

His gospel of socialism consists of an indictment of society, the denunciation of the sufferings and the torments, the wretchedness and the debasement of the working masses, on whose backs a handful of idlers grow wealthy and rule society. For Babeuf, it was enough that the existing social order well deserved to perish, i.e. it could have been overthrown a hundred years previous to his time, if only a group of determined men had been found who would seize the state power and who would introduce the regime of equality just as the Jacobins seized political power in 1793 and introduced the republic.

In the 1820s and 1830s, socialist ideas were represented with a great deal more genius and brilliance by three great thinkers: Saint-Simon and Fourier in France, Owen in England. They based themselves on altogether different methods and yet, in essence, on the same line of reasoning as Babeuf. Of course, not one of the above-mentioned men thought even remotely of any revolutionary seizure of power for the realisation of socialism. On the contrary, like the entire generation which followed the Great Revolution, they were disappointed with social overthrows and with politics, becoming express adherents of purely pacific means and propaganda. But the postulation of the socialist ideas was the same in all of them; basically, it was only a scheme, the vision of an ingenious mind who prescribes its realisation to suffering humanity, for the purpose of rescuing it from the hell of the bourgeois social order.

Thus, in spite of all the power of their criticism and the magic of their futuristic ideals, these socialist ideas remained — without any noticeable influence on the real movements and struggles of the times.

With a handful of friends, Babeuf perished in the counter-revolutionary tidal wave, without leaving a trace, other than a short, shining inscription on the pages of revolutionary history. Saint-Simon and Fourier succeeded in establishing sects of enthusiastic and talented followers who — having sown rich and fertile seeds of social ideas, criticism and experiments — went their separate ways, looking for greener pastures. Of them all, Owen gained the greatest hold on the proletarian masses, but, after having attracted an elite group of English workers in the 1830s and 1840s, his influence also vanishes with hardly a trace.

A new generation, of socialist leaders emerged in the 1840s: Weitling in Germany, Proudhon, Louis Blanc and Blanqui in France. The working class itself had begun to take up the struggle against the clutches of capital; the class struggle had been initiated by the revolts of the silk weavers of Lyons in France, by the Chartist movement in England. However, there existed no direct link between the spontaneous movements of the exploited masses and the various socialist theories.

The proletarian masses in revolt did not have a socialist goal in view, nor did the socialist theoreticians attempt to base their ideas on the political struggle of the working class. Their socialism was to be instituted



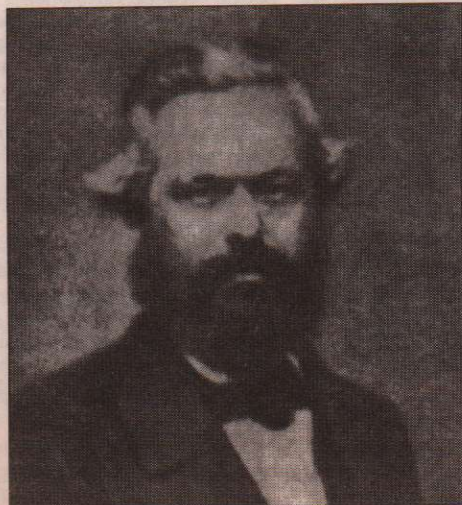
A cartoon from 1848 shows luxury based on it can be ended

by certain cunningly devised artifices like Proudhon's People's Bank or Louis Blanc's productive associations.

The only socialist who looked on the political struggle as an end towards the realisation of the social revolution was Blanqui; this made him the only real representative of the proletariat and of its revolutionary class interests at the time. But, basically, even his socialism was only a scheme — sustainable at will — as the fruition of the iron determination of a revolutionary minority and the outcome of a sudden coup d'etat carried through by the same minority.

The year 1848 was to be the high point and also the critical moment for the older socialism of all varieties. The Parisian proletariat, influenced by the traditions of preceding revolutionary struggles, agitated by the various socialist systems, passionately espoused some nebulous notions about a just social order. As soon as the bourgeois kingdom of Louis Philippe had been overthrown, the Parisian workers utilised the favourable relationship of forces to demand the realisation of the 'social republic' and a new 'division of labour' from the terrified bourgeoisie.

The provisional government was granted the famous three months period of grace for complying with these demands; and for three months the workers starved and waited, while the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie secretly armed themselves and prepared to crush the workers. The period of grace ended with the memorable June massacre in which the ideal of a 'social republic', attainable at will at any time, was drowned in the blood of the Parisian proletariat. The revolution of 1848 did not institute the reign of social equality but rather the political domination of the bourgeoisie



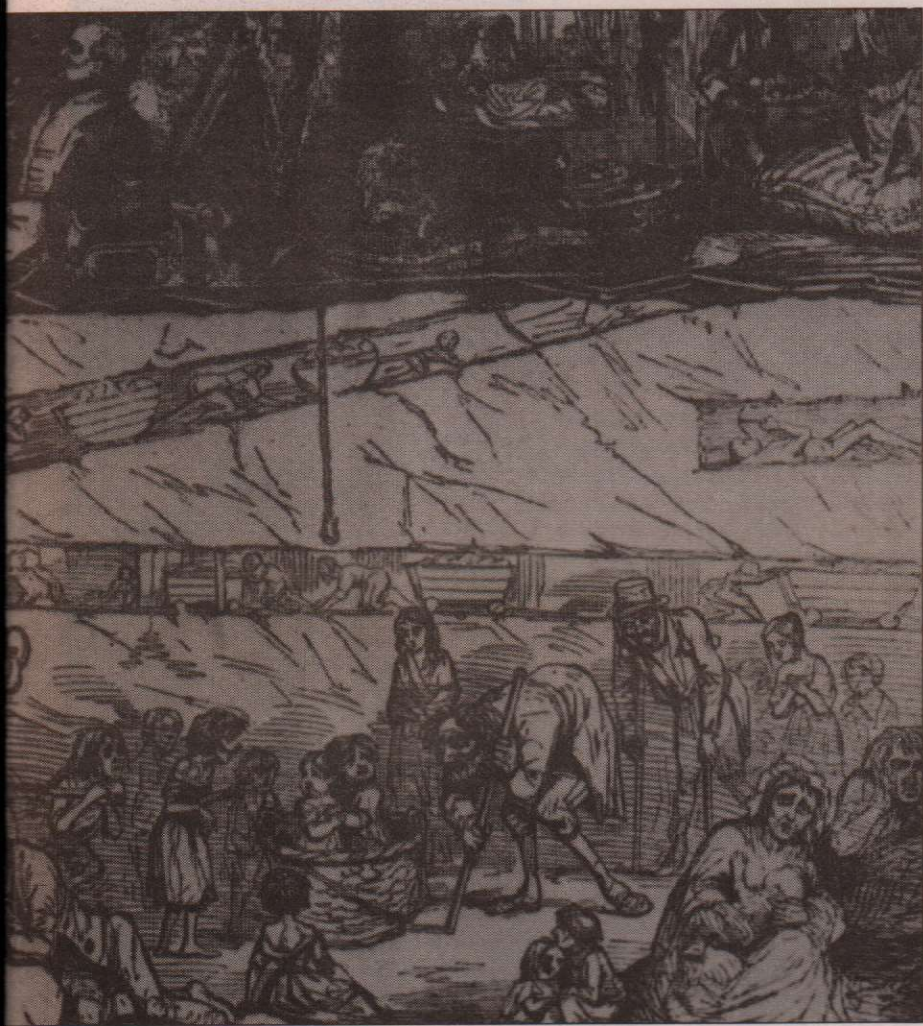
Karl Marx developed his ideas tenaciously despite the fact that mass Marxist parties emerged only after his death



As well as writing theoretical works Marx was active in the International Working Men's Association

... this month

Science, not Utopia



poverty. But anger at such inequality is not enough to tell us how and by whom

and an unforeseen growth of capitalist exploitation under the Second Empire.

But at the same time, while socialism of the red stripe seemed to be buried forever under the smashed barricades of the June insurrection, the socialist idea was placed on a completely new foundation by Marx and Engels. Neither of the latter two looked for arguments in favour of socialism in the moral depravity of the existing social order, nor did they try to smuggle social equality into the country by means of inventing new and tempting schemes. They turned to the examination of the economic relations of society. There, in the very laws of capitalist anarchy, Marx discovered the real substantiation of socialist aspirations. While the French and English classicists of economics had discovered the laws according to which capitalist economy lives and grows, Marx continued their work a half century later, starting where they had left off. He discovered how these same laws regulating the present economy work towards its collapse, by the increasing anarchy which more and more endangers the very existence of society itself, by assembling a chain of devastating economic and political catastrophes.

As Marx demonstrated, the inherent tendencies of capitalist development, at a certain point of their maturity, necessitate the transition to a planful mode of production consciously organised by the entire working force of society in order that all of society and of human civilisation might not perish in the convulsions of uncontrolled anarchy. And this fateful hour is hastened by capital, at an ever-increasing rate, by mobilising its future gravediggers, the proletarians, in ever greater numbers, by extending its domination to all countries of the globe, by estab-

lishing a chaotic world economy, and by laying the foundation for the solidarity of the proletariat of all countries into one revolutionary world power which shall sweep aside the class rule of capital.

Socialism ceased being a scheme, a pretty fancy, or an experiment carried out in each country by isolated groups of workers, each on its own hook. As the common political programme of action for the entire international proletariat, socialism becomes a historic necessity because it is the result of the operation of the very laws of capitalist development.

It should be apparent by now why Marx put his own economic teachings outside the pale of official economics and named them *A Critique of Political Economy*. The laws of capitalist anarchy and of its future collapse which were developed by Marx are only the logical continuation of the science of economics as it had been created by the bourgeois scholars, but a continuation which, in its final conclusions, is in polar opposition to the point of departure of the wise men of the bourgeoisie.

The Marxian doctrine is a child of bourgeois economics, but its birth cost the mother's life. In Marxist theory economics found its perfection, but also its end as a science.

What will follow, apart from the elaboration of Marxist theory in details, is only the metamorphosis of this theory into action, i.e. the struggle of the international proletariat for the institution of the socialist economic order. The consummation of economics as a science constitutes a world-historic task: its application in organising a planful world economy. The last chapter of economics will be the social revolution of the world proletariat.

The special bond between economics and the modern working class is shown to be a reciprocal relation. If, on the one hand, the science of economics, as it was perfected by Marx, is, more than any other science, the indispensable basis of proletarian enlightenment, then, on the other hand, the class-conscious proletariat is the only receptive audience these days capable of understanding the teachings of scientific economics.

With the crumbling ruins of the old feudal society still before their eyes, the Quesnays and Boisguilleberts of France, the Adam Smiths and Ricardos of England surveyed the young bourgeois order with pride and enthusiasm and with faith in the coming millennium of the bourgeoisie and its 'natural' social harmony, without trepidation, they permitted their eagle eyes to scan the depths of the economic laws of capitalism.

But the growing impact of the proletarian class struggle, and especially the June insurrection of the Parisian proletariat, has long since destroyed the faith of bourgeois society in its own godlikeness. Since it has eaten of the tree of knowledge and learned about modern class contradictions, the bourgeoisie abhors the classic nakedness in which the creators of its own classical political economy once depicted it, for all the world to see. The bourgeoisie became conscious of the fact that the spokesmen of the modern proletariat had forged their deadly weapons from the arsenal of classical political economy.

Thus, it has come about that for decades not only has socialist economics preached to the deaf ears of the propertied classes, but bourgeois economics, to the extent that it once was a real science, has done the same. Unable to comprehend the teachings of their own great forebears, and even less able to accept Marxist teachings which flowed from them and which, moreover, sound the death

knell for bourgeois society the bourgeois professors serve up a tasteless stew made from the leftovers of a hodgepodge of scientific notions and intentional circumlocutions — not intending to explore the real tendencies of capitalism. On the contrary, they try only to send up a smoke screen for the purpose of defending capitalism as the best of all economic orders, and the only possible one.

Forgotten and forsaken by bourgeois society, scientific economics can find its listeners only among class-conscious proletarians, to find among them not only theoretical understanding but also concomitant action. The famous saying of Lassalle is applicable first and foremost to economics: "When science and the workers, these two opposite poles of society, shall embrace, they shall crush in their arms all social obstacles".

"Socialism ceased being a scheme, a pretty fancy, or an experiment carried out in each country by isolated groups of workers, each on its own hook."

Glossary

BABEUF (1760-97): leader of the Conspiracy of Equals, which in 1795 attempted to organise an uprising to introduce a communist society in France. He based himself on the aspirations to equality proclaimed by the French Revolution, and its inability to realise them. He was arrested and guillotined before the uprising could take place.

BLANQUI (1805-81): a continuator of Babeuf who in the course of his long revolutionary career moved closer to the class-struggle socialism of Marx. Scorned utopian schemes; looked to class struggle and political action but still tended to see the conspiratorial organisation of an armed uprising as central to winning socialism.

SAINT-SIMON (1760-1825): coined the idea of socialism involving the transition from the government of people to the administration of things and the organisation of production, i.e. the abolition of repressive state authority. But he identified the working class as including both workers and employers, as against the parasitic and aristocrats.

FOURIER (1772-1837): advocated socialist communities in which work would become attractive rather than oppressive. The first to argue that "in any given society the degree of women's emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation".

OWEN (1771-1858): advocated worker cooperatives and 'labour money' to ensure fair exchange. Stressed, like Saint-Simon, that economic circumstances determine views, habits and character. Marx commented on this view that it "forgets that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, of which one is superior to society". Owen spent time trying to persuade aristocrats and princes to sponsor his socialist communities.

WEITLING (1808-71): preached a sort of Christian socialism, but advocated revolution. Tended to look to the unemployed and semi-proletarians rather than the working class proper.

PROUDHON (1809-65): advocated a society of worker cooperatives linked by 'fair exchange' (and without a state). Very influential among radical French workers in his time.

LOUIS BLANC (1811-82): also advocated cooperatives, but looked to constitutional action and government measures to introduce them.

QUESNAY, BOISGUILLEBERT, ADAM SMITH, RICARDO: early bourgeois economists.

LASSALLE (1825-64): founder of the German workers' movement. Marx was at one time friendly with him, but later clashed with him politically.

The SWP and the general strike: serious revolutionaries or Strikes, slogans and

AGAINST THE STREAM

By Sean Matgamna

Last Friday 19 March Timex bosses failed to get a court order against the trade unionists leading the strike and mass pickets at their Dundee factory.

Part, at least, of the reason for the judge's failure to give the bosses what they wanted must have been the prospect of strikes in solidarity if the order were granted and then the trade unionists were jailed for defying it.

The bosses will be back in court, and next time they may swing the judge their way. Mass strikes will be necessary to free the Timex trade unionists if they are jailed; and now, with industrial militancy reviving, especially in Scotland, those mass strikes are possible too.

Does this turn of events justify those like the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) who started shouting "general strike now!" as soon as the pit closures crisis broke last October? On the contrary! It shows that mass strike movements, and even more so, an all-out general strike, come from the logic of the developing class struggle, not from the sloganising of socialists who use the first demonstrations and rallies as an opportunity to advertise themselves as ultra-militant.

The outcry last October against Michael Heseltine's plan to close 31 pits did mark a turning point in British politics.

Hundreds of thousands marched through the streets in the biggest demonstration in 15 years. Since then, the NUM has been able to mount a great political campaign in a context of sympathy and support. Even the Labour leaders showed

some sign of life on the issue — timid and two-faced to be sure but, for them, nevertheless, remarkable.

Vast public revulsion against brutal callousness expressed general revulsion with what Tory rule has done to Britain. People understood that. Above all, people learned that they are not alone in their loathing of the Tories and their philosophy.

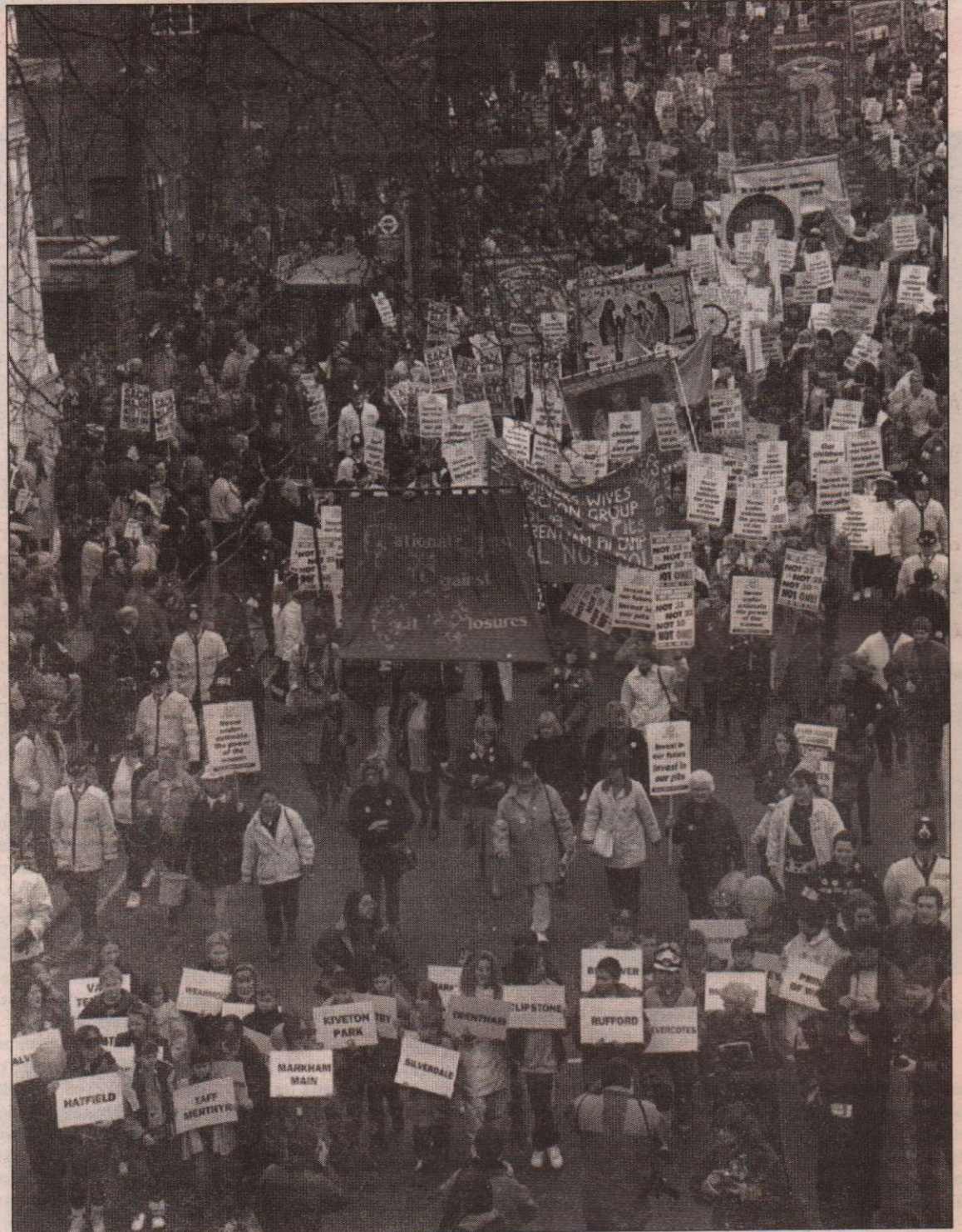
People began to feel that *something could be done*. The climate changed. Though the initial upsurge in October soon died down, political and industrial life settled on to a higher plateau. Since then, workers have been noticeably more ready to fight. The labour movement is slowly regathering its strength, slowly climbing out of the deep depression of the last decade.

Five months on from October it is clear beyond serious dispute that those around *Socialist Worker* (the SWP) who started calling for a "general strike now" even before the big demonstrations had assembled in London were — as we said then — radically off beam.

Within weeks, *Socialist Worker* had dropped the general strike slogan — without any explanation. Last week it was not calling for strikes to back the Timex trade unionists, but only for donations and delegations to the picket line.

The SWP does not allow serious discussion. It has expelled some of its members for daring to say that calling for a general strike made no sense. Nevertheless, discussion continues on the issue in and around the SWP — subterranean, 'illegal', whispered discussion as well as the bluff and bluster "discussions" of the officials who need to gag their opponents to win the arguments.

As a contribution to that discussion we print this letter to a supporter of the SWP on the general strike. It was sent out at the end of October.



"Women Against Pit Closures" march in London on 6 February. The anger against pit closures has led to a long, simmering political campaign not an industrial 'big bang'. Photo: John Harris.

Dear Mick,

OBVIOUSLY WE are "for" a general strike in the same sense as we are for a revolution — something to which a general strike is closely linked, if it is not to be linked to defeat and disaster. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Putting the slogan "general strike", or the perspective, or the goal of "general strike" before the labour movement now is a different question.

If the TUC were to call a general strike now, we would support it *practically* with everything we have, and do our best to minimise the damage, but we would also criticise the decision as being either crazily, suicidally ultra-left, or else a deliberate attempt by the TUC to abort the movement which is just beginning.

For now it is impossible to say whether or not the movement now beginning could, can or will lead to a general strike. For that to be an objective, for it to be something revolutionary Marxists could sensibly advocate — as we rightly advocated general

strike in 1980-1, and again during the 1984-5 miners' strike — the movement now beginning will have to grow into a movement so big that it would in fact be a *different movement*.

"We have to argue for revolutionary realism, and for responsibility towards the labour movement."

Can the slogan "general strike" or "general strike now" help the movement that has just begun to grow into a movement that would be able to see general strike as a serious option? Surely not! Quite the opposite.

It will scare many people. It is no accident that the only "leader of the labour movement" who "calls" for a

general strike is the scab-herder, Neil Gatrex of the UDM. He probably remembers Joe Gormley 'calling' for general strike at the NUM conference in 1973 in an attempt to dissuade the NUM conference from taking on Heath.

I have learned that some miners have taken up the general strike call — not because they felt strong but because they felt their own weakness and thought they could not win without a general strike. One of the things that was noticeable on Wednesday's big demonstration — it was too wet on the Sunday to judge! — was that even miners' groups did not take up the call for "general strike" chanted by clusters of SWPers scattered in the demo (and only by them as far as I could see, watching it go past for two hours).

To those it does not scare, the "general strike now" slogan will appear as utterly unreal — at best as something half a dozen stages from where we are along a favourable course of development. Far better, they will think, and rightly, to focus on concrete achievable things — limited solidarity action, bringing forward other demands, calling for a TUC day of action, etc.

"General strike", "general strike now" is no use here. I repeat: quite the very opposite.

"General strike" is either empty phrasemongering or a proposal to go for a stand-up fight now, or soon — a fight in which either the Government or the TUC will surrender. That is sheer fantasy "now", and in the calculable future.

"Industrial action is not and can not be a substitute for political campaigning."

We should call for "general strike" to "expose" the TUC? The SWP's present antics remind me very much of the '60s and early '70s Socialist Labour League/Workers' Revolutionary Party. For them journalistic "exposure" politics came to loom higher than the class struggle; and they

came in time to mistake their own literary 'exposing' work for real events in the class struggle.

At best this game will 'expose' the TUC to young people with no sense of the labour movement, and to a militant here and there, at the cost of making those of them who take up the SWP slogan talk self-evident nonsense to the serious labour movement.

But then, to be fair to them, the SWP do not try to put forward perspectives for the broad labour movement. These people who would not call on the then much stronger labour movement to do its duty by the miners with a general strike to stop the miners being ground down in 1984-5 raise it now to impress students! Marxists take these matters more seriously.

BUT, YOU SAY, there might be an explosive, spontaneous general strike "from below", and socialists like us should encourage it and try by way of throwing out ideas to evoke it? This is incalculable. The signs are that nothing like that is likely at the moment. In contrast to France where there was a spontaneous eruption in 1968 there is no British tradi-

and sense

tion of such explosions.

In 1972, the 250,000 who struck when five dockers were jailed under anti-union legislation acted after a powerful two-year long TUC/big union campaign against the Tory anti-union laws (preceded by the TUC's 1969 campaign against Labour's anti-union laws "In Place of Strife"). It was a radically different industrial and political world... Yet July 1972 is the only such explosion I know of in modern British labour history.

"We have to be Marxists in the way we use ideas and slogans, not cynical advertising agency or Labour Party-style operatives!"

I repeat: it is possible, but incalculable.

Anything like that is, anyway, quite a few stages away from where we are now! "General strike" will only confuse the forces now active and pushing in that direction; it will frighten, repel, miseducate, and therefore, it is no help in helping developments towards a general industrial confrontation. (It is *politically* disorientating, too, but I'll come back to that).

For all these reasons, socialists can not do as you urge us to do and seek to merge into the SWP current — and that is what it is, I believe, only an SWP "current". We have to argue for sense and *revolutionary* realism, and for *responsibility* towards the labour movement.

We have to try and teach the young people miseducated by the pseudo-revolutionary phrasemongering to think — about politics, about the labour movement and about the role of revolutionaries.

We have to explain to them that a revolutionary TUC would *not* now go for the "big bang" of a general strike, but would develop the labour movement by way of limited, political movements, industry linkages, days of action, and perhaps at a later stage one day general strikes.

We have to give them a sense of the real labour movement *evolving and developing and reviving*, of the *evolutionary basis of the Marxist notion of revolution*, including — most of the time — revolutions in the consciousness of the working class. *As part of the left*, we have to teach them not to follow slogan-mongers, but to turn to the labour movement (including the political labour movement).

WE HAVE TO teach them hostility to the SWP *bureaucrats* who raise and drop 'left' slogans like the Comintern in the early '30s did — in pre-Hitler Germany for instance — with its commands from the centre imposed without reference to the tempo of events in the class, for Stalinist, sectarian goals.

It is a characteristic of the SWP now, as it was of the SLL (when it was still a — degenerate — political organisation) in the '60s that its

"ultra leftism" is not organic, not the spontaneous gut feeling of young people (though it appeals to and exploits such people) but *an attempt to extend the internal regime of bureaucratic command and arbitrariness by which the leaders relate to the members of "the Party" outwards to the class.*

I've always found Trotsky's comments on this peculiar feature of Third Period Stalinist ultra-leftism very illuminating. The people who raise slogans like the call for the "general strike" with the calculations of an advertising agency executive and the single-mindedness of a sailor setting sails to catch the wind are equally capable of veering sharply "to the right" tomorrow, if their calculations indicate such a turn.

Taken with the fact that they were impervious to the call for a general strike when the miners needed their political support for such a call, this crazy turn proves that they do not regulate their affairs and activities by the class struggle, or by the needs of the labour movement. *We do.* And we have to be Marxists in the way we use ideas and slogans, not cynical advertising agency — or Labour Party-style — operatives!

It is, I suppose, a tangent, but I will tell you of my first experience of Tony Cliff [SWP leader] and the general strike, back in 1969. It was the Easter conference [of the SWP (then called International Socialists)] at Beaver Hall. The group was effervescent, still democratic, full of genuinely ultra radical young people who rightly hated the Labour government and the Labour Party.

We needed a line on the coming general election. Should we — could we? — now, after everything, just say "vote Labour"? An awful lot of people — me included — thought that you simply could not just blandly do that after years of right-wing Labour government. It was necessary to discuss things, work out a 'line'.

Discussion was heated, and very chaotic. Then Cliff was called to speak. The Hall was like a large lecture theatre with tiers of seats rising up from a sort of stage, and Cliff came down the steps at a little run. Clutching a sheaf of papers in his hand, he grabbed the microphone very "militantly" and shouted: "Comrades, this is an *unnecessary* discussion! We don't need it! What will we do in the election? How will we tell people to vote? We'll tell them voting is a blinking waste of time! A waste of time! Instead of an election we will tell them they need a general strike! We'll call for a general strike, that's what we'll do when they call an election".

Thunderous applause... The French general strike had been nine months earlier.

What did the SWP do in the election? What they have done in all elections since — contradicting everything said for four or five years — call for a Labour vote!

We have a different approach...

SO FAR I HAVE considered general strike in isolation from 'politics'. The push for a concentration by the left on calling for general strike is a push away from politics and towards a syndicalism that is three parts fantasy.

For years the SWP has been in the uncomfortable position of being an organisation with an essentially syndicalist notion of 'politics' in a world with few strikes. Everything has

pointed to 'politics', but they have resisted, unless you count a flaccid pro-Labour line in the general election.

Now the first stirrings of life in the class serves them an excuse for a new, apolitical, pseudo-syndicalist fantasy. Up from the very depths of working class prostration straight to a general strike — at the call of a petty bourgeois organisation 3 or 4,000 strong — in one bound! Essentially it is for them a fantasy "solution" to their political problems. Politics? No — general strike!

In fact, even if we now set the goal as a general strike the way to it would have to be through broad political agitation against the Tories — including calls to kick the Tories out, for a general election and so on.

So far the movement against pit closures has been a *political movement*. I think that is good. This turn of the tide against the Tories and against the "political economy of the bourgeoisie", together with the growth of revulsion with Thatcherism and marketism is of immense value to socialism and to the working class movement. The shock of the brute Tory closure policy should be given time to reverberate politically.

The militancy of *even the miners themselves in their own cause* has received a great — and maybe even an irreplaceable — boost from the general horror and sympathy around them. We need to build on this, linking it with issues like the health service and the homeless. For this we need *politics*. We need a political campaign: industrial action should be linked with such a political campaign.

Industrial action — unless it is a revolutionary general strike that *shatters the Tories and puts the working class in power*; and that is a tall order now — *is not and can not be a substitute for such political campaigning*.

We need to walk on two legs now — industrial action, combined with politics.

"Everything has pointed to 'politics', but the SWP have abstained, unless you count a flaccid pro-Labour line in the general election."

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty stands for a broad labour movement campaign linking industrial action and politics together in perspectives for action by the broad labour movement. By contrast, the SWP now is trying to make a campaign for a — fantasy — industrial action into a substitute for this necessary political dimension of working class politics.

An organisation that responds with such mindless and deeply irresponsible slogan-mongering to the first signs of labour movement revival does not have, and does not deserve, a political future. You should try and do something about it, Mick!

Yours,

Sean Matgamna

Menstruation and the human cultural revolution

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

WHEN CHRIS Knight wrote in *SO* last year that synchronised menstruation coupled with a Stone Age sex strike had given birth to human culture some 5,000 years ago, many readers may have found this rather difficult to swallow. This was particularly so when the only evidence submitted was the tendency for the menstrual cycle of women living in close quarters to become synchronised.

Knight, a Marxist formerly associated with the Chartist group and an anthropologist, fills out his argument to a considerable degree in his 500 plus page tome, *Blood Relations*. Despite the many interesting points he makes, I remain to be convinced.

In quite a disarming way, Knight admits that his purpose is to create a sort of Marxist "origin myth" to combat what he sees as "politically-motivated" (capitalist origin) myths based on concepts such as "Man the Hunter" or "The Selfish Gene". In this task he seeks to harness the science of animal behaviour, sociobiology, hitherto much attacked by those on the left who see any explanation of behaviour in terms of genes as inherently anti-socialist.

The problems facing the anthropologist in this field are substantial: the behavioural and cultural differences between humans and our nearest relatives, the chimpanzees, are enormous. And this is despite a 97% similarity between our DNAs! The differences with other primates, the group of which ourselves and monkeys are members, are even greater.

Humans of our type arose some 130,000 years ago, and Knight estimates that our surviving linguistic and cultural traditions can be traced back perhaps 15,000 to 90,000 years. No doubt, these are much changed, but the drift of Knight's argument is that enough survives to give us clues to the origin of our culture. I find that difficult to accept without corroborative

physical evidence. Unfortunately, that is almost entirely lacking.

As a Marxist, Knight is primed to look for class explanations for the origins of human development and, in common with other Marxist and feminist thinkers, sees the first class division as a sexual one. It is rare in other primate species for the males to play a significant role in the feeding of the young and yet in humans this is quite common. How did this come about?

Knight sees hunting for meat as a crucial element in this and he asks how it was that women were able to force men to share their kills with the women and children.

Here he brings in the fact of the synchronisability of menstrual cycles and suggest the idea of the sex-for-meat strike. In this model, women living in matrilineal clans, would have been sexually available to adult male hunters who would have supplied meat to these clans (though not themselves mem-

"Could this cultural evolution have been sparked off by a struggle for a mainly luxury commodity?"

bers of them).

There are several problems with this theory. Firstly, with the ability of menstrual cycles to become synchronised. When and why did this evolve? Things do not evolve because they are going to be useful. And how important is it? Are menstrual cycles synchronised in modern hunter-gatherer societies?

Secondly, why the importance of meat? Most of the food in modern hunter-gatherer societies is collected by women. Could this cultural evolution have been sparked off by a struggle for a mainly luxury commodity? If meat was that important, why could not women look for it as well?

It would be difficult for anyone to answer these questions. The question for Chris Knight is not so much "Did it happen" but "Could it happen?" (I will look at his arguments in more detail next time).

* *Blood relations: menstruation and the origins of culture*, Yale UP 1991, £40.

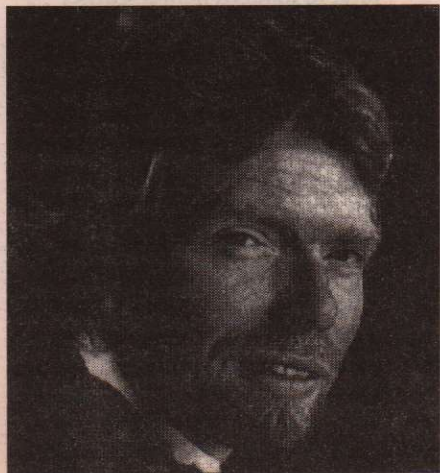
How capitalists divide the spoils

Rosa Luxemburg wrote the best short summary of the gist of Volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital*, in a section she contributed to Franz Mehring's book *Karl Marx*. Last week we printed her sketch of Volume 2. This week: her explanation of one of the chief issues in volume 3 — how, through the normal processes of the market, surplus value gets expressed as profits proportional to industrial capital, as rent and interest, and as the profits of wholesalers and retailers.



WHEN PROFIT has been turned and is being turned in increasing measure into money, the great problem now arises of how to distribute the booty. Many different groups of capitalists put forward their demands. Apart from the employer there is the merchant, the loan capitalist and the landowner. Each of these has done his share to make possible the exploitation of the wage-worker and the sale of the commodities produced by the latter, and each now demands his share of the profit. This distribution of profit is a much more complicated affair than it might appear to be on the surface, for even amongst the employers themselves big differences exist, according to the type of undertaking, in the profits obtained, so to speak, fresh from the factory.

In one branch of production commodities are produced and sold quickly, and capital plus the normal addition returns to the undertaking in a short space of time. Under such circumstances business and profits are made rapidly. In other branches of production capital is held fast in production for years and yields profit only after a long time. In some branches of production the employer must invest the greater part of his capital in lifeless means of production, in buildings, expensive machinery, etc., i.e. in things which yield no profit on their own account no matter how necessary they may be for profit-making. In other branches of production



Richard Branson — each capitalist demands his share of the spoils

Some factories have a lot of their capital tied up in machinery, and relatively little for wages. How does the fact that they get a similar rate of profit to business with little fixed capital square with the labour theory of value?

the employer need invest very little of his capital in such things and can use the greater part of it for the employment of workers, each of whom represents the industrious goose that lays the golden egg for the capitalist.

Thus in the process of profit-making big differences develop as between the individual capitalists, and in the eyes of bourgeois society these differences represent a much more urgent "injustice" than the peculiar "exchange" which takes place between the capitalist and the worker. The problem is to come to some arrangement which will ensure a "just" division of the spoils, whereby each capitalist gets "his share", and what is more, it is a problem which has to be solved without any conscious and systematic plan, because distribution in present-day society is as anarchic as production. There is in fact no "distribution" at all in the sense of a social measure and what takes place is solely exchange, commodity circulation, buying and selling. How therefore does unregulated commodity exchange permit each individual exploiter and each category of exploiters to obtain that share of the wealth produced by the labour-power of the proletariat which is his or its "right" in the eyes of capitalist society?

Marx gives the answer to this question in the third volume of *Capital*. In the first volume he deals with the production of

capital and lays bare the secret of profit-making. In the second volume he describes the movement of capital between the factory and the market, between the production and consumption of society. And in the third volume he deals with the distribution of the profit amongst the capitalist class as a whole. And all the time he proceeds from the basis of the three fundamental principles of capitalist society: firstly, that everything that happens in capitalist society is not the result of arbitrary forces, but the result of definite and regularly operating laws, although these laws are unknown to the capitalists themselves; secondly, that economic relations in

"In the second and third volumes ... Department stores, banks, the stock exchanges, finance take up the foreground."

capitalist society are not based on violence, robbery and cheating; and, thirdly, that no social reason is at work controlling the movements of society as a whole. He analyses and systematically lays bare one after the other all the phenomena and all the relations of the capitalist economic system exclusively on the basis of the exchange mechanism of capitalist society, i.e. the law of value and the surplus-value which results from it.

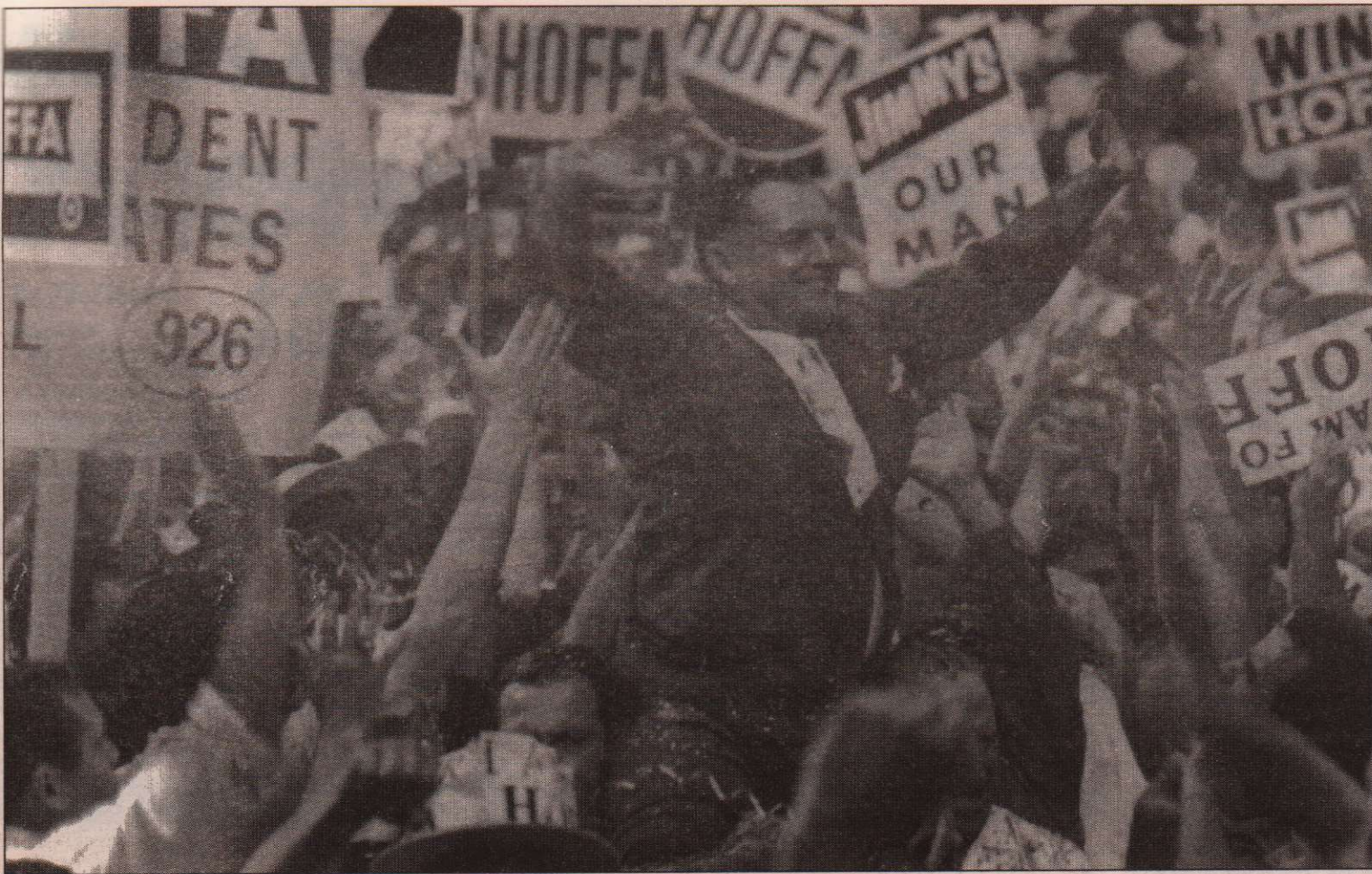
Taking his great work as a whole we can say that the first volume, which develops the law of value, wages and surplus-value, lays bare the foundations of present-day society, whilst the second and third volumes show us the house which is based on these foundations. Or, to use a different comparison, we can say that the first volume shows us the heart of the social

organism, which generates the living sap, whilst the second and third volumes show us the circulation of the blood and the nourishment of the body from the centre out to the cutaneous cells.

In the second and third volumes we are on the surface, on the official stage of society. Department stores, banks, the stock exchanges, finance and the trouble of the "needy" agriculturalists take up the foreground. The worker has no role on this stage, and in fact he shows little interest in the things which happen behind his back after he has been skinned. We see the workers in the noisy mob of business people only when they troop off to the factories in the grey light of the early morning or hurry home again in the dusk when the factories eject them in droves after the day's work.

At first glance therefore it may not be clear why the workers should concern themselves with the private worries of the capitalists and with the squabbles which take place over the division of the spoils. However, both the second and the third volumes are as necessary to a thorough understanding of present day economic mechanism as is the first volume. It is true that they do not play the same decisive and fundamental historic role for the modern working class movement as the first volume does, but nevertheless they offer a wealth of insight into the workings of capitalism which is invaluable to the intellectual equipment of the proletariat in the practical struggle for its emancipation.

Next week's excerpt: Rosa Luxemburg provides two examples of why Volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital* are worth studying: she solves the riddle of the average rate of profit and she takes a look at a very popular, but wrong, left-wing attitude to explanation of crisis.



The Hoffa of the film: a workers' champion

Captive in capitalism

Cinema

Thomas Macara reviews
Hoffa

"HOFFA" IS a type of film which is now as rare as pro-black movies once were. It is a Hollywood film about class in American capitalist society.

Rarer still: its viewpoint is strongly, if sometimes perversely, that of the working class. A sense of class, and of class oppression and even of working-class captivity, pervades the film, brooding over it, infecting even the landscape.

Most of the setpiece Acts or Scenes into which David Mamet's screenplay dissects this version of the life of James Hoffa, one-time leader of America's nearly two million strong Teamsters' (truck-drivers') union, seem to take place against a background of icy roads, banked snow, lowering skies or driving rain. There is even a sense in it of class hatred and of working-class will to fight the big and little tyrants of American factories, warehouses, ports and roadways — the class hate and the class will which produced the modern American labour movement.

In one savagely brutal scene, strikers fight cops, scabs and vigilantes in a battle with fists and clubs which rages across an entire square. The camera focuses intermittently on a terrified, tearful, hungry boy of six or seven caught in the melee — and then, as the camera takes its leave of the scene, we are in a boardroom commanding the square, behind a senior police officer standing with grim and silent men in expensive suits who have been watching the battle from on high like ruling princes or gods.

The same sense of class antagonism, naked and abusive, is there, spitting and clawing, in the two big scenes between Hoffa and Robert Kennedy, who, as Attorney General, hounded him.

Kennedy, young, shallow, a man

who has had everything given to him, is out to make a name for himself. The life of American workers is as foreign to him as the life of the Eskimos. Hoffa the truck-driver snarls at his tormenter that he couldn't even get a job without his father's \$200 million and his brother's incumbency in the White House! And yet it is the callous millionaire's son who wins in the end.

In the film the workers respond to Hoffa as to a tribune of the plebs. He is their champion. As he goes to jail, his prison van passes through a long double line of parked trucks, their drivers cheering and honking horns to cheer him up.

This Hoffa is, and knows himself to be, the champion of the oppressed in

"This is a powerful drama about a mythic Labour leader, not history. But it is based on history, some of it very closely."

a world run by and for their oppressors. He says at one point: "I want justice, not law". He doesn't care about *their* rules and *their* laws.

With the persistent force of a half-wild bull, Hoffa blasts out a militant stop-at-nothing spirit of defiance and intransigence. There is *them* and there is *us*. His attitude is that of a revolutionary — but a revolutionary who has had his political eyes put out. Hoffa struggles against exploitation and oppression, and for better wages and conditions — in a society that will never change. Everything in this world is bleak and grim, brutal and savage. Capitalism is forever. All the workers can hope to do is climb "into the middle class".

This Hoffa is Spartacus, Big Bill

Haywood, a Wobbly travelling organiser, or Jim Larkin — an elemental force evoking and organising revolt. But this is Jim Larkin up to his knees — and sometimes up to his neck — in corruption, in the shit and offal of mid 20th century America's Imperial Republic.

His first contact with the Mafia comes in negotiations to get strike-breaking Mafia goons off the back of embattled Teamsters. Hoffa buys them off with a promise that Teamsters' drivers will let them steal from their trucks. He links up with the armed gangsters on the illegal underside of capitalism the better to fight the armed gangsters — police, National Guard, vigilantes — who break drivers' heads on behalf of the "legitimate" ruling capitalists.

Anything goes in this war. Eventually, after serving a jail sentence, he has to appeal to the Mafia, who now decide union affairs, to "give me back the union". Now he is a threat: they blow his brains out. They don't need him any more. The imported mercenaries have made themselves masters of the country whose rulers sent for them as their protectors against other mercenaries.

This is a splendid, powerful drama, about a mythic labour leader, not history. But it is based on history, some of it very closely.

The real Jimmy Hoffa started his union life helping Trotskyists like Farrell Dobbs organise long-distance drivers. He ended his life as an associate of gangsters, and a man whose union bought his release from jail by throwing its political support behind Richard Nixon.

That life embodied and epitomised one of the two choices that lay before the US labour movement in the 1930s — the reformist option of living within capitalism, winning the best deal the workers could beg, beat, or blackmail out of the bosses and the bosses' government. The only other option was a fight to overthrow capitalism by way of a socialist revolution.

The "gangster" option, for all its

colourful detail, was one variant of the reformist option — a version which, disregarding the rules and laws of the dominant exploiters, incorporated a perversion of part of the revolutionary option.

The testing time for the Teamsters came as the US prepared to go into the Second World War. The union boss, Daniel J Tobin, called in his friends in the Roosevelt administration to help him reclaim control of the Minneapolis local from the Trotskyists who had done so much to build the union. (Farrell Dobbs, who organised the unionisation drive in ten states, had become the administrative secretary of the Trotskyist party). The leaders of the Minneapolis teamsters' union and of the Trotskyist SWP were tried and jailed.

As Hoffa goes to jail on the big screen, I could not help remembering pictures I have seen of the 16 Trotskyists and union militants marching off to jail. These were the alternative to both Tobin and Hoffa. They relied on workers' defence squads to fight the company goons, not on other goons. They would have won but for the treachery of the then-powerful Communist Party USA — but that is another story.

The real Hoffa, a trade union bureaucrat to his shoe soles, backed Tobin in gangster and other tactics against the revolutionaries in the trade union.

The politics of the film — if translated from the mythic dimensions of the film to the real world — are gamey here and there, too. Robert Kennedy was indeed a snotty-nosed rich kid on the make; but the liberal-democratic bourgeois state, with an approximation to the rule of law, was better than gangster rule of the union with which the real Hoffa was associated.

Last year the rank and file Teamsters successfully used the bourgeois courts to defeat the incumbent gangsters, the heirs of Hoffa in the union.

"Hoffa" — as myth, not as history — has great power and force. A fine film. See it.

A drop in standards

Television

By Lizzie Salt

SOONER OR later they let you down, don't they? No, I mean TV programmes. "Drop the Dead Donkey" (DDD) did it to me last Friday, 19th.

Here's a programme that satirises the news-doctoring and opinion-forming industry, and does it splendidly. Weak editors, corrupt executives, Murdoch-style proprietors, greedy ambition-maddened reporters, journalistic couplings and blending with showbiz — it's all there, very funny, but with an acid-truthful undertaste.

"Damien", the super-slimy reporter who rigs and fakes his stories, may yet give British English a new word, to go with "bowdlerise" and "Mrs Grundy" — "to do a Damien", meaning to fake or concoct. Great stuff.

And what happened last Friday? DDD went and turned itself into a part of the political lie machine!

The programme, recorded as late as possible, tries for maximum topicality. Occasionally it has a "celebrity guest". Last Friday that was its undoing.

The celebrity guest was none other than the former leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, who was presenting the awards at some journalistic ceremony. All right, he might.

But then Damien, feeling that he has been cheated of an award by an even slimmer rival, Lynn — she has spread the tale that he faked one of the few stories that in fact he hadn't faked — gets drunk, and more and more bitter. Eventually he goes up to her, in a group including Kinnock, and gives her a John Wayne style sock on the jaw.

In the flash of an eye Kinnock has Damien pinned helplessly against the wall.

All right, he might. Remember those press stories of tough-guy Neil beating up yobs? But in a programme dedicated to telling the truth about modern British journalism through symbol, caricature, and satire, this is a gross piece of falsification.

Kinnock never played action-man with the media, or with any part of it. He played the coward, the sneak, and the toadying, timid wimp. In his years as leader of the Labour Party, he let the press bully him and dictate to him.

Remember Kinnock in the miners' strike? And when the press lords were carving up Fleet Street, and during the savage police violence against newspaper trade unionists at Wapping, Kinnock sided with Rupert Murdoch's and Mrs Thatcher's thug-gish "forces of law and order".

A truthful satirical depiction of Kinnock's real relationship with the real capitalist media would have Kinnock offering to hold big bully Damien's coat, or dusting him down afterwards — possibly from a kneeling position — or lapping the spilled drinks off Damien's expensive shoes.

ORGANISING

Why you should be a socialist

WE 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 to productivity and profitability.

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

FROM THAT COMES the cultural blight and barbarism of our society force-fed on profitable pap. From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" in 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 principle of profitable 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 produce societies like Britain's 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 this society of ours where the rich, who — through their servants and agents — hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a mental condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and prevent real democratic self-control developing within the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence — whatever they need to use. They have used fascist gangs when they needed to, and they will use them again, if necessary.

A GAINST 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 full 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 and should 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; we back 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. We are deep in the worse capitalist slump for 60 years.

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: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Building the Alliance for Workers' Liberty: The secret weapon of the socialist

Against the great wealth of the bourgeoisie and the power and financial strength of the labour movement's own entrenched bureaucracy, revolutionary socialists begin with nothing but their own commitment to socialism and the will to fight for it. Serious activists are people who organise their lives around the struggle for socialism. Leon Trotsky here explains the spirit in which socialists work semi-miracles such as the production and circulation of papers like *Socialist Organiser*, despite general material poverty and the active hostility of the official bourgeois society in which we operate.

IN PARIS DURING the war we published a daily paper beginning with a capital of thirty francs (\$8.00), and we published it for almost three years. How? We had three devoted comrades in a printing shop, and they worked it. When we had money, we paid them. When we had no money, they waited for better times. I believe that at least our young

comrades should make the same effort, not only to have a central printing shop in New York, but one in every important region, such as we had in Tsarist Russia in every important town. We must have such printing shops if we have nothing else. For example, our English comrades now have their own printing shop, but to have such a printing shop with two or

three devoted comrades, we can put out not only the *Socialist Appeal* at least twice a week, but also pamphlets, leaflets, etc. The trouble is that the party work is too much based on petty-bourgeois conceptions.

We must educate our youth for more of a spirit of sacrifice. We already have so many young bureaucrats in our movement. For example the *Challenge* needs \$300. If they lack it, good, they wait. That is not the revolutionary way. It is a very opportunistic policy, far more opportunistic than advocating a labour party. You know that the reason we don't have the revolution is because the workers are held back by bourgeois prejudices — democratic prejudices. We don't have these prejudices, but in the matter of approaching practical

things we have the bourgeois manner. It is very useful for the bourgeois class.

The American workers consider it a degradation not to have a Ford, fine clothes, for they think they must do the same as the bourgeois. It is disgraceful to imitate the upper class. We Marxists understand this very well. Absolutely bad, in a revolutionary situation particularly. But in practical methods we act the same way. We don't have the revolutionary courage to break this tradition, to break the bourgeois norms of conduct and set up our own rules of moral duty, etc. This is especially true for youth, and it is extremely important, not only to educate themselves theoretically, but to educate themselves as militants, as men and women.

Leon Trotsky, July 1938

Alliance for Workers' Liberty public meetings

Thurs 25 March

"Police brutality — what's the answer?"

Nottingham Youth Fightback
12.15 People's College, Carlton Road site.

Friday 26 March

"Police brutality — what's the answer?"

Nottingham Youth Fightback
12.15 Peoples' College, Maid Marion Way site.

"Malcolm X — the facts not the fiction"

Monwearmouth College AWL
1.15 Shiney Row Centre.

Weds 31 March

"Labour Must Fight"

Merseyside AWL
7.30 Wallasey Unemployed Centre, Seaview Road.

Thurs 1 April

"Labour Must Fight"

Nottingham AWL meeting
7.30. The Peacock pub, Mansfield Road.

Weds 7 April

"Labour Must Fight"

Manchester AWL meeting.
8.00 Manchester Town Hall.

"Should we Clintonise the Labour Party"

Labour Must Fight debate John McTiernan.
7.30 Walworth Old Town Hall, Walworth Road.

Thurs 8 April

"Youth, crime and the Tories"

Sheffield AWL meeting.
8.00 SCCAU, West Street.

AWL weekend school

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 April

"An introduction to Marxism"

hosted by:
Newcastle AWL.
Details: 091-284 6347.

Weds 31 March

"Meet Mark Serwotka"

Birkenhead
5.30. TGWU Building.

Weds 7 April

CPSA Presidential campaign meeting.

Manchester Town Hall.
6.00. Speaker: Mark Serwotka.

Anti-deportation

Sat 3 April

Defend the Rahman Family demonstration. Assemble 12.30 Sunninghall School, Bolton. Details: 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1 1DY.

Yugoslavia

Friday 25 March

END meeting. Speakers from Bosnian and Croatian peace campaigns. 7.00 Friends' Meeting House, Euston Road, London.

Labour Party

Sat 17 April

Socialist Campaign Group Conference. 11.00-5.00 Sheffield Hallam University. Details: Jeremy Corbyn MP, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7

INDUSTRIAL

Notes from the North

A change in mood

By Jim Kearns

THE LAST two months have seen some significant developments in the Scottish labour movement.

January began with a determined offensive by the Scottish Engineering Employers on jobs and conditions.

The initial battle went badly for the workers. At Hoover in Cambuslang the employers had been threatening mass redundancies if the workers did not accept a draconian attack on their conditions. At the end of January, AEEU official Jimmy Airlie signed the disgraceful deal and the workforce went down to serious defeat without a

fight.

The position could have got worse right across Scottish engineering immediately after the Hoover deal. The employers were confident after their initial success, expecting little or no resistance. With the unions safely in the hand of sell-out bureaucrats like Airlie and the levels of mass unemployment, they concluded that the workers would be a passive factor in the equation.

And how wrong they proved to be.

Almost simultaneously with the Hoover sell out, 1,300 workers came out on strike at Yarrow's Shipyards. After years of redundancies and attacks on

working conditions the workers decided that enough was enough. With the bosses making vast profits the workers struck for a wage rise. What is most significant however is that they came out and stayed out for four weeks consistently against the recommendations of their national officials and senior stewards.

After the threat of mass sackings and pressure from the union leaders, including the stewards at the workplace, the workers returned on the basis of a slightly improved offer.

The workers did not win a victory, nor were they decisively defeated, and management know that things at the factory

have changed. As the workers went back they made it plain that they would soon be out again if the bosses tried to play dirty after the strike.

Next door to Yarrow's is Albion Motors. Albion is the plant that makes chassis for Leyland-DAF. Against all expectations the workers voted overwhelmingly for strike action to save their jobs. This was clearly a reflection of a desire to fight, unfortunately it was not to be replicated at other plants.

At Timex, the management, after initially coming to a settlement regarding redundancies, quite clearly went on the offensive in exactly the same manner

as Hoover. All in all, the attack amounted to a wage cut of 15%. The workers attempted to return to work to fight from within, they were locked out and all were sacked.

What emerges quite clearly is that the employers after the Hoover debacle were coming up against determined resistance and a willingness to fight from the rank and file.

The tenacity and the combativity from sections of the Scottish working class, who for over a decade have suffered huge losses due to the decline and subsequent restructuring of Scottish capitalism have been remarkable. The most recent employers' offensive can be

defeated and Timex can represent a turning point.

It is now time for the labour movement to shake off the depression that holds it back and stop the employers' offensive dead in its tracks. The Scottish TUC has a central role to play in this battle and its initial response in support of the Timex workers has been encouraging.

If any of the leaders of the Timex strikers are jailed then the labour movement must respond with a day of action that will bring Scotland to a halt.

The mood is changing, the fight is on. With some leadership the tide can be turned.

Market Testing: fight for strike action!

By Mark Serwotka (CPSA DHSS SEC member and presidential candidate)

THE government are pushing ahead with plans to contract out large numbers of jobs throughout the DHSS. Typists and those in accommodation services are immediately under threat. In Lancashire Central Benefits Branch typists have already staged a walk out in protest at contracting out plans.

The Broad Left majority on the DHSS Section Executive Committee put forward plans for a widespread Section-wide campaign, to include members' meetings. This was

refused funding by the right-wing controlled National Disputes Committee on the grounds that it would replicate the (virtually non-existent) national campaign.

We must be clear that where the right-wing national leadership will not act, or will

not allow us to act, we must launch unofficial campaigns and argue with members for the need to take strike action to defeat Market testing.

In the DHSS the Broad Left must organise an awareness campaign beginning with a one-day Section-wide

strike on 2 April alongside the miners. Where other Sections are organising strike action, we must work together.

It is vital that the DHSS SEC does not allow the grip of the right wing to become an excuse for inactivity.

NALGO rallies against Sheffield wage cut

OPPOSITION to the 3.25% wage cut agreed by all the manual and craft and white collar unions representing workers at Sheffield City council is beginning to surface among other NALGO activists across the country.

The NALGO Yorkshire and Humberside District Local Government Committee agreed to oppose "branches exchanging pay or conditions for short term

guarantees of no compulsory redundancies", in the wake of the Sheffield deal.

It also agreed to call on NALGO nationally to instruct all branches that 'pay cut deals' contravene national NALGO policy.

The majority of shop stewards in Sheffield NALGO have opposed pay cuts all along and five of the shop stewards' committees have agreed to send a

protest letter to NALGO News. Activists in NALGO are clear where the blame for the pay cuts lies - Paul Hudson, Sheffield branch executive officer and NEC member is the architect of the deal. He first won the branch to the idea of fighting pay cuts when faced with compulsory redundancies at the 1987 AGM. He deserves to be totally discredited within the national union.

Scots miners will be solid

Although the miners' ballot result is a significant step forward in the campaign to save the coal industry, the Scottish miners voted 2 to 1 against the action. The Scottish NUM have refused to support the National Miners' Support Network and have made a number of criticisms of Arthur Scargill and the national campaign.

Phil Cowan, a miner at Longannet colliery, Scotland's last working pit, spoke to *Socialist Organiser*.

DURING THE ballot for a rolling programme of 24 hour stoppages, the recommendation from the delegates' meeting was for a yes vote. What

normally happens in that situation is that every area representative who was at the delegates' conference should campaign for the yes vote in their own areas. That didn't happen in Scotland, although to listen to some people you would think they ran a major campaign! There was no active campaign for the stoppage in Scotland and I think this was the main reason for the poor vote in Scotland. Of the 1,200 miners currently at Longannet, only 37% voted yes compared to over 60% nationally. Despite the setbacks we have endured in Scotland, I think the action will still be 100% solid.

George Bolton, Scottish President of the NUM, has confirmed that publicly. I'm still very opti-

mistic that the Scottish miners will come out to a man. It has been disappointing that the Scottish NUM has failed to endorse the National Miners' Support Network and the other initiatives from the national executive. This has made local support work here very difficult.

However, it is essential that local support work is done, linking with activists in other unions and keeping the public profile high.

Nationally, with the railway workers balloting for industrial action and the miners' result other unions could follow the lead. This didn't happen in 1984-5 and we have a great chance now.

There is also more public support than during the strike — the two massive demonstrations pro-

vided a focal point for many other protests to the Tories: unemployed, post office workers, rail workers all there in support of one another. We have to keep that momentum going because we will not win by means of the 24 hour stoppages alone. Massive public support and solidarity action by other workers is the key to victory.

The arguments over uneconomic pits have been won in Scotland. If we had the same subsidy as the gas and nuclear generating industries then we could give our coal away free and still make a profit! The Tories' arguments have been discredited. It's up to us to organise our action and provide the solidarity action and support that will win the dispute.

European law can slow Tory

contracting-out but not stop it

By a civil servant

IT'S AN OLD film cliché that just when things are at their most bleak the hero (or more rarely the heroine) bursts in and saves the day. With contracting out threatening tens of thousands of jobs, the union bureaucracies are desperately hoping that European law will save the day.

TUPE (Transfers of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations) is the British translation of an EC directive which is meant to protect workers' conditions. Where TUPE applies, if workers from organisation A have transferred to organisation B, then their pay and general conditions must remain the same on day one in the new organisation as they were in the previous organisation.

Although TUPE has been on the books since 1981, only in the last 2 years or so have the unions begun to take much interest in it.

This is partly because the Tories translated the EC directive in such a narrow way that it appeared not to apply to contracting out or "market testing" in the public sector. Nearly 200,000 workers were transferred to the private sector before somebody realised that TUPE may indeed cover those areas.

It is disgraceful that despite advice in 1981 that TUPE could be used to protect workers' conditions, that the national officials have only recently woken up to this fact.

Recent European Court of Justice cases have meant that TUPE covers most areas to be Market Tested. As a result of EC pressure the Tories have been forced to put in a clause in the 1993 trade unions bill which will extend TUPE to the entire public sector.

For the national officials the argument goes like this. TUPE prevents private sector companies undercutting public sector existing pay and conditions.

As these companies make profits from cutting wages, they won't bid for public sector work, therefore Market Testing is doomed.

Through legal action COHSE have managed to bring Compulsory Competi-

tive Tendering to a halt in the NHS in Wales, for instance.

For most unions, however, TUPE remains a convenient smoke screen to hide their own inactivity — the civil service unions CPSA and NUCPS, for instance.

In almost every CPSA or NUCPS circular TUPE is mentioned and the government is threatened with legal action. On the ground, getting legal advice, let alone legal action, is not so easy. Despite all their bluster, most unions are actually putting their faith in winning 'in-house' bids. That means taking the initiative in suggesting ways in which workers can cut their own terms and conditions so as to keep their jobs.

If the bureaucracies were really serious about using the law, they would set up a TUC legal fund to vigorously pursue every possible TUPE claim. Recent European Court rulings mean that workers who have been forcibly transferred to the private sector and had their wages cut can sue for lost wages.

In addition this TUC fund could be used to sue the government over narrowly translating the EC directive in the first place. Again recent European Courts of Justice rulings have opened the way to do this.

But for the national officials the law is only useful when they want something to counterpose to strike action.

Legal action can buy time for workers. However, it would be naive to believe that legal action alone will be sufficient to reverse the entire course of government strategy in the public sector.

If the need arises, the Tories will defy the law and then they will make new ones. The Tories desperately need to reduce "labour costs" in the public sector. That is why they are so keen on contracting-out. They can therefore be expected to find ways round TUPE if it really does have the effect on their plans that some legal experts have predicted.

In the end the best way to defeat the Tories will be through mobilising workers and organising industrial action.

TUC Women's Conference backs miners

The TUC Women's Conference was visited by Women Against Pit Closures who were given a standing ovation.

During the discussion of the TUC's plans for 'Jobs and Recovery' several delegates spoke of the need to stand firm with the miners on 2 April and for the TUC not to squander the massive public support from working-class people who are sick of this government's heartless economic policies. TUC Women

said — it's time for action!

Low Pay

Delegates debating the increase in casualisation and low pay told John Major to keep his classless society.

The delegate from the Union of Knitwear and Allied Trades told of wages of £106 a week for 60 hours. Other delegates spoke of how lower wages do not mean more jobs. The calls for protection in law of part-time, temporary and casual staff were

overwhelmingly carried.

Sunday Trading

The debate on Sunday trading showed the hypocrisy of the Tory government. They are prepared to let retail businesses break the law and run-down workers' wages, whilst trade unionists taking industrial action are penalised.

The increase in Sunday working was a trend in industries other than retail. A delegate

from the NCU spoke of the threat of compulsory Sunday working for thousands of Telecom workers.

Threats to Welfare State

Delegates voted for equalisation of the pension age to 60, criticised the government's Child Support act and called for the principle of universal benefits to be upheld.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Railworkers vote yes to strike

Build the links, strike together!

By a railworker

THE railworkers' union RMT has voted 26,000 to 16,000 for a series of one-day strikes. This is the best news for a long time. It has been achieved despite the absence of any real campaign from the RMT leadership. Many railworkers didn't know a ballot was going on until presented with their ballot paper.

It shows an undercurrent wanting a fight in the face of a continuing onslaught on jobs, pay and conditions and negotiating rights carried out to prepare for privatisation.

Now we have the result it must be used. The miners have declared 2 April as the day of a national strike against pit closures. Scargill has called for solidarity action on that day.

RMT leader Jimmy Knapp must set 2 April as day of the first 24-hour strike against redundancies on British Rail. The RMT is demanding a continuing guarantee of no compulsory redundancies; a guarantee that contractors will not be employed while BR railworkers' jobs are at risk; and an assurance that redundancy agreements will be adhered to.

Already BR has done away with 7,000 jobs this financial year and announced a further 4,000 cuts by September. Informed sources have suggested the final figure for the 1993-4 financial year will be 20,000. And BR won't rule out compulsory redundancies.

Where RMT National Executive members have spoken to the membership before the ballot they have been at pains to stress that it is only about redundancies. It is not about privatisation, nor about the miners and pit closures, nor about the new machinery of negotiation, nor about the pay claim and the 1.5% public sector pay freeze.

But these problems remain. And they won't go away unless we tackle them. Part of the problem is the RMT leadership.

On privatisation they have committed themselves to an exclusively Parliamentary campaign; on the machinery of negotiation they were threatened with imposition and so responded by signing it! Certainly the law poses problems for the RMT fighting over pit closures, and many RMT members would react cynically if directly asked to (strike) after so much has been given away by our leadership. But on pay there is neither excuse nor reason not to push for an immediate fight.

We face the 1.5% limit with all other public sector workers and a campaign and ballot should begin now making all the necessary links with miners, firefighters and so on.

But, right now, it should be all out on 2 April!

"Capitalist revolution" flounders in chaos

Russia heads

for dictatorship

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin was the hero of the resistance to the Stalinist coup of August 1991. Now he is organising his own coup. The "special rule" he declared last Saturday, 20 March, means dictatorial rule by presidential decree.

He hopes that the referendum he says he will hold on 25 April will rubber-stamp this presidential rule and reject the Russian Parliament, with which Yeltsin has come into sharp conflict.

The Constitutional Court, to which the Parliament has appealed for a ruling, is likely to condemn Yeltsin for acting "illegally". But legality or illegality will count for little: much that Yeltsin has done in the last 19 months has been "illegal" by the standards of what went before.

Decisive here is force and power. Who will the army back? Where does the powerful, facelifted but still intact, secret police organisation, the KGB, stand? Which side will the local dignitaries back? Or will they continue to do as they have done increasingly, and to ignore all central authority, whether Yeltsin's or Parliament's?

Will the mass of the people remain quiet, or will they take to the streets as they did in August 1991?

Those are the decisive questions. The army says it will remain neutral, but the Ministers of Defence and of the Interior (i.e. police) back Yeltsin. So far the army's "neutrality" is neutrality on Yeltsin's side.

But the army may not remain united under the control of its present hierarchy. If the country divides violently between Yeltsin and the Parliament, the army will divide. Civil war will then become almost certain.

Mikhail Gorbachev did not exaggerate when he accused Yeltsin of "setting the house on fire". Yeltsin the democratic demagogue of 1991 is now an openly aspirant Russian Mussolini (as *Socialist Organiser* predicted he would be), willing to risk civil war to win dictatorial power.

But this is not just a question of Yeltsin, or of Yeltsin's ambitions. Yeltsin has had tremendous difficulty pushing through measures to transform the ex-USSR into a capitalist economy.

Historical capitalism evolves and grows and develops over a very long time, with a class of capitalists, big and little, as its active agents and promoters. Such people cannot be conjured up by political ukase.



"Yeltsin the democratic demagogue of 1991 is now an openly aspirant Russian Mussolini"

Outright gangsters are one of the main elements of such a bourgeoisie to have emerged in the ex-USSR so far.

The great bulk of the economy remains nationalised, though enterprises are now being auctioned off at an accelerating rate. Despite decrees "liberalising" prices - that is, putting essential goods like food at the mercy of uncontrolled market forces - Yeltsin has so far failed to make good the "capitalist" revolution for which the breaking of the back and the power of the old Stalinist political party, in its failed coup in August 1991, opened the way.

The bulk of industry continues to operate on the old lines of supply and distribution, only now the firms have no cash to pay their bills. While Yeltsin aims for the free market, in fact markets are breaking down in crucial sectors. Factories are building up huge, unpayable debts. The rouble is becoming worthless.

There is vast inflation and heaving chaos

in Russia. Yeltsin is greatly unpopular. He may lose the 25 April referendum, if he succeeds in calling it.

Resistance, sometimes incoherent and perspectiveless, but much of it representing the force of inertia still possessed by the old bureaucracy, is focussed on the Parliament elected under CP control in 1990, where Russian chauvinists, old Stalinists, and moderate marketeers hold the majority.

Yeltsin has opted to try to cut the knot by way of presidential dictatorship. He may find that it is the hoops binding the whole system together which have been severed.

Socialists in the West should give all the aid we can to Russia's fledgling trade union and socialist movements over the difficult months to come.

The Parliament represents not a democratic opposition to Yeltsin, but a section of the old bureaucratic elite. Whether Yeltsin or the parliamentary leaders emerge victorious from the current stand-off, or some third party (based on the military chiefs, maybe) pushes them both aside, the winner will certainly aim to build a "strong state", capable of controlling the chaos of Russia's transition to a private-enterprise economy.

Whoever wins is certain to want to suppress and restrict the working class.

The old Stalinists' model is Stalin's and Brezhnev's - or maybe Deng Xiaoping's - structure of fake state-controlled 'trade unions'; the new free-marketeteers' is Chile or South Korea. Neither faction offers a way out for the working class.

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